

Fukushima Shimin Think Tank **(Fukushima City, Fukushima Prefecture)**

(1) Project operator: Fukushima Shimin Think Tank (Voluntary organization)

[Establishment] March 2012

[Members] As a newly established organization, its immediate task is to increase members. At time of establishment on March 1, there are about 10 members (applicants), including people living in Fukushima-city and its suburbs, self-employed workers, NPO staff, students, and university teachers, over a wide range of age from 20's to 60's.

[Objectives] Just looking at the national government and agencies' responses after the Great East Japan Earthquake, we have to say that they are "far from satisfying to the affected people and the general public." The group aims to establish a social system in which people learn for themselves, actively speak up to the governments, and make their voices reflected in political measures, by eliminating various negative effects produced through globalization and neoliberal policies. In specific, it aims to produce young council members through its own activities and make a huge ground swell in Fukushima and expand nationwide.

In its charter, the group set up two objectives. One is to "engage people in policymaking from the viewpoint of local administration and in their capacity as citizens", and another is to "produce council members who have determination and ability to realize the first objective."

[Background] Key persons involved in the establishment are mostly self-employed workers, who have been also participating in political activities of the Liberal Party and Democratic Party of Japan. Underlying our activities is this aspiration to "reform the politics of this country and our community." They have been working to practically solve the issues the communities face by using their political network and in the field of Fukushima. In the course of these activities, they came to see the truth of "social economic system" and "legal system" that have been established by the party governments and through close relationship between businesses and governments/public administrations. Consequently, these original members have been gradually shifting their core activity from political one to social contribution through town building. However, over time, they confronted the reality that "they need to meet face-to-face with governments and public administrations" to make the significance of their activities known widely in a society. As a result, this think tank was established for practical actions.

(2) Specific actions and past achievements

The group has no track record yet, since it's relatively new. However, it plans to set up working groups for each of the following six areas and have workshops and make policy proposals.

Its immediate task is to "create opportunities to critically learn and discuss various social issues from the academic viewpoints. At present, we started to read "Gakumon no susume (Encouragement for Education)" by Yukichi Fukuzawa in turns and discuss the contents critically.

- (1) Economy and industry (Economic growth without waste and formation of a resource recycling society/establishment of a highly effective economic system in which money circulates within a community/formation of a system in which money flows in from outside)
- (2) Culture and education (Create favorable environments for child-rearing/Use society's eyes and power in education)
- (3) Welfare and nursing (A happy society brings post-retirement years without worries)
- (4) Study of public projects and policy effectiveness (Create living rather than buildings/town development along the line of natural circulation/formation of a compact city)
- (5) Assembly reform (Top priority to council members is policymaking/the next thing is supervising administration/abolition of legislators' privileges and increase authorities to grant)
- (6) Recovery support volunteers

(3) Future development and issues to deal with

First of all, we need to recruit members while publicizing our basic principles and activities. Damage by the Great East Japan Earthquake, lengthy life as evacuees, anxieties about health damages among residents in Fukushima Prefecture and surrounding areas, right hunting of decontamination business, social exclusion of the evacuees who are critical to the governments and policies... Amid mounting dissatisfaction and distrust with the governments and administrations, people started various civil activities mainly in the affected areas. These groups have a bit different characteristics from the "movement" as shown in the traditional social movement theory. Historically, a movement develops during a high-growth period and then calms down. It lies hidden in a form of "movement culture," and soon rises again as part of "new social movement." However, at this time, it seems that those who have never been involved in social activities stood up for the realization of their own "civil society."

Our group was naturally born in midst of such movement. It is important to conduct its social activities in partnership with other relevant activities. (Then, it could become a ground swell towards the unique "civil activity" that could save the "end of democracy" as U. Beck worried about)

We have just started, but in the future, we need to develop a process to accumulate achievements of each working group and get the society to recognize them. Quite a lot of our members are university teachers, former municipal government leaders, and political party members in the local district. In addition to classroom lectures, we need to work on practical projects in Fukushima City and municipalities where Fukushima residents live as evacuees and in the areas of disaster recovery, children's health and education, evacuees' welfare in the affected areas.