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## Description

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Recently, events such as â??marriage activity dinner partiesâ?• have been held frequently across the country. In particular, regional cities are seeing a noticeable outflow of young women, which is analyzed as one of the causes of declining birth rates and population decrease. As in many other places, Uenohara City in Yamanashi Prefectureâ??where the Monozukuri Juku (Makersâ?? School) is locatedâ??also hosts similar matchmaking events.

At present, the university enrollment rate is about 60% for both men and women, with little difference between the sexes. In the past, the rate of women going to junior colleges was high, but recently enrollment in junior colleges has fallen, and entering four-year universities has become the mainstream path.

Personally, I believe that if someone is considering having children in the future, it is desirable to give birth as young as possible, in order to carry out pregnancy and childcare in good health and without excessive strain. If one can plan their studies and career backwards from the expected time of childbirth, they should be able to make better choices. Moreover, creating a system that allows for

continuing oneâ??s studies after childbirth without undue burden is also important.

Of course, advances in medicine have made late-age childbirth possible, but childcare is also a matter of physical stamina. It seems clear that giving birth and raising children at a younger age tends to reduce both the physical and mental burden.

A slight digression here: there are people who advocate for the â??right not to have childrenâ?• or the â??freedom not to give birth.â?• But if oneâ??s own parents had exercised that right or freedom, they themselves would not be here today. It is precisely because that right was not exercised that we were born and can now speak of that freedom.

Unwanted pregnancies or dangerous health conditions exist, so I am not saying everyone must give birth. But I do feel some discomfort when the â??right not to give birthâ?• is excessively and loudly proclaimed.

Letâ??s return to the main topic.

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The recent matchmaking events being organized in Uenohara City appear to target people in their 30s.

According to those involved in the matchmaking business, in the so-called â??marriage marketâ?• (I feel resistance to this term), the â??market valueâ?• of women in their 30s (I also dislike this expression) tends to decline. This is because, for men who want children, older age is seen as a disadvantage.

From the perspective of gender activism, such talk may be considered â??outrageous.â?• Yet, the biological aspects of sex and instinctive feelings cannot be completely ignored.

I donâ??t know the exact intention behind targeting women in their 30s for these events, but there must be some purpose. I am not particularly interested, so I simply watch quietly.

What I want to emphasize instead are measures to prevent the outflow of young women in their teens and twenties.

As mentioned earlier, now about 60% of women go on to university. But for young people graduating from university with dreams and hopes, there are very few attractive jobs in rural areas. Once they go to university in a big city, even if they love their hometown, they find it difficult to see a reason to return. Many end up working, marrying, and building their lives in the city.

As a result, rural areas are left with few children and mostly elderly people.

Many municipalities tend to say, â??We donâ??t have the budget,â?• but are they truly aware of the urgency? They should understand the reality, yet they seem unable to act.

If I were running a municipality, I would prioritize support for young entrepreneurs, attracting high-tech companies, and bold investments in education, rather than focusing primarily on matchmaking events or welfare projects.

As the Monozukuri Juku, our contribution lies in supporting young entrepreneurs. Here, one can receive practical training in production technology and craftsmanship.

By starting businesses locally and building a livelihood base, young people can also plan their future lives through effort. Living near oneâ??s parents makes childcare support easier, and they can apply the knowledge and experiences gained at university in their work. The practical skills not learned at university can be thoroughly learned here at the Monozukuri Juku, where professional mentors provide solid guidance.

Another important point is that adults themselves should actively start businesses in the fields of production and technology. Adults should challenge themselves first, showing their determination to young people. That is the best form of education. Today, there is both remote work and an environment where one can dedicate themselves to production in peace.

It is not challenging that is the riskâ??rather, not challenging is the greatest risk of all.

As I have often said, the Monozukuri Juku operates under a policy of not receiving subsidies or grants, and not taking on government contractsâ??in other words, we do not accept public funds. All revenue goes into maintaining and reinvesting in our facilities. We do collect a small monthly tuition fee, since calling it â??volunteer workâ?• might seem hypocritical, but our aim is not financial wealth.

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Iâ??m not telling you to come to us, but letâ??s take on these challenges together.

As a side note, I personally believe the population of Uenohara City will continue to decline. Even if the population decreases, the area of the city does not shrink, so the administration cannot easily be downsized. Will city employees end up rushing around north, south, east, and west with fewer staff? Or will Uenohara City eventually disappear altogether?

Japan as a whole will also see its population decline. With fewer people, fewer goods will be produced, deliveries will be delayed, thefts may increase. Unless we make use of technologies such as AI, robotics, quantum computing, and autonomous driving, we may suddenly find ourselves surrounded by foreign labor and foreign capital.

We should prepare for that future with the same seriousness as we prepare for earthquakes.

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