

# Ideologies of State, Market, and Gender from High Growth to “Lost Decades”

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## Introductory

An extraordinary change in the substance and tone of discourse on Japan took place both inside and outside the country in the 1990s. Its emblem was the take-off of the term “lost decades.” The first published use in English appears to have been a *Newsweek* story in 1998. The first use in Japanese was probably the very same day in a *Nikkei* newspaper column attributing the expression to foreign investors.<sup>1</sup> It hardly matters which came first. The idea that Japan was declining or lost was a co-production of global and local voices.

As the problems associated with the condition of loss persisted, the singular “decade” gave way to the plural “decades,” but the discourse of loss has consistently focused on two topics: first and foremost, on economic stagnation. But second, and also importantly, it has focused on a host of social problems seen as both cause and effect of an ailing economy, even though all of these predated the bursting of Japan’s bubble economy: an aging society and falling birthrate; rising inequality of income, assets, and education; limited change in women’s roles; a perceived decline in energy or ambition among youth. Put simply, the consciousness of Japan as “lost” resulted from the puncturing not only of an economic bubble, but also of a social myth: that Japan had become and could remain a mass middle class society. The years from the 1990s onward have eroded faith in the possibility of the great majority of people to achieve membership in the middle-class, whose hero was the “salaryman” and whose heroine was the “professional housewife.”<sup>2</sup>

The onset of the “lost decades” bisects my own 45 years of connection to Japan, and the notion that something profound had changed at the midpoint drew my atten-

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1 Bill Powell, “The Lost Decade,” *Newsweek* (July 27, 1998), p. 28. Takita Yōichi, “Kokufu: Ushinawareta 10 nen no kyōkun,” *Nihon keizai shinbun*, July 20, 1998, evening edition, 3. Because magazines date their issues a week after actual publication, the *Newsweek* story would have appeared simultaneously with the Japanese newspaper article.

2 I have written on the emergence of the professional housewife as heroine of postwar middle class society in *Fabricating Consumers: アンドルー・ゴードン『ミシンと日本の近代——消費者の創出』* (大島かおり訳、みすず書房、2013年)。

tion to this topic. In this paper, with a primary focus on conservative or establishment voices, I am interested to examine two aspects of the shifting ideological landscape that are particularly relevant to the erosion of confidence in the future of Japan as a middle class society: first, thinking about markets and competition as the means to sustain a good society; second, attitudes toward change in gender roles. My focus will be on policy debates or publically oriented statements by scholars more than works written by scholars for each other or for students. But this arena of discourse must be examined as we seek to understand trends in the practice of what we typically call “Japanese studies.”

To assess the widely shared consciousness of loss that took root in the late 1990s of course requires that we identify the prior more optimistic state of mind against which this shift takes on meaning. It is not hard to find such upbeat views, expressed with particular vigor toward the end of the era of high economic growth and a perceived “catch up” with the West, even though some of the key problems associated in popular thinking with the time of “lost decades” were already noticeable. We begin, then, by examining some of the most notable triumphant declarations that an economically dynamic and socially stable middle-class Japan had become a global leader and even model for others.

### **Japan as Number One: the Japanese version**

My point of departure is an important set of mostly forgotten reports produced at the end of the 1970s. These are typically called the “Ōhira reports.” They were prepared at the behest of then Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi by a large study group including prominent academic figures.<sup>3</sup> They focused mainly on domestic issues ranging from management of the economy to family life and issues facing regional Japan, with attention as well to international relations. While reflecting some anxiety about the future, the reports are most notable for their pride in Japan’s accomplishments. Calls for reform were relatively modest, especially when read with the hindsight of several decades.

The context for this sort of appraisal was global.<sup>4</sup> The Ōhira study group was convened in January 1979. Five months later, the Harvard sociologist Ezra Vogel pub-

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3 大平報告書の正式名称は『大平総理の政策研究会報告書』第1～9巻（大蔵省印刷局、1980年）。The study group officially began its work in January 1979.

4 In his paper for this symposium, Naoki Sakai argues for the significance of a global context both for the creation of the earlier mode of Japanese studies that produced such positive assessments, and the more recent shift toward more pessimistic appraisals.

lished *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*. A Japanese translation quickly followed. The works were not identical, but they shared both optimism and the idea of Japan as a model. Although Vogel’s book turned out to have a far greater circulation in Japan, he wrote for an American audience; he hoped to encourage Americans to look outside their borders for ideas in addressing present-day social and economic issues. Members of the Ōhira group addressed their policy proposals to Japan’s political leadership, although they too had an eye on Japan’s potential role as inspiration for others.

Much like the discourse of Japan as “lost” since the late 1990s, these upbeat appraisals were local/global co-productions. Vogel began working on his project in 1976, and he had for some years been a close friend in particular of Satō Seizaburō, who along with Kōyama Kenichi and Kumon Shunpei was a key figure in convening the Ōhira study group. Vogel and Satō had at various times discussed the issues that were addressed in both Vogel’s book and the Ōhira report.<sup>5</sup> Other important scholarly works were also published outside Japan in the 1970s that saw the Japanese system not as destined to “westernize” but as one to which Western models might converge, such as Ronald Dore’s now classic study comparing British and Japanese industrial relations.<sup>6</sup> It was in this context, but also in a context of engagement with more critical voices in Japan (and indeed, in reaction to their own prior views), that the authors of the Ōhira report produced their study.

Somewhat like Tanaka Kakuei, and in clear contrast to other important postwar prime ministers such as Yoshida, Hatoyama, Kishi, Ikeda, Satō, or Miki, Ōhira’s personal background was socially and economically modest. He entered the Ministry of Finance from the forerunner of Hitotsubashi University, not from Tokyo University. He rose in the political world thanks to the support of Ikeda Hayato, his superior in the Ministry before he himself entered politics. Ōhira was a Christian, and widely read; among his intellectual influences were Thomas Aquinas and the British economist Richard Tawney. He took from them a belief in the importance of intermediary groups between individuals and the state, which would safeguard society from the harmful effects of either a radically unregulated market economy or anti-capitalist class struggle. Ōhira advocated “reform capitalism” or social cooperativism. He was also impacted by the 「成長の限界」 ethos expressed by the Club of Rome; he believed that the modernizing growth model had reached a dead end and needed to be tran-

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5 Personal communication, Ezra Vogel (May, 2015).

6 Ronald P. Dore, *British Factory-Japanese Factory* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1973).

scended. Within the Liberal Democratic Party at that time he stood in opposition to the Fukuda stream that supported more defense spending and constitutional revision; he feared such moves would return Japan to a harmful “premodern” state. He was also concerned that the central state held excessive power and wanted to shift the balance of political and administrative power to localities.<sup>7</sup>

The nine volumes produced by the study group all include the same prefatory “Proposal for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” This gives the reports an overarching problem consciousness with clear debt to Ōhira’s world view. The preface begins with a buoyant statement of pride at a new equality with the West:

近代化を達成した欧米諸国と日本は、高度産業社会として成熟し、多くの困難な問題に直面するに至った。……日本は、明治維新以来、欧米先進諸国に一日も早く追いつくために、近代化、産業化、欧米化を積極的に推進してきた。その結果、日本は、成熟した高度産業社会を迎え、人々は、世界に誇りうる自由と平等、進歩と繁栄、経済的豊かさと便利さ、高い教育と福祉の水準、発達した科学技術享受するに至った。<sup>8</sup>

The proposal goes on to lay out the authors’ understanding of the different cultures that enabled these achievements:

欧米の文化が、神か悪魔か、勝ちか負けか、白か黒かというように、「二者を峻別し対比」させる構造を持つのに対し、日本文化は、じゃんけんにもみられるように、絶対的勝者も敗者もない三すくみの「三極低鼎立・円環構造」を特質としている。絶対的一神教崇拝に対し、神仏習合の歴史的経験をもつ。ルールを守れば勝てば勝ちの「フェア・プレイ」よりは、「おのおのがその所を得る」ような「フェア・シェア」の原理をもつ。都市の構造や家屋、庭園、生活習慣でも、「中間領域」を大切に「グレイ・ゾーンの文化」をもっている。<sup>9</sup>

Presenting a vision of East versus West that is itself remarkably binary, the authors see Japan as particularly suited to address the difficult problems faced by all modern societies, in particular 「かつてない自由と経済的豊かさは、これまでの物質文系や近代

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7 本段落の記述は宇野重規の論文に基づく。宇野重規「鈍牛 哲人宰相と知識人たち——大平総理の政策研究会をめぐる」『アステイオン』81号（2014年11月）174～177頁。

8 大平政策研究会「21世紀に向けての提言（総説）」『大平総理の政策研究会報告書』（大蔵省印刷局、1980年）1～2頁。

9 大平政策研究会「21世紀に向けての提言（総説）」4頁。

合理主義の下で、ともすれば見過ごされがちであった人間の精神的・文化的側面への反省を促し、より高度な人間的欲求を目覚めさせるに至った」<sup>10</sup> The authors, with Ōhira, repeatedly describe Japan and the world as entering 「近代を超える時代」. In this new world, principles of harmony, balance, as well as mutual solidarity rather than individualism can be the foundation of Japanese leadership in a new global 「文化の時代」 where there are no longer Western models to chase.<sup>11</sup>

In a notably defensive move, the report follows its first mention of 「近代を超える時代」 with a firm declaration that 「前近代の回帰であってはならない」.<sup>12</sup> The authors were well aware that their phrasing echoed discredited wartime discussion of overcoming modernity. But it seems fair to say that no more than the Ōhira writers did those wartime thinkers see themselves as atavistic. They were pursuing a vision of a globally relevant Japanese cosmopolitanism, grounded in tradition but transcending the modern, albeit a vision that was to be spread to the eight corners of the world by military might.

Given this echo, as well as the report’s reductive understanding of both Japanese and Euro-American culture, it is easy and in some measure fair enough to dismiss the Ōhira group’s vision of a new “era of culture” as simplistic and shallow. But I have introduced the report’s underlying premises in some detail for two reasons. It is an example of a mode of thinking that not only has deep roots reaching back through the war era at least to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century writings of figures who came together in the Society for Political Education (政教社) and its journal, *Nihonjin* [*The Japanese*]. It also reflects an enduring stance of those seeking to define “Japan” in a continually changing and challenging global environment.

Such visions in the past, whether during wartime or in the mid-Meiji era, had been marked by a sense of crisis and embattlement, reflecting concern that in the rush to ape a modernizing West, Japan was losing its cultural essence. Against this background, the relatively confident tone of this manifesto is intriguing, all the more because it had not been the tone of some earlier writing by these same men. The origins of the thinking expressed in the Ōhira report—like the origins of Vogel’s project—reach back to the mid-1970s. A number of the key figures in the Ōhira brain trust, including Kōyama, Satō, and Kumon, had been part of a self-described “Group 1984.” Convened by the entrepreneur Ushio Jirō, the founder of a major electronics company in the 1960s, the group published a manifesto titled 「日本の自殺 (Japan’s Suicide)」 in

10 大平政策研究会 「21 世紀に向けての提言 (総説)」 3 頁。

11 大平政策研究会 「21 世紀に向けての提言 (総説)」 3 頁。

12 大平政策研究会 「21 世紀に向けての提言 (総説)」 1 頁。

the February 1975 issue of the monthly magazine 『文藝春秋』.<sup>13</sup> It drew much attention and brought its authors together with Dokō Toshop, at that time president of Keidanren.<sup>14</sup>

This manifesto shares with the Ōhira report a concern with the spiritual and cultural character of modern life, and a belief that Japanese culture—or what it calls at one point “the Japanese soul (日本の魂)” —held potential to overcome the economic challenges of the energy crisis “so long as Japanese society does not lose its [“self-discipline (自律性)” and “capacity for autonomic decision (自己決定能力)”.<sup>15</sup> But such confident claims are remarkably few; as the essay’s title conveys, the overall tone and substance of the statement is one of crisis and a fear of imminent disaster. The document starts with a vivid account of the decline of the Roman Empire, blamed on elites pandering to the masses by providing them “bread and circuses.” It goes on, in a profoundly elitist tone, to condemn present day Japan as a society likewise in moral decline as its leaders, and its economy, pander to mass desire at the expense of social discipline and responsibility.

More specifically, Japan is said to face three great problems: lack of natural resources, damage to the environment, and an inflationary spiral where excessive pay raises chase (and enable) rising consumer prices. But these are less economic problems than cultural, political and especially psychological afflictions. The root problem is the rampant materialism of a mass production society. Homogenized goods destroy taste, and standardized work harms laborers both spiritually and physically. Consumerism damages the home as well, when women pursue the convenience of instant foods and ready-made clothes and forget the joy of knitting or cooking. This modern system—essentially capitalist production and consumption although the authors generally stay away from the “C” word—has created a profound moral crisis of an “infantilized” population, weakened popular judgment, and eroded discipline. To top it off, and in one section of this 40 year-old manifesto that hardly feels dated, an overflow of information circulated in mass media far too quickly for people to make sense of it on their own.<sup>16</sup>

The authors have a clear enemy in mind: the political left, especially the Japan Communist Party and the Japan Teachers Union (Nikkyōso) created these problems

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13 「日本の自殺」『文藝春秋』1975年2月号、いくつかのコメントをつけて同誌2012年3月号に再掲載。

14 宇野前掲「鈍牛 哲人宰相と知識人たち」178頁。

15 「日本の自殺」再掲載版（2012年）100頁。Quote marks as in original.

16 「日本の自殺」再掲載版（2012年）100頁、102～106頁、109～110頁。

and impedes their resolution. The left is blamed for an excessive or evil egalitarianism in an education system that moves students along at the same standard pace without recognizing merit, and in a welfare state that erodes self-reliance and discipline. What is needed is a turn away—“by consumers, by workers, by politicians, by managers”—from egoistic self-seeking, a turn to self-reliance, strong leaders not afraid to give unhappy messages to the people, tough love for the young, and recognition that material gain is not the sum of human happiness. The overwrought intensity of this long manifesto clearly reflects the conviction of the convert; the authors had themselves been student radicals—and Communist Party members—in their youth.

Against this background, the Ōhira report must be read as a radically moderated presentation of the problems Japan faced, and a dramatically more confident appraisal of the potential for Japanese culture not only to thrive but to serve the world outside Japan in a new “age of culture.” It is not entirely clear what accounts for this difference in statements written four years apart by many of the same people. The explanation would appear to rest first in growing confidence; Japan by 1980 had weathered the storm of two oil crises in better condition than much of the advanced capitalist world, something not anticipated in 1975. Specifically in relation to the earlier article’s fear of the left, wage negotiations between cooperative private sector unions and corporations had tamed the inflationary spiral, and the public sector unions had suffered major setbacks in a failed “strike for the right to strike”. Second, a report prepared for a Prime Minister is politically constrained. It cannot bemoan the present crisis to excess, especially as the Prime Minister’s party held power during the time the alleged crisis emerged, and it must allow the Prime Minister to offer some possible ways forward through his policies.

The Ōhira report’s presentation of Japanese economy and culture as a strong foundation for a new “age of culture” thus had its origins in an antagonistic, anxiety-ridden dialogue with the left, even if that anxiety was muted in the report and the antagonism largely unstated. In later years the report’s essentialist concern to identify and preserve something specific to Japan in changing times would persist, and a sense of crisis would return. But with the left increasingly marginal, its place as the perceived enemy or source of the problem would diminish (although not disappear, as evidenced in attacks on teachers by politicians such as Hashimoto Tōru as well as Prime Minister Abe). A different axis of opposition would emerge, reflecting the internal contradiction at the heart of these manifestos of the 1970s. Even as it was positioned as an alternative to the programs of the Japanese left, the Ōhira report’s support for a Japanese cultural path placed it in uneasy tension with the incipient neo-liberal spirit evident in “Japan’s Suicide” harsh attack on egalitarian education and expanded social

welfare.

The first important moment in the rise of a Japanese version of neo-liberalism came just a few years later under the administration of Nakasone Yasuhiro, more or less simultaneously with advent of similar reformism from the right in the United States under Reagan and in the United Kingdom under Thatcher. Calling for a “total settlement of postwar politics (戦後政治の総決算)”, the centerpiece of Nakasone’s domestic agenda included education reform and the privatization of government monopolies, above all the Japan National Railway. Nakasone intended not only to cut the huge debt incurred by the railway but above all to destroy the powerful JNR union (Kokurō). There is some dispute among Japanese scholars as to how much direct carryover there was from the Ōhira report authors to Nakasone’s economic programs, but the spirit especially of his project for education reform surely carried forward the gist of “Japan’s Suicide.”<sup>17</sup>

But for all that Nakasone pursued reforms in education and in public sector monopolies, through the time of his administration and well beyond, optimistic assessments of Japan’s private sector economic system continued unabated or were put forth even more exuberantly. Only after the bubble burst, and even then not immediately, would a steady stream start to flow calling for reform of the heart of the post-war economic and social system. Among the most famous early works in the “rescue lost Japan” genre were Noguchi Yukio’s *Structure of the 1940s* (1995) and Richard Katz’s *Japan: the System that Soured* (1998). Such works were at heart attacks on bureaucratic management of economy and society, and legal restrictions on the operation of free markets. After taking a closer look at how the Ōhira report affirmed the value of what it defined as a Japanese management system, we will look in more detail at the conflicted discourse of market friendly reform that has been the hallmark of economic talk in the lost decades.

### **From Managed to Free Markets?**

The Ōhira reports included a particularly interesting volume titled “Business Management in an Age of Culture (文化の時代の経営運営)”.<sup>18</sup> It offered a detailed and

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17 There is not space in this paper to examine this issue in depth. For more on the topic, see 大嶽秀夫『自由主義的改革の時代——1980年代前期の日本政治』（中央公論社、1994年）第三部、第一章「中曽根政権の理念と政策」241～254頁、中北浩爾『自民党政治の変容』（NHKブックス、2014年）。

18 大平政策研究会編『大平総理の政策研究会報告書7巻 文化の時代の経営運営』（大蔵省印刷局、1980年）。

positive description of the special characteristics of the Japanese management system. In the 1950s and 1960s this system had often been presented as rooted in the pre-modern past and fated to converge to a more advanced Western system. Now it was seen to be an enduring set of practices that might in fact serve as models for others. These included long-term employment and seniority wages, based on a culture that stressed solidarity among people (人と人の間柄), and a modular “rhizome” structure to organizations, which they contrasted to a top down “tree” structure of American management organization. The “rhizome” model led to more fluid decision making involving all relevant parties. These organizations gave security to employees but in the view of the authors, they did not lack for effective internal competition; rather they possessed “the dynamism of competition for advancement which stood upon a foundation of solidarity and peace of mind.”

Turning to “competition in the market”, the report gave a ringing endorsement to what we can call managed competition:

市場における競争という面では、日本の競争は、「なかま」集団による競争であるため、ルールにのっとって行われる限りは結果はどうであろうと構わないという欧米型の「フェア・プレイ」ではなく、競争が始まる前から結果はどうか、最適な分配方法（「フェア・シェア」）は何かということを考え、参加者が「おのおのがその所を得る」ことを目標としている点に、その特徴がある。<sup>19</sup>

This report’s introduction laid out the above perspective in broad strokes. The rest of the document offered further details of practices such as the regular hiring of school graduates, the cooperative stance of labor unions, the coordination of financial markets, and the practice of administrative guidance. It repeated the point about “fair share” over “fair play” and cited Vogel’s *Japan as Number One* as the source.<sup>20</sup>

The report did, at the same time, evidence anxiety that echoed the “Japan’s Suicide” when it identified signs of erosion of this now effective system, although its tone is muted and more optimistic. In an era when a once unimaginable freedom and affluence had been achieved, the authors voiced concern at the spiritual state of the nation. Echoing concerns found in Europe and North America in these years, they feared that across the advanced industrial world, a postwar regime of economic growth that promoted popular welfare through access to new technology, cheap en-

19 大平政策研究会『大平総理の政策研究会報告書7巻 文化の時代の経営運営』10頁。

20 大平政策研究会『大平総理の政策研究会報告書7巻 文化の時代の経営運営』80~93頁。  
Vogel quote on p. 90.

ergy, Keynesian demand stimulation, and welfare states had exhausted its potential. They worried that except for electronics, no technological innovations were on the horizon. Demand management and Japanese-style administrative guidance had a cost in inflation, and the emerging welfare state was too costly for taxpayers to sustain. Turning to social issues, the emergence of the new middle class with 「生産中心主義」 and 「会社中心主義」, as the ethos of men, was laudable, but it had brought with it some worrying trends. One was called 「個別化」, which seems to be not quite individualism but a partial secession from the group in pursuit of leisure and relaxation (*yutori*). Related was an emerging desire for instant gratification and pursuit of pleasure. This was related to a perceived self-protective (保身性) or selfish behavior, leading couples to have fewer children and speeding the aging of society. All of these economic and social problems were encapsulated in the notion of “advanced country disease,” a toxic mix of declining economic energy, political un-governability and social anomie manifest in terrorism, crime, youth delinquency, and suicide. But Japan, they concluded, still possessed a dynamism and cohesion that was the envy of others.<sup>21</sup> Thanks in large measure to its ability to manage competition both within organizations and in the wider marketplace, it had so far contracted no more than the advanced country sniffles, hardly the flu or pneumonia.

As Japan's economy continued to outpace its advanced country rivals and allies through the 1980s, an even more exuberant tone came to mark discourse on Japan in the academy as well as among policy makers. By the mid-1980s, declarations echoing the report's binary divide of Western and Japanese culture, and elevating a Japanese style of labor management to the status of a model to the world, were common both among scholars and a wider public. Itami Hiroyuki, a well-known professor of management at Hitotsubashi University, proclaimed his belief in the superiority of what he called a 「人本主義的企業システム」 which he understood to be the 「日本文明の企業的側面」. He argued that 「日本の長い繁栄を考えるのなら、いささか大げさではずかしい話だが、文明を輸出することを意識して考えるべき時期にきているのではないか」—most notably, its corporate system.<sup>22</sup> The eminent sage of Japanese-style quality control, Karatsu Hajime, happily agreed that 「私の念願がある。それは日本での〔工場経営に関する〕実験データを詳細に分析し、世界の人々に公開したいのである。……〔より根本的に言えば日本は〕ヨーロッパの発想の原点のひとつであるデカルトに噛みつくぐらいのことをしなくては」 「ならない」.<sup>23</sup>

21 大平政策研究会『大平総理の政策研究会報告書7巻 文化の時代の経営運営』36～50頁。

22 伊丹敬之「文明を輸出するとき」『アステイオン』創刊2号(1986年)41～42頁。

23 唐津一「米国の破綻」『Voice』106号(1986年)123頁、125頁。

Of course, with the bursting of the economic bubble in a crash of stock and land prices, followed by years of anemic, sometimes negative, economic growth, this happy chorus with its hymns of praise gave way to criticism and calls for change in the media and among some academics. The British magazine, *Economist*, was in the forefront among foreign press. As early as 1993 it gleefully reported a decision by Pioneer, the large audio-equipment maker, to force 35 veteran employees to retire early. “Capitalism in Japan is becoming harder to confuse with socialism. ... [The Pioneer decision] is seen as a signal that the post-1945 tradition of life-time employment in big companies is creaking under pressure from economic slowdown.”<sup>24</sup> As the United States economy surged through the late 1990s, American-style corporate governance, often described as a “shareholder capitalism” in which the best outcomes for all were achieved by giving primary attention to return on the shareholder’s investment, was put forward as the new model in a renewed statement of—and support for—the America-centered global convergence of labor-management relations. Japanese firms were criticized for their adherence to a “stakeholder” capitalism that considered the interests of employees and of managers to be comparable to those of investors.<sup>25</sup>

But through the 1990s one found both in the wider society and among corporate leaders and elite bureaucrats an enduring attraction to the ideas and institutions understood in the Ōhira report to have provided the foundation for the nation’s postwar rise as a global economic power. To be sure, corporate Japan in these years made many quite significant changes in the workplace. As they had already been doing at least since the 1980s, companies facing global competition from low wage nations dramatically cut their numbers of domestic employees. They also increasingly turned to the hiring of non-regular workers in various categories: part-time employees, dispatch workers, contract workers. Perhaps because these changes were in fact quite extensive, many in Japan spoke of the need for caution in the continued pursuit of reforms.

As one example, consider the 1996 proposal of Japan’s major employer federation focused on labor issues, Nikkeiren. Called the “Bluebird Plan,” this was in significant measure a managerial vision of a deregulated future where companies would be more responsive to market forces. The federation called for “structural” reforms, in particular the end to regulation of utilities, distribution, and transportation, said to drive up the cost of the industrial infrastructure. But Nikkeiren ended its call for reform with a strong caution. Although 「市場経済・資本主義は自由競争原理を通じて産業の興隆、

24 “To encourage the others,” *Economist*, January 16 (1993), p. 66.

25 Ross Mouer and Hirosuke Kawanishi, *A Sociology of Work in Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 253 introduce such works.

国民生活水準の向上をもたらしているが、一方で影の部分ともいうべき低成長、高失業、所得格差、バブルの発生、行き過ぎた投機などの弊害を生んでいる。要するに、市場経済・資本主義が内包する様々な危機・問題に対し適切なチェックを行い、いわばリスクを管理するシステムが必要になる。経営者自らがそうした役割を果たすと共に、社会の中に市民・個人を中心にした新たなシビリアンパワーを育成する土壌も必要になる」。<sup>26</sup> The echo of the Ōhira report's praise of managed competition is clear, as is the similarity in Nikkeiren's explicit presentation of a "third way" that would avoid what it saw as the excesses of Anglo-American capitalism as well as the rigidities of social democratic systems. Nikkeiren here called on management more than the state to curb the excesses of the market, but it also called for a new civilian power of the citizenry at large to play this role, and it mentioned unions as cooperative partners who were needed to help enterprises be all the more flexible in hiring and deploying workers and in setting wages in "rational" fashion. The Rengō labor federation had a similar view. In 1997 its secretary general was Washio Etsuji, formerly a union leader at New Japan Steel. Interviewed for a front-page feature on "Private sector reform: the future of the corporation" in April 1997, he noted that 「どの企業も大競争時代と声高に叫び、危機感をあおり、雇用を奪おうとしている。安易な人減らしは生産性まで低める」。<sup>27</sup> These cautious reformers of the managerial and union elite spoke for many. They found support in media commentary suspicious of too single-minded a pursuit of an American model.<sup>28</sup>

In the early 2000s, the tide seemed to turn away from such caution in media discourse, party politics, and state policy. In 2003, the *Nihon Keizai shinbun* ran a high profile series on what it called the "Japanese disease" (picking up on much earlier criticisms of "the British disease" of economic stagnation and entrenched labor power). The paper condemned Japanese business leaders for failing to implement much needed reforms in how they managed their companies.<sup>29</sup> It was of course reflecting and supporting the ambitious free market reform spirit of the administration of Koizumi Jun'ichirō, who came to power in April 2001 and would remain the Prime Minister for over five years (until September 2006).

Koizumi pursued policies of deregulation and privation with unprecedented vigor. His most ambitious reform by far was to further deregulate financial markets by pri-

26 日本経営者団体連盟「ブルーバードプラン・プロジェクト」(1997年度～1999年度)報告(1997年1月)25頁。

27 「米国型競争社会を実現すればいいのか(民革——企業の未来を問う 下)」『朝日新聞』1997年4月8日朝刊1面。

28 Edward Lincoln, "Japan Hasn't Really Failed," *New York Times*, Saturday, February 22, 1997.

29 Mouer and Kawanishi, p. 254. And/or find cite to original, January 2003.

vatizing the massive postal savings and insurance system. He and his allies, most significantly the economist and cabinet minister for economic policy, Takenaka Heizō, argued that this was the only way to insure that its assets were invested in the most productive sectors and enterprises according to a logic of the market rather than at the behest of special interests. They trumpeted this reform as the key to Japan’s economic recovery and long run prosperity, and with a landslide victory in the Lower House election of 2005, in essence a referendum on privatizing the postal savings system, Koizumi appeared to have triumphed unequivocally over anti-reform sentiment, including significant resistance within his own party.

Koizumi also pursued labor market deregulation with considerable energy. In 2003, his administration won approval of a revised Labor Standards Law, which expanded the scope of fixed-term contract labor.<sup>30</sup> And in 2004, after two years of negotiations with labor unions and opposition parties, his government enacted a new Dispatch Worker Law, which made it possible for labor brokers, until then limited to providing workers in a small number of service industries, to dispatch workers to jobs of any sort.

Koizumi’s mantra throughout his administration was “structural reform without sanctuary (聖域なき構造改革)”. Takenaka and Koizumi’s other advisors likewise justified their reforms with a neo-liberal rhetoric that was considerably more forceful than anything heard in the postwar past. Takenaka, for example, dismissed concerns about growing economic disparities with the claim that while polices were needed to support those in poverty, if the rich got richer, so much the better: 「がんばってリスクをとって、どんどん稼いで、たくさん納税してくれる人は増えたほうがいい」.<sup>31</sup> That the expanded ranks of non-regular workers might lack buying power did not seem to trouble him. In a similar spirit, Ushio Jirō, a close Koizumi advisor and one of the charter members of the “Group 1984” which wrote “Japan’s Suicide (日本の自殺)” thirty years earlier, told a reporter who asked him about the negative side of deregulation such as the rise of non-regular work that deregulation had not gone nearly far enough. Only about 20 percent of the needed changes had taken place during Koizumi’s time in office.<sup>32</sup> And another of Koizumi’s business allies, Miyauchi Yoshihiko, chairman of the

30 Hiroya Nakakubo, “The 2003 Revisions of the Labor Standards Law: Fixed Term Contracts, Dismissals, and Discretionary Work Schemes,” *Japan Labor Review* (2004), pp.4–25.

31 「(検証・構造改革 第4部・当事者たちの証言：1) 総務大臣・竹中平蔵氏」『朝日新聞』2006年9月5日朝刊10面。In the same interview, he also dismissed the possibility that poverty was a significant problem in Japan, compared to Europe or America.

32 「(検証・構造改革 第4部・当事者たちの証言：3) ウシオ電機会長・牛尾治朗氏」『朝日新聞』2006年9月7日朝刊10面。

Orix corporation, celebrated the shift from Keynesian policies that supported the economy with public expenditures to structural reforms aimed to increase the scope of the market economy. For Miyauchi, growth had to be the goal, and if one cost was rising inequality, so be it.<sup>33</sup>

But for all this rhetoric, even at the high tide of market reform under Koizumi's administration, the enduring attraction of what the Ōhira report called an ethos of fair share rather than fair play was evident. The government's 2001 draft of a proposed new Labor Standards Law included an initial declaration that "employers have the right to dismiss employees," followed by the proviso that such dismissals had to be "reasonably" grounded. Labor unions, lawyer organizations, and the opposition political parties all objected strenuously to this initial statement. They felt it would weaken the doctrine of the "abuse of the right to fire," which had been developed over several decades of case law, although never written into legislation. In the end, the revised Labor Standards Law passed in 2003, while moving slightly toward deregulation by widening the scope of contract labor, also omitted the first draft's affirmation of a right to fire while inscribing in a statute for the first time ever the requirement that dismissals be "reasonable" and not an "abuse of right." A clause of the new law (Art. 18-2) stated "In cases where a dismissal is not based upon any objectively reasonable grounds, and is not socially acceptable as proper, the dismissal will be null and void as an abuse of right"<sup>34</sup>. In addition, amendments to the Equal Employment Opportunity Law included greater protection for women against dismissals either directly or indirectly based on gender. A new Whistleblowers Protection Law (2004) outlawed dismissal on ground of whistle blowing, and a revised (2004) Child Care and Family Care Leave Law ruled out the dismissal of employees taking leave for child care or family care.<sup>35</sup>

Of most interest, key business leaders were reluctant to embrace the affirmation of a right to dismiss. The head of Nikkeiren, Okuda Hiroshi (later the first chairman of the merged Keidanren/Nikkeiren) put it clearly in 2001 as discussions of a revised law were beginning:

私はこれ〔解雇規制の緩和〕を最もやってはいけないことであると思います。それ

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33 「〔検証・構造改革 第4部・当事者たちの証言：7〕オリックス会長・宮内義彦氏」『朝日新聞』2006年9月13日朝刊8面。

34 Takashi Araki, "Corporate Governance Reforms, Labor Law Developments and the Future of Japan's Practice-Dependent Shareholder Model," in *Japan Labor Review* (2005), pp. 40-42.

35 Woolf, "The Death of Lifelong Employment in Japan," pp. 76-77.

は最も警戒すべき便乗解雇を容易にするものであるとともに、何より、経営者のモラルハザードに直結しかねないものであるからであります。<sup>36</sup>

Okuda expanded on his implicit call for corporate managers to act with restraint in Keidanren’s New Year statement of 2003, sometimes called the “Okuda vision” which called for a 「民主導・自律型の日本独自の成長モデル」. This vision was thin on detail, so it is hard to be sure in what sense Okuda and Keidanren felt a need for corporate self-discipline, but the statement appears to echo the moralism of the Ōhira study group and the earlier manifesto on “Japan’s suicide”, which also spoke of the importance of corporate and individual self-discipline in a society marked by ever expanding desire for material gain.<sup>37</sup>

Even during the Koizumi administration, then, the attitude toward neo-liberal reform remained ambivalent or divided even among business leaders. As Sanford Jacoby wrote in 2005, significant numbers not only of labor leaders but corporate executives and academics were urging “preservation or incremental reform of current corporate practices.” They argued that too dramatic a shift toward American practices would “erode Japan’s comparative organizational advantage in customer and supplier relations, product quality, firm-specific human capital formation, and speed of execution.”<sup>38</sup>

And, as the post-Koizumi era loomed in 2006, a pushback against reform escalated. It focused in particular on the recently expanded scope of dispatch labor, even though such workers accounted for a small minority of all non-regular workers. It is important to remember that the so-called “lost decades” were not a time of continuous economic decline, and certainly not a span of unrelenting losses for Japanese corporations. By the spring of 2006, the economy had been slowly but steadily growing for four years, and businesses were reporting growing profits. But criticism that these benefits were not widely shared came to be voiced even within the establishment. Shinagawa Masaharu, for example, a former director of the Keizai Dōyūkai, Japan’s second most important business association, presciently noted that 「小泉改革は資本家のための改革だったと反発が出かねない状況だ」.<sup>39</sup>

About one half year later, his predictions proved correct, as some key voices

36 仁田道夫「雇用の量的管理」、仁田道夫・久本憲夫『日本の雇用システム』（ナカニシヤ出版、2008年）45～46頁。「労働法改革と雇用システム——解雇法制をめぐって」社会政策学会編『格差社会への視座——貧困と教育機会』（法律文化社、2007年）80～81頁。

37 日本経営者団体連合会「活力と魅力溢れる日本をめざして」（2003年1月1日）。<https://www.keidanren.or.jp/japanese/policy/vision2025.html>

38 Sanford Jacoby, *The Embedded Corporation: corporate governance and employment relations in Japan and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 7-8.

within the LDP rejected calls for further deregulation, in particular the proposal to remove the three year limit to the duration of any one dispatch worker's stint. Yanagisawa Hakuo, Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare, told the press "there are people among the dispatch workers who want to become regular employees, and a time limit is necessary so they are not stuck in that status." The resistance here likely stemmed as much or more from the career bureaucrats with responsibility for labor and welfare issues, as from the politicians who served briefly as cabinet ministers. One unnamed ministry official complained of the free market reformers: 「直接雇用を促すという制度の根幹をひっくり返し、厚みのある正社員層を切り崩そうというのか。20代のフリーターの85%は正社員を望んでいるというのに」。<sup>40</sup>

Yanagisawa's predecessor as Minister, Kawasaki Jirō, noted in an interview a couple weeks later that he and others among the LDP MPs were concerned that the benefits of recovery had not reached enough people, especially those in smaller companies or sub-contractors to larger firms. Non-regular workers received no bonuses or retirement pay, and the minimum wage was much too low. Japan had become "the worst of the low-wage countries (最低の最低賃金国)". Non-regular workers who held such jobs against their wishes needed policies to move them into regular status.<sup>41</sup>

Although he was in favor of some market-friendly reforms, such as the white collar exemption on overtime pay, Minister Yanagisawa stuck to his opposition to further deregulation of dispatch labor. From autumn of 2006 through the winter of 2007 (under the first Abe administration), a vigorous debate on this issue set the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare against Keidanren; in the end the Ministry and their allies among the LDP's reluctant reformers prevailed. One reason was that strong DPJ resistance in the upper house, where it held a majority, was in any case expected to doom the reform. But the LDP was itself divided.

Against this background, the made-in-America global financial crisis of 2008 further discredited the cause of American-style free market reform, and gave a boost to those who supported existing practices of long-term employment. In June 2008, with the support of the newly-installed Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo, the new Minister of Health Welfare and Labor, Masuzoe Yōichi, argued that "regular employment should be the norm." The fact that a recent (and rare) murderous attacker of random shop-

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39 「(奥田経団連 変容の4年 上) 蜜月の実装 「改革」と響きあい」『朝日新聞』2006年5月18日朝刊8面。

40 「(時時刻刻) 派遣待遇、潜む危険 直接雇用義務撤廃を検討」『朝日新聞』2006年12月1日2面。

41 「「非正社員の代弁したい」 川崎・自民雇用生活調査会長」『朝日新聞』2006年12月14日朝刊12面。

pers in Tokyo’s Akihabara district had been a dispatch worker provided part of the motivation for this stance.<sup>42</sup> But concern over the insecurity of employment and future prospects for non-regular workers was widespread, and it came together in the outpouring of popular support for the thousands of dispatch workers who lost their jobs during the immediate aftermath of the Lehman shock.<sup>43</sup>

This conflict among conservative elites over the desirability of neo-liberal reforms can also be seen in the dissonance between “White Papers” issued by two government ministries just before and then after the global financial crisis. The Cabinet Bureau’s *Economy and Finance White Paper* of 2008 (written before the crisis of that year) continued to beat the drums of reform. It lamented the rigidity of 「伝統的日本型企業」 compared to what it called 「市場型企業」. The former—defined as companies that relied on a single main bank and followed the “traditional” commitment to long-term employment—were unwilling to take necessary risks. The report acknowledged that the security of a long term position can lead to willingness to take risks by employees who will not be afraid to fail, but it argued that this potential benefit is outweighed by the fact that employees concerned to insure the long-run survival of their company so they can get pensions and future wage gains will not take risks that might upset the status quo. Further, the slow adoption in “traditionalistic” companies of incentive or results-based pay schemes failed to encourage risk taking.<sup>44</sup>

In sharp contrast, Ministry of Health Welfare and Labor strongly defended the core institutions that had come to be celebrated in the high growth era. The 2008 *Labor Economy White Paper* likewise written and released before the Lehman shock, worried that employment in high value added positions was not growing, while insecure non-regular jobs were on the rise. Further, an increased use of performance incentives for middle aged and older regular workers lowered morale by expanding disparities among employees. A rethinking of wage practice was needed. The report concluded that Japan’s notable practice of long term employment, marked by regular school grad hiring, learning on the job through experience, and attention to building career paths, was making a comeback. After having come under attack in the 1990s and early 2000s, regard for 「日本型雇用慣行」 had risen along with the improved economy of the past several years. The goal of policy was said to be support for such prac-

42 「日雇い派遣禁止、範囲は 厚労相、法形成の意向 各党の主張に隔たり」『朝日新聞』6月14日朝刊7面。

43 Toru Shinoda, “Which Side are You On? Hakenmura and the Working Poor as a Tipping Point in Japanese Labor Politics” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 7, Issue 14, No. 3, April 4, 2009.

44 内閣府『経済財政白書』（2008年）135～142頁。特に140～141頁。

tices, highly valued by workers and by many employers.<sup>45</sup>

The following year's *Labor Economy White Paper*—issued just after the financial crisis—took an even stronger position in defense of traditional institutions and practices.

厳しい経済収縮の中にあっても、政労使の一体的な取り組みのもとに長期雇用システムの基盤を守り、その上に、新しい日本型雇用の姿を展望していくことが、今後の経済成長と社会の持続的な発展にとって、極めて重要であると考えております。<sup>46</sup>

This clarion call to defend Japanese employment practice, issued in the name of Minister Masuzoe (later the governor of Tokyo), does not make clear what would constitute the “new form” to be added, though one assumes it would involve some degree of increased flexibility. Nonetheless, the overall tone here is hardly reformist. At a moment of intense economic crisis, the focus of this Ministry, at least, was on shoring up existing institutions rather than transforming them.

Under the second Abe administration, economic thinking and policy has continued to play out as a negotiation between defense of and desire for the status quo, and call for free market reform. On the one hand, the government has revised the dispatch worker law by eliminating the requirement that companies convert a dispatch worker's position to regular employment after three years, and it continues to press to exempt companies from the need to offer overtime pay to white-collar workers with relatively high incomes. On the other hand, in the parliamentary election of December 2014, one key measure of success put forward by the Abe administration was the rising percent of college seniors who were winning promises of regular employment before graduation (内定率). Also, in spring of 2015 as in the previous year, the Prime Minister pushed corporate managers with unusual force to offer wage increases during the annual springtime round of bargaining with unions, in a sign of the continued or indeed increased salience of a corporatist model of economic management involving the state in consultation with management and labor.

Another striking sign that a style of economic management associated with the heyday of administrative guidance remained alive and well in Tokyo was the role of the Prime Minister and METI in revising “guidelines for transactions” between large

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45 厚生労働省『労働経済白書』（2008年）1～2頁、254～255頁、261頁。

46 厚生労働省『労働経済白書』（2009年）。巻頭に舛添要一「雇用の安定を基盤とした安心できる勤労者生活のために」。

and small firms in 14 industries in spring of 2015. The revision was informed by “concentrated on-site inspections” of approximately 500 major firms. The goal of the new guidelines was to press large companies to share the burden with smaller subcontractors of the increased costs of imported raw materials and energy due to the sharp fall in the value of the yen rather than pass on those costs to the weaker partners. This in turn was intended to allow the smaller firms to offer pay increases to their employees, thus reinforcing a virtuous cycle of rising wages and rising consumption feeding back into stronger production and productivity, a cycle at the heart of the political economy of Japan as a mass middle class society.<sup>47</sup>

### **Beyond a Society of Male Breadwinners, and Good Wives, Wise Mothers?**

Although its discussion of the issue was relatively limited, the Ōhira reports gave some attention to the social and economic roles women were playing and would play—or ought to play—in the future. These were discussed in passing in the volume on economic management in an “age of culture” and more directly in the report on “enriching the foundation of family.”<sup>48</sup> The authors remained very much in the grip of a traditional modernity defined by breadwinning men and home-managing women, even as they indicated their awareness of challenges to these roles and the world view that sustained them and some need to widen the range of life choices available to women.

In its report on families, the Ōhira group in 1980 already identified what remain 35 years later as two of the most urgent related issues understood to be facing Japanese society: an aging population and a declining birth rate. But the focus was less on the need for elder care, an issue that would emerge to prominence later, and more on offering women paths to fulfillment in their middle and older ages, as they were living longer and now had many decades post childrearing, which needed to be filled with either hobbies or work (there is no discussion of providing fulfillment to men post-retirement). The report also identified a need for policies to support women who did choose careers in the working world from a younger age, such as better childcare, but the framing assumption was that for the most part, men would earn a living and women would manage the home.

The report envisioned a rich cultural life for such women in the years after the

47 首相官邸「経済の好循環実現に向けた政労使会議」2015年4月2日 ([http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/97\\_abe/actions/201504/02seiroushi.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/97_abe/actions/201504/02seiroushi.html))。2015年8月24日アクセス。

48 大平政策研究会『大平総理の政策研究会報告書3巻 家庭基盤の充実』（大蔵省印刷局、1980年）。

heaviest burden of childrearing had passed. While mentioning that about half of all women were working outside the home, it noted that women must be enabled to pursue a wide range of activities: 「文化、スポーツ、趣味、お稽古ごと、仕事、ボランティア活動」. At a later point, in a section on 「婦人の生きがいと生活設計」 the report listed four possible life paths for women, one of which was to work outside the home, whether part time or full time. The authors did mention the importance of giving women the ability to make use of their education, ability, and experience in the workplace.<sup>49</sup> But the strong force of a male breadwinner ideology was evident throughout, as was awareness there were exceptions or challenges to such a vision. A bit later in the report, the authors noted that an established division of labor in which women work in subsidiary roles while men are the “breadwinners” was the guiding principle of the gendered division of labor in the families of industrial societies. But however much this was generally appropriate, there were exceptional cases, whether stemming from economic need or from women’s own ambitions. Society should offer chance and room for such women to work on equal footing if they wish. This meant offering not only part time work but equal treatment for those who did want to work on equal basis.<sup>50</sup>

Toward the end of this volume, a brief section addressed in some detail (although only for women) the related matter of what has come to be called “work-life balance.” Titled 「有職夫人の仕事と家庭生活への支援」 it noted an 「家庭のほかに専門的な仕事と職業をもつ有職夫人が増大している」. A marked shift had taken place as fewer and fewer women worked as “family labor” in agriculture, small commercial operations, or home-based production, and more worked outside the home for wages. In this context, and gently anticipating the more recent strategic emphasis on women as a resource for the national economy, the report asserted the importance of opening pathways for women to make use of their high abilities in various realms of economic life so as to increase the quality of Japanese 「人的資源」. Specific measures put on the agenda of state or corporate policy were longer maternity leaves, childbirth leaves, child care facilities, shorter working hours, two day weekends, more annual and summer vacations, and commercial services to cover housework. The report acknowledged 「日本においても、多くの女性が、自分の可能性を社会的に開花させようとして、結局挫折してきたことは事実であろう。しかし、いまや女性も、家庭基盤充実のための諸施策の展開によって、その才能を生かし、社会の中で活動する大きな可能性を手に入れようとしているのである」.<sup>51</sup>

49 大平政策研究会 『大平総理の政策研究会報告書 3 巻 家庭基盤の充実』 92 頁、182 頁。

50 大平政策研究会 『大平総理の政策研究会報告書 3 巻 家庭基盤の充実』 133～134 頁。

The volume on economic management touched only lightly on the question of women in economic life, but where it did, it echoed this tentative emphasis on giving women a somewhat greater role outside the home or family business in a way that pointed directly to the later emergence of a varied “portfolio” of non-regular jobs for both men and especially for women. In the future, this volume asserted, it will be necessary to both retain a core of long term employees and gain greater flexibility in adjusting employment to a changing business climate. To this end, it will be necessary for companies to systematically offer specialized jobs for medium and short term assignments. Such an approach would enhance corporate flexibility, reduce competition for top posts (by limiting the number of long term employees), and offer opportunities for good jobs for women. Similarly, an expansion of part-time work was welcomed as a way to offer positions to women and older workers. This would offer women and the elderly time to pursue a “cultural” life, and these jobs would not threaten the posts of the core of long term employees, and offering them opportunities for cultural life<sup>52</sup>.

The configuration of family life that runs throughout the various volumes of the study group is one where some women might find fulfilment some of the time by working outside the home, but where their basic commitment lay within the home. This vision was clearly connected to the study group’s underlying assumption of a Japanese cultural particularity suited to face common problems of the advanced industrial world in a superior fashion. One key passage stated:

欧米先進工業国と比較した場合日本の犯罪発生率や離婚率のきわだった低さ、……〔これは〕日本の家庭ならびに家庭基盤が、あのような急激な社会変動の衝撃にもかかわらず自立自助と相互扶助とにより、変化への対応と相対的安定ならびに健康の維持に成功してきていることを示すものである

This passage discussed “family” with no specific reference to women or men, but the only way to read it is in gendered terms. It echoes the gauzy nostalgia for a lost world where housewives poured their souls into knitting and sewing for the family, so vividly articulated in the passage from “Japan’s Suicide” cited above. For the men who wrote these documents, it was the special role of women to anchor the families that gave Japan its stability in the face of rapid social change. The Ōhira report went on to note that Japan was blessed with a high proportion of families where grandparents lived together with children and grandchildren, and more generally a warm network

51 大平政策研究会『大平総理の政策研究会報告書 3 卷 家庭基盤の充実』184～186 頁。

52 大平政策研究会編『大平総理の政策研究会報告書 7 卷 文化の時代の経営運営』128～130 頁。

of human relations grounded in family life. The goal of policy should be to support the foundation of such families. Even as they noted that “today, with the rise in married women who pursue careers (職業), a desire for husbands and wives to share [family] roles is evident,” the authors introduced a 1979 survey that showed the majority of people in Japan expected husbands to be primary breadwinners and wives to raise children, monitor their education, and shoulder the burden of elder care.<sup>53</sup>

I have introduced the Ōhira study group’s discussion of women and the family at some length because over the following thirty-five years, in Japan more than in many countries, the tension embedded in the report remains deeply entrenched; it sets the traditionally gendered modern family as the “guiding principle” of industrial society against a newer vision of women as social actors on a par with men in their opportunities and accomplishments. To be sure, in 1985 the government adopted an Equal Employment Opportunity Law, revised and strengthened in 1997, and in 1999, it promulgated a Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society. This set forth the ambitious goal of realizing a “gender equal society in which men and women respect each other’s human rights and share responsibilities, and every citizen is able to fully display their individuality and ability regardless of gender.”<sup>54</sup> Today, the Abe administration proclaims the goal of building a “society where women can shine (女性が輝く社会)” and it promotes in rhetoric—including numerical targets—the goal of a sharp increase in the numbers of women taking on leadership roles in economic and political life.

But the legal reforms have been contested and tentative at every step. Echoing the spirit of the Ōhira report and a longer heritage of gender ideology, support for a more “traditional” gendering of society remains powerful. One finds evidence of this in the response to various efforts to enable women to participate more fully and on their own terms in social and economic life. Among the most notable examples is the refusal of successive LDP (or DPJ) administrations to pursue legal reforms that would allow women to keep their original family name upon marriage, even after the Justice Ministry’s Legal System Advisory Council (*Hōsei Shingikai*) went on record in favor of this reform in 1996. This reform would not only carry practical and symbolic weight by allowing women to build careers with a continuous identity from before marriage and giving recognition to women’s identity independent of a husband’s family. It also would have important practical implications for couples who do not formally marry in order to maintain separate names, and whose children are therefore consid-

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53 大平政策研究会『大平総理の政策研究会報告書3巻 家庭基盤の充実』34～35頁、84頁。

54 From preamble to the law, official translation, accessed at [http://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/about\\_danjo/lbp/index.html](http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/lbp/index.html).

ered illegitimate.

Resistance to this reform is grounded in the continuing ideological power of the view found in the Ōhira report that the “family and its foundation”—implicitly a foundation sustained by women in domestic roles—was a source of social stability and cultural identity. Thus, when the Legal Advisory Council issued its report called for legalization of separate names in 1996, one of the leading politicians in the LDP, Murakami Masakuni (dubbed the “don of the House of Councillors”) warned “this will weaken family ties (*kizuna*) and sow seeds of family dissolution.”<sup>55</sup> Over the years, such sentiments have remained deeply rooted in the LDP, whose Prime Ministers have repeatedly invoked the divide in public opinion on the merits of the reform as reason to move cautiously or not at all. Indeed, public opinion polls on this issue have generally shown at most an even split on the issue, or else a minority in favor.<sup>56</sup>

In other realms of policy, one finds a more mixed picture, although one that ultimately reveals the enduring power of the expectation that women anchor the home front. Osawa Mari’s important work on Japanese social security programs makes this complexity clear.<sup>57</sup> She shows that on the one hand, the government has in its rhetoric moved away from the concept of a “Japanese style welfare society” that was the ruling ideal through the 1980s. Prime Minister Miyazawa in the 1990s put forth a goal of social fairness alongside efficiency in speaking of social programs, and he lamented the absence of fathers as a distorting factor in family life. Prime Minister Hashimoto affirmed a commitment to 「男女共同参画社会の実現」 in the late 1990s. The LDP-Socialist coalition government in 1994 also called for a shift in welfare policies from support of male-headed families toward support of individuals, although few such policies were implemented immediately. But the pioneering long-term care insurance program, written into law in 1997 and implemented from 2000, did take an important step away from elder-care as the private work of women in the family when it provided state-funded services to those who qualified for care. One can read the significance of this step against the grain of comments such as that of the LDP politician, Kamei Shizuka, who complained that this system would destroy 「子が親を介護するという美風」.

Moving from policies for elders to those for youths, one sees with astonishing

55 Statement on floor of House of Councillors, January 25, 1996. Accessed via [kokkai.ndl.go.jp](http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp).

56 For Ministry of Justice list of polls generally running against the reform (though with increasing acceptance over time), see [www.moj.go.jp/MINJI/minji36-05.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/MINJI/minji36-05.html).

法務省 HP 「選択的夫婦別氏制度に関する世論調査結果（総数比較）」 ([www.moj.go.jp/MINJI/minji36-05.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/MINJI/minji36-05.html))。2015年8月24日アクセス。

57 この段落は大沢真理『現代日本の生活保障システム』（岩波書店、2007年）、72～88頁の記述に基づく。

clarity the persistence of the assumption that women's primary role was in the home in the way the government has defined the category of young workers known as *furitā*. This term is not a legal status, and has only recently and inconsistently been treated by the state as a category of employment. It began as a colloquial term that came into common use in the mid-1980s, originally with a positive connotation of care-free youth pursuing non-mainstream careers. The famous and notorious Recruit Corporation gave the term a boost as the centerpiece of a marketing campaign in 1987. But in the 1990s and after, it took on the relatively negative connotation of young people unable to get a footing on a strong career track, both in state policy and to some large extent in the wider culture.

In 1991 the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare offered what appears to be the first official definition of the term in its annual White Paper on labor: 「「アルバイト」か「パート」と呼ばれている雇用者で、男子では継続就業年数5年未満、女子では未婚の者」<sup>58</sup> The Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2003 for the first time began to count the number of *furitā* in its 「労働力調査」. It adopted a slightly revised definition of 「15～34歳の男性又は未婚の女性（学生を除く）で、パート・アルバイトして働く者又はこれを希望する者」<sup>59</sup>. In this bureaucratic mind's eye, when a woman married she was no longer a *furitā* even if she continued on the same job. Rather, insofar as she now had a husband expected to be the breadwinner, her official identity shifted from that of an individual in a non-regular category of employment to that of a dependent woman.

In practice the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has been more flexible than this definition implies. In a 2011 report, the Ministry described *furitā* as “divided into three categories: the 「モラトリアム型」 biding their time until they find an occupation they want to pursue; the 「やむを得ず型」 who while aiming for regular employment cannot get such work; and the 「夢追求型」 who have a clear future goal but are now working just to get by<sup>60</sup>.” In 2012 the Ministry established a network of over 200 “employment assistance” centers (就労支援センター) at public employment agencies throughout Japan. Their mission was to help young working people in non-regular jobs, in particular those considered *furitā*, to find regular jobs with long-term stability<sup>61</sup>. The goal was to cut the number of *furitā* from its 2012 level of almost 1.8 million to 1.2

58 労働省政策調査部『図説 労働白書 平成3年度版』至誠堂、1991年、88頁。

59 厚生労働省「若者雇用関連データ」2011年 (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/2010/01/tp0127-2/12.html>)。2015年6月24日アクセス。「15～34歳の男性又は未婚の女性（学生を除く）で、パート・アルバイトして働く者又はこれを希望する者」。

60 厚生労働省「若者雇用関連データ」2011年 (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/2010/01/tp0127-2/12.html>)。2015年6月24日アクセス。

million by 2020. The Ministry defines those eligible for the program as “*furitā* and such (フリーター等)”, thus not strictly following the official definition. It makes not only those strictly defined as *furitā*, but also married women, and all men and women in non-regular jobs up to the age of 45, eligible for assistance.<sup>62</sup> But the great majority of those who use the program are indeed men.

Apart from the matter of gender bias in the official definition, this initiative is problematic for imposing a normative understanding of proper adulthood that stigmatizes the pursuit of a *furitā* lifestyle; for some significant portion of the population *furitā* was a positive choice rather than a sign of failure to find a proper place in society. Still, given that many younger adults unable to find stable employment do indicate a desire to do so, launching this program made sense. Despite the formal opening of this job assistance program to married women, the overall context of the history of the notion of *furitā* reveals the enduring power of a vision of women as guardians of the family whose default mode was of employment as a supplementary activity.

The discussion thus far has focused mainly on the ideology and policies of politicians and bureaucrats, with a glance at divided sentiment among the wider public in polls on the question of women maintaining their family names at marriage. Government polling conducted at three year intervals by the cabinet’s Gender Equality Bureau from 1992 through 2012 suggests that the notably halting moves of bureaucratic and political elites toward gender equality over these decades have not been greatly out of step with popular wishes, even among women. To be sure, the proportion of all men and women (among roughly 3000 to 4000 respondents in each poll) who believe women should continue their careers through marriage and childrearing years and beyond has risen steadily from only 23 percent in 1992 to 48 percent in 2012, with hardly less than a two percent difference in views of men and women in 2012. But when asked whether they supported the belief that “men should work outside the home and women should protect the family,” the 3033 respondents in 2012 reversed a 17 year trend moving against that position. Those who supported this venerable vision of women as good wives and wise mothers had fallen from 60 percent of all in 1992 to 41 percent in 2009. Three years later the traditionalists had jumped back to a majority of 52 percent. The proportion of women who upheld this view (48 percent) was not much smaller than the proportion of men (55 percent).<sup>63</sup> It is hard to know what to make of these contradictory recent trends (and a survey in 2014 revealed a swing

61 厚生労働省「フリーターへの就職支援拠点を全国約200カ所に設置します」2012年4月9日 (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/2r98520000027f6u.html>)。2015年6月24日アクセス。

62 Personal communication from Iokibe Chinami, Ministry of Health, Labor, Welfare, July 10, 2015.

back toward support for women's work outside the home, albeit still less than in 2009).<sup>64</sup> The long term picture appears to be one of a slow and inconsistent increase in those affirming wider social and economic roles for women, an increase that has not reached a tipping point that might be considered a clear mandate for change.

It is also, finally, noteworthy that the recent push for women's empowerment put forth by the Abe administration is in important ways a step backward from the logic of the Ōhira report. The members of the Ōhira study group were clearly proud of Japan's cultural heritage understood to have enabled or framed the nation's modernizing achievements. But they envisioned the future as an era of "culture" in which self-cultivation and fulfilling individual lives were affirmed more as ends in themselves than as means to an end of national power. The goal of promoting 「社会に新たな活力を与える婦人の進出」 was justified not mainly as a means to strengthen the nation's economy but as a way to offer "fulfilling lives for women (婦人の生きがい)".<sup>65</sup>

Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, in contrast, has explicitly boasted that he promotes women's advancement as an economic strategy for the nation, rather than a socially desirable step for women themselves, or a goal grounded in ideals of equity and justice. He wrote in 2014—in the third person voice typical of politicians in many lands—that:

保守政治家の安倍晋三が女性が輝く社会というと違和感を持つ方がいらっしゃるかもしれませんが、従来のように社会政策としてではなく、私は経済政策の重要な柱の一つとして位置づけています。これまで人材資源として十分に活かされていなかった女性の皆さんは、言ってみれば“宝の山”です。……能力ある女性の皆さんに、どんどん日本を引っ張ってってもらいたいと思います。<sup>66</sup>

It is not hard to hear echoes of prewar and wartime calls for people to “serve the nation” (お国のために), in this call for women to be fully exploited as human resources to build a strong national economy.

## Conclusion

One thing “lost” in the past 20 years has been a mainstream conservative consensus

63 「男女共同参画社会に関する世論調査」2012年 (<http://www.gender.go.jp/research/yoron>)。2015年6月24日アクセス。

64 「女性の活躍推進に関する世論調査」2014年8月 (<http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h26/h26-jo-seikatsuyaku/index.html>)。2015年7月12日アクセス。

65 大平政策研究会『大平総理の政策研究会報告書3巻 家庭基盤の充実』14～15頁。

66 安倍晋三「アベノミクス第二章起動宣言」『文藝春秋』2014年9月号、104頁。

as to what constitutes a good society and how it is to be sustained or achieved. As encapsulated in the Ōhira report, and with an explicit global framing, after several decades of strong economic growth that consensus focused on the virtues of Japan’s mode of “managed competition.” It also rested on a gendered structure of society where women maintained the family, with exceptions allowed for ambitious women to advance into the man’s world of professional achievement. These views were never unanimous of course, but the main counter-narratives in public and policy discourse as well as in the academic world, both in Japan and in the Anglophone community of Japanese studies, came from the left or “progressive” camp. In the case of gender, the challenge came from feminists who sought gender equality in principle as a social value and human right, not as a means to national economic power. In studies of labor history or industrial relations this counter-narrative took the form of critiques of the Japanese model which stressed its costs. But through the 1980s and into the early 1990s, those who put forth such critiques found themselves on the defensive in the face of the widespread evidence of its success, and they to some extent modified their views.<sup>67</sup>

Work in Japanese studies today, which focuses on the present moment or on contemporary and modern history, is situated in a more complicated intellectual environment than in the past. Over the past two decades, the main axis of opposition in public debate on the question of sustaining or restoring a good society has come to set defenders of a “traditional” modernity against neo-liberal reformers, but a secondary axis of critique has continued, albeit with lower profile than before. It draws on the discourse of a global precariat and rising inequality. In studies of Japan it has focused on and lamented the exclusions inherent in the traditional modern system, arguing they have only been made worse in recent years.<sup>68</sup>

The global attention given Thomas Picketty’s work on inequality has opened new space for such debate. At the same time, insofar as Picketty describes Japan—like most of Europe, the US and the UK—as having indeed experienced a heyday of relative equality over the forty or so years after World War II, he offers grounds to see

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67 Gordon, *Wages of Affluence* discussed the changes in the perspectives of scholars in Japan writing from a left or critical perspective as they sought to address the apparent success of the Japanese model. It was written in the early years after the economic bubble burst, with awareness that the ground was shifting, but it did not successfully reorient its own argument to take account of the emerging critique from the neo-liberal camp.

68 Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), Tachibanaki Toshiaki, *Nihon no keizai kakusa* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), and other works.

the Ōhira report as the logical product of a moment when optimism seemed justified. With hindsight it is easy to dismiss its authors as shortsighted in their view of the future, and dismiss their essentialist and static understanding of Japan's own culture as reductive in the extreme. But these reports remain worthy of attention for the way they put greatest emphasis on enhancing the quality of individual lives or the vibrancy of local communities.