

- As seen till now, the desire and capacity in the elderly to start work is increasing and the idea of the elderly being "supported" is now far from reality. However, the fixed image that "the elderly are supported" still remains and so the situation arises where the energy or ability of the elderly to start work or to participate in society is not used sufficiently.
- If we turn our eyes to the young generation, there are a lot of people who have problems in work and life. It is necessary to achieve a society in which both this type of elderly people and those of the young generation can work feeling that what they are doing has worth and is rewarding, and, as regards family life and life in their locality, too, that they can select various ways of life according to their own stage in life. The most important point in this regard is the achievement of harmony between work and life, regardless of age.
- It is important not only that people can work during their youth feeling that what they are doing has worth and is rewarding, but that they can also live the kind of life they want to live in regard to their family and locality. In their elderly years, they can then use their desire and ability to start work or participate in the society, meaning that "Harmony of work and life as understood in the life of an individual" is important.
- In the charter, a society that achieved the harmony of work and life is defined as "a society in which all the citizens work, feeling that what they are doing has worth and is rewarding along with achieving the responsibility of work, and even as regards to family and social life etc., they can choose and realize various life styles according to each stage in life such as the child-nurturing period and life in middle age and advanced age". Concretely, that is to say, a society in which economic independence is possible by working, time can be secured for a healthy and good life, and a society in which they can select from various working styles and life styles. To achieve such a society, the role of the main parties' concerned (enterprises and workers, citizens, the country and local public bodies) is set out. As regards the action agenda, the approach by enterprises, workers and citizens and the policy of measures by the country and local public bodies is also set out.

2 Harmony of Work and Life regardless of Age

1 Charter and Action Agenda

- On December 18, 2007, the "Harmony (work-life balance) Charter of Work and Life" (hereafter, referred to as the Charter) and "Action agenda for the promotion of harmony of work and life" (hereafter, referred to as the Action Agenda) were planned in "a top conference held between the government and the citizens on harmony of work and life" by the representatives of related cabinet ministers, of the economic world, of the labour world, and local public bodies.
- Along with declining birthrate and growing population of elderly people, the labour force is decreasing and it is forecast that in the future it will decrease further. However, the percentage of elderly people in their late 60s who desire to work but are not at work is 21.0 percent for men and 18.3 percent for women, showing that there are still lots of people who desire to work but are not at work. Since it is thought that securing a labour force will be more difficult in the future, the situation will be even more difficult when the nurturing generation and the generation in their prime of their working life find it difficult to spare time for anything other than work. It is necessary to achieve a "harmony of work and life regardless of age" in order to improve the situation where elderly people who have a desire to work are not able to work and the young working generation has no time for anything other than

work.

- In spite of the fact that the reality of elderly people is different from the image of elderly people being "supported by others", the fixed conception of "elderly people = supported by others" has not changed. This has become a bottleneck to utilizing elderly people's manpower. In the future we should not have such fixed conceptions, and it is crucially important to reform citizen's awareness based on the realities in order to utilize elderly people's desire to work and to expand their activities into various areas of society.
- It is necessary to change the preconception that there is nobody among elderly people with the ability or physical strength to work. Instead of viewing elderly people uniformly, it is necessary to examine and prepare a flexible working style regarding the form of employment, working days and hours according to diversified needs given individuals' physical strength, motivation and desire. Moreover, in addition to promoting activities for elderly people like Hello Work for re-finding employment or promoting Silver Talent Centers, etc., it is also necessary to positively support the spread of various working styles for enterprises and workers, and spread self-development, ability development, etc.

3 Harmony of Work and Life in an Individual's Life Span

- Since people socialize mainly with their colleagues, even if the elderly would like to participate in the local activities after retirement, they cannot do so, and so even if they have interest, the situation is that they cannot actually do so. Moreover, households with only elderly people are increasing, so cases where they die unnoticed (isolation death) have become a social problem. One of the causes of it, particularly in cities, is that after their retirement from the office, elderly people do not participate in local activities, and as they have no connection with local people, they often get isolated. The background behind the fact that ability development or self-development is not advancing is that an environment where an individual can easily carry out ability development or self-development is not in place. And many people say that the problems of self-development are that they have no time because they are busy, the cost of these activities is too much, they cannot take a vacation from work, or that they cannot leave the office early, etc. Moreover, the provisions for them to spend the old age healthily are not sufficient.
- Practically, it cannot be said that enough efforts are undertaken for ability development and self-development for work. The background for that is that there is no time for self-development because they are busy, the costs are too much, or it does not fit in with the business schedule etc. Because of that, the elderly cannot think about improving the quality of life, for example, by investing in their own future. Moreover, as a provision for healthy and long life, health care is necessary during one's youth too, but the significance of this is not sufficiently recognized and it does not lead to practice. There is too much focus on "work" when people are young to think about their ability development or participating in local activities, and, so the preparation for making it possible to have the desired work during the old age and the harmony of work and life is not sufficient.
- To have a healthy and independent old age, it is important to think about the "harmony of work and life" over the entire span of one's life from youth to old age. While they are working, the tendency is to focus more on their work, but one should make a plan from youth with old age in view, and it is important to achieve a harmony of work and life that makes it possible to pursue self development and good health. A system should be introduced whereby people can take vacations upon reaching a certain age before retirement to think about their plan for life during the old age and enterprises should also support this by trying to make an environment in the office that makes it easier to use that sort of system. It can be expected that achieving participation by healthy elderly people in local activities according to their motivation and abilities will not only make it possible for them to spend their old age feeling that what they are doing has worth, but also to construct the

solidarity of mutual support, such as “mutual support among the elderly”, whereby healthy elderly people give support to the increasing number of those who need support.

4 In Conclusion

- The "baby boom generation" has reached retirement. If the "baby boom generation" simultaneously reaches retirement and withdraws itself completely from the labour market then there will be a rapid decrease in the labour force and the load on the young generation will increase, making too much work. The environment required to achieve "harmony of work and life between generations" will be more needed than before to utilize the willingness of the baby boom generation with motivation and skills to work. The "baby boom generation" is a symbol of the popularization of higher education, the change to salaried work (businessman), and urbanization. This baby boom generation will move the center of their life from the office to the locality upon retirement. It is a good opportunity for those people who have been the main driving force behind many changes in the society as part of this “baby boom generation” to re-consider how the balance of work and life should be and to seek a wide range of possibilities in their life of old age. We need to pay attention to how the "baby boom generation" which was always the pioneer of a new lifestyle, achieves the harmony of work and life in old age.