

WILL WOMEN SAVE JAPAN?

I happened to watch a prolonged, 73-minute special titled “Can Japanese Women Save Japan?” on the NHK TV program “Close Up Gendai.” The main guest was Christine Lagarde, the Managing Director of the IMF (International Monetary Fund). After the IMF meeting, she stayed over one day and appeared in this program.



As the representative of the IMF, Lagarde said that increasing women’s participation in the actual outside world and in the workforce would be the key to economic growth in Japan. Why would an increase in number of working women promote Japan’s economic growth?

The number of people working in Japan is now decreasing drastically because of the drop in birth rate and the growth in number of elderly citizens. Considering these things, increasing the number of working people is the most important factor for prosper here in Japan. Abandoning these conditions would weaken Japan’s economic power. Also, the reduction of tax revenue from working people would make the outlook for Japan’s future bleak.

Then, what should Japan do? There are two ways to solve this problem. One is to increase the number of immigrants. There are many countries which have a great number of immigrants and a high working population. However, Japan has been hesitant to accept immigrants, so the IMF believes that Japan has no other choice but to turn to women and immigrants to increase the overall number of working people.

Questions:

1. Which do you think is better for Japan: an increase in number of immigrants or in that of working women or both?
2. Do you agree with the opinion of the IMF? Will women save Japan?
3. What kind of help would be needed to increase the number of working women in Japan?
4. What should be done to give women more chances to be a part of the work force?

