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Citizens' Nuclear Information Center

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WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO STOP NUCLEAR SHIPMENT!

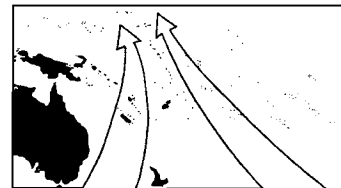
Health, Environment and Tourism in Danger



- The Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, a Tokyo-based nonprofit organization working for a nuclear-free world, hopes to draw your attention to the Japanese government's plans to transport nuclear fuel containing weapons-grade plutonium by sea from Europe to Japan.
- The Japanese government and utility companies are planning to use the plutonium-based fuel in the nuclear reactors. This would create greater risk of severe nuclear accidents.
- We feel very sorry that this move will put our friends in the Pacific under fear of nuclear contamination that could happen in case of accidents during the transport of the fuel.

- According to studies done by the experts, the transport containers to be used are not designed to withstand possible severe collisions or fire during shipping or at port.
- Our objective is to stop this shipment until adequate safety standards are established and legitimate concerns of nations along the transport route are addressed.
- Please help us. If we work together, we can stop the shipment. Once it takes place, more shipments with the same deadly cargo will follow. Please raise your voice and concern.

Possible Japan's MOX fuel Transport Route



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On 31st March 1999, CNIC put an opinion add in the "FIJI TIMES," the biggest local daily newspaper in Fiji. The opinion add alarms local public at shipments of radioactive material planned by the Japanese government, from Europe to Japan through pacific seas.

In January, CNIC visited Fiji to discuss the impending shipment of mixed plutonium-uranium oxide (MOX) fuel with Pacific nation states and NGOs there. (see the previous issue of NIT)

In this issue:

Japan's MOX Program	1-3
The Fourth Shipment of HLW	4
The CNIC's 5th Open Seminar on Asian Energy Situation	5-7
Current Situation in Japanese Nuclear Industries	8-9
TV Documentary on Dr. Takagi	9
Anti-Nuke Who's Who: Ikuo Kusaka	10
News Watch	11-12

Recent MOX Situation in Japan

A civic group in Kashiwazaki, Niigata Prefecture, submitted a petition to the city's election management committee on 12 Feb. seeking a local ordinance for the implementation of a plebiscite on Tokyo Electric Power Co.(TEPCO)'s plan to start use of mixed plutonium-uranium oxide (MOX) fuel at its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa 3 nuclear power plant. The group's petition was endorsed by the signatures of local residents, whose number far exceeded that required to initiate a direct petition for a plebiscite.

According to the "Group to Realize a Plebiscite," led by Fumiko Kuwayama and Shugo Hanyu, signatures collected in favor of the plebiscite amounted to 26,690 in Kashiwazaki. In the nearby village of Kariwa, a similar group collected signatures calling for a plebiscite from 1,354 people in the village.

TEPCO is rumored to have applied strong pressure on employees of affiliated local firms not to sign their names in support of a plebiscite. The economy of Kashiwazaki is heavily dependent on TEPCO. The fact that so many local residents participated in the signature campaign in the city demonstrates local strength of feeling against the MOX fuel project. If a plebiscite is carried out, it is most likely - judging from the number of signatures collected - that more than half of the electorate will express opposition to the MOX fuel project.

Meanwhile, the national government, ignoring the will of the residents expressed in the signatures, dispatched Yasuhiro Inagawa, chief of the Agency of Natural Resources and Energy, to the Niigata Prefectural gov-



Citizens oppose to the preliminary approval of TEPCO's plan.

ernment one day before the results of the signature campaign were released. Inagawa urged Niigata Governor. Ikuo Hirayama and Kashiwazaki Mayor Masazumi Nishikawa to cooperate with TEPCO's plan. According to media reports, Inagawa stressed the importance of the government's nuclear fuel recycling policy and the safety of MOX fuel. Also, Hiroshi Araki, president of TEPCO, visited the governments of Niigata, Kashiwazaki and Kariwa on 24 Feb. and submitted requests for preliminary approval of the firm's plan. In short, both Inagawa and Araki were attempting to influence decision-making by the local governments even before deliberations for the plebiscite proposals began in Kashiwazaki and Kariwa.

On 23rd March 1999, a special meeting was held by the Kashiwazaki municipal city assembly and the Kariwa village assembly addressing on the approval of the plebiscite proposal issue. Unfortunately, the proposal was contradicted. Upon receiving this decision, Kariwa village and Kashiwazaki city both announced that they have accepted the MOX plan, and on 31st March 1999, the last day of the fiscal year, Niigata's prefectural governor made a official announcement on accepting the plan.

In Kashiwazaki city, over 38% signatures were collected from eligible voters in favor of the plebiscite proposal and in Kariwa village close to one-third of the local voters signed. On accepting the MOX plan, it is clear that the will of the residents, was not reflected upon at all. The strong anti-MOX plan action in Kashiwazaki city and Kariwa village, where it has 7 nuclear power plants operating holds a great significance.

Schedule of Fuel Shipments Delays

In the previous edition of our newsletter, we informed our readers about the campaign to oppose the shipping of MOX fuel.

Currently, shipments of MOX fuel have been put on hold for three reasons. Firstly,

Fukui Prefecture has not yet responded to Kansai Electric Power Co.(KEPCO)'s request for preliminary approval of its MOX project. Secondly, the U.S. government has not given permission for the physical protection measures outlined in the proposed Japanese shipment plan. Finally, the authorization process for the containers to be used in the shipment has been halted by the data falsification scandal. There will be no shipment of MOX fuel unless all of these hurdles can be cleared. We'd like to take a closer look now into the problems surrounding the shipping containers.

The scandal involves data falsification for the neutron shield used in the spent nuclear fuel shipping containers. This fact came to light last October through information provided by an insider. In the process of investigation into the case, it was learned that falsified data were used in certain parts of the containers for use in the shipping of MOX fuel. The neutron shield used in the containers did not meet the standards specified in the documents submitted to the authorities. In other words, the containers were proven to be defective.

A total of four containers will be used for the transport of MOX fuel, three of which will be used by TEPCO and the remaining one by KEPCO. The falsified data concerned KEPCO container. In Japan, the user of a container for shipments of nuclear fuel must undergo a three-stage authorization process. Firstly, one has to obtain official approval of the container's design. Then it has to be officially proven that the container was manufactured in accordance with the design. And finally authorization for the shipment plan is granted immediately prior to implementation of the shipment.

The container to be used by KEPCO is called the EXCELLOX-4 type. This container is owned by PNTL, a subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuel Ltd. In line with the above-mentioned procedure, KEPCO has acted as an agent of PNTL in placing an application for official Japanese approval of the container design, and this permission was granted in March 1996. In November of that year, KEPCO submitted its application for approval of the container itself, but the process came to a halt when the data falsification scandal came to light.

Last December, KEPCO surrendered the approval of the container design and re-submitted to the authorities a modified design based on the falsified data. The changed design is now being examined by the Ministry of Trans-

port, whose position is that the design will be approved as long as it meets the standards required of a nuclear fuel container - a radiation level of 2 mSv or less per hour on the container's surface, and 0.1 mSv or less per hour at a position one meter away from the container. The ministry says that analysis made so far show that the design meets the standards. There is widespread criticism, however, toward KEPCO's move to redesign the container based on altered data. Effectively, the company is trying to fabricate a design to meet the specifications of a container that already exists.

KEPCO's action is also highly irregular in terms of normal procedure. The Ministry of Transport rules require a container user to submit an application for official approval of the container after the design is authorized and before the container is manufactured. Upon investigation we have discovered that this container has previously been used for the shipping of spent nuclear fuel. CNIC has confirmed through talks with the Ministry, that the container is a "second-hand" product. It was also learned that in addition to the EXCELLOX-4, the containers that TEPCO plans to use are also "second-hand" containers. Shipment of spent nuclear fuel from Japan to Britain and France under the current reprocessing contract was completed last year, making the spent fuel containers redundant and prompting power companies and transport firms to find ways to "re-use" them. In the process, TEPCO re-submitted the design of its containers for official approval by changing the purpose of their use. Since KEPCO's container in its original form was not suitable for the shipping of MOX fuel, the firm changed its design to add a neutron shield. The shield material was provided by the Genden Koji, and it was later made known that quality of the material did not meet the standards specified in the design.

Since the container has a history of use in the shipping of spent nuclear fuel, it is possible that the quality of the material in the container has suffered due to exposure to heat and neutron bombardment. It is questionable whether second-hand containers can meet the various standards (in terms of resistance to shock, fire and submersion) set by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Ministry of Transport has not yet given any judgement on this problem.

CNIC has sent an eight-point open letter to the Ministry of Transport concerning these serious questions. by Hideyuki Ban

The Fourth Shipment of HLW

On 25 February, the fourth shipment of High Level Waste from France began. The total number of vitrified waste to be shipped this time is as follows: twenty canisters for Kansai Electric Power Co., ten for Chubu Electric Power Co. and ten for Japan Atomic Power Co. The transport vessel is the "Pacific Swan" (4,500 ton) owned by PNTL, a subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuel Ltd. The transport route starts from Cherbourg in France moving to the Pacific through the Panama Canal and then to Mutsu-Ogawara port in Rokkashomura, Aomori Prefecture. The vessel is expected to arrive in Japan sometime in the middle of April.

Disclosure of information by the Japanese government regarding the shipment was once again inadequate. The name of the vessel and the ports of call were announced one or two days before the departure, and the transport route was revealed a day after departure. The arrival date will not be released until 2 to 3 weeks before the arrival. The shipment of dangerous radioactive cargo is still being planned and carried out without letting the public know any of the details.

Countries near the transport route have expressed their concerns. Since the first shipment of HLW by sea was initiated they have asked that such shipment be halted. The Japanese government and utility companies have not taken adequate measures to assure the safety of the material nor are procedures in place in case of an

emergency. They have also ignored the proposal from the en-route countries that an environmental assessment be conducted all along the sea route.

Regarding this shipment as well, a number of countries expressed their continuing concerns. South Pacific Forum released a public statement on 2nd March entitled the "Forum Concerned about Nuclear Waste Shipment". In the statement the Forum expressed its continuing concerns regarding both the shipment of HLW and the planned transport of MOX fuel through the Pacific. On 6 March Caribbean Community and Communal Market (CARICOM) expressed its "deep concerns" and asked the Japanese government to halt the waste shipment. The group denounced the shipment stating that, "we are strongly opposing the continuous shipment through our waters."

According to the Science and Technology Agency of Japan, as many as 3,500 vitrified waste canisters produced by reprocessing will be returned to Japan. This is a tremendous number. If 100 is shipped by sea once a year, it will require 35 years before the operation is completed. We also demand that the Japanese government halt these dangerous shipments and that all possible contingencies be addressed including those concerns raised by the relevant countries. We also demand that an environmental assessment be done.

by Masako Sawai

HELP WANTED

Citizens' Nuclear Information Center is seeking a full time staff member who is in charge of INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. Duties include editing Nuke Info Tokyo, fund raising and communications with NGOs abroad.

Fluency in both English and Japanese are required, and applicants should have an interest in environmental issues, preferably nuclear-related. Experience in working at NGO and good computer skills would be an advantage. Office is located in Higashi-nakano, Tokyo. Interested candidates, please contact, Hideyuki BAN, Mr., Co-director at CNIC.

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A Sustainable and Peaceful Energy Future in Asia

On 1st March, Citizens' Nuclear Information Center held its 35th Open Seminar, a Sustainable and Peaceful Energy Future in Asia. The Open Seminar was arranged after the first steering committee meeting of the "Sustainable and Peaceful Energy Network Asia (SPENA)," the aim of the Network is to promote a sustainable and peaceful energy policy by exchanging information and arranging co-research programs among countries in Asia. The Network was called by CNIC last year. The Open seminar was held to inform Japanese citizens about the current energy situation in Asia, and at the seminar, four researchers from different countries gave presentations on national energy policies from their own point of view.

by Mika Ohbayashi

Energy Problems Facing China

Shiqiu Zhang

China's economic growth rate remains high at about eight percent. Less than 30% of the entire population live in urban areas, and many rural areas still have no access to electricity. Energy consumption per capita in China is one eighth of that of the U.S. and quarter that of the European countries. China has few natural resources per capita, for example, only a half the world average in coal reserves, and one tenth in petroleum.

Industry accounts for 70% of the entire energy consumption and 80% of the coal consumption. Modern high-technology industry and coexists side by side with older technology, causing an energy usage characterized as "energy intensive, but with low energy efficiency." China uses 30 to 100% more energy to produce the main industrial products compared with developed countries. However, the low energy efficiency means that there is a high potential for energy conservation. It is said that there are potential savings of approximately 300 to 400 MTCE (million tons of coal equivalent), amounting to quarter to one third of total energy consumption.

Since the coal reserves are scattered



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widely around the country, much energy is used to transport the resource. The low quality of much of the coal and the use of unwashed coal has serious environmental effects. Ninety percent of the three main contributors to air pollution, soot, SO₂ and NO_x (oxides of sulphur and nitrogen) are emitted by coal burning. CO₂, which forms 82% of greenhouse gases, is emitted by energy usage.

For the next fifteen years, China will depend on coal for 70% of her energy supply. About half of the newly created coal will be used in electricity generation. On the other hand, renewable energy is an important energy source for rural and remote areas. About 47% of the entire energy consumption in those areas is from renewable energy sources. Renewable energy production will rise to 390 MTCE by 2010, with emphasis on wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and small-scale hydro power.

What is needed now is an integrated plan covering energy, the environment and the economy. The government is currently emphasizing clean coal technology. The World Bank has reported that damage caused by air pollution is equivalent to between three and eight percent of GDP per year. Freedom of information is also thought to be an important element. In 1997, the government decided to disclose air pollution data for the main cities every week. This has had the effect of increasing environmental awareness among the general public, and the media has also started to focus its attention on air pollution. Education and citizen participation are also thought to be very important elements.

Once concrete policy would be to be eliminate subsidies for coal. This is an appropriate policy for both the economy and the environment. Another policy option is to introduce penalties for pollution emissions. Decentralization of the political system is also thought to be an effective option. Renewable energy development should also be given a high priority.

Climate Change: The World and Taiwan

Gloria Kuang-Jung Hsu

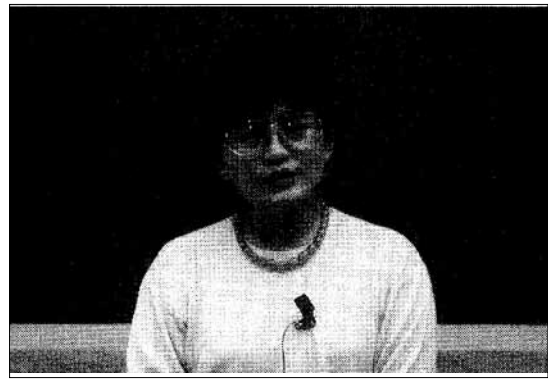
Climate change is becoming a serious problem. In the 1980s, economic damage caused by natural disasters was US\$55 billion worldwide. The damage has increased in the 1990s, and it is said that it will amount to US\$90 billion in the year 1998 alone. For example, floods caused by hurricanes have increased, and both the frequency and magnitude of changes in climate have been accelerating.

According to an IPCC estimate, the CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere was 280ppm before the industrial revolution, and is currently 360ppm. If this level increases to 450, 650 or 1000, it will take 40, 140 and 240 years respectively to return to the 1990 level.

Taiwan has annual emissions of 112.7 million tons of CO₂. These emissions increased on average 5.8% per year from 1991 to 1994. If this trend continues, CO₂ emissions will be more than 80% larger in the year 2000 than in 1990. 60% of the CO₂ was emitted by the industrial sector. One third of the entire energy consumption was accounted for by the steel, petroleum, cement and pulp industries.

Last May, the Taiwanese government held a National Energy Forum following the Kyoto Conference in December 1997. At this forum, the following four decisions were made: 1) increase energy efficiency by 1.2% per year, 2) eliminate the tax on imports and consumption of natural gas, and increase annual consumption from 3.3 million tons to 16 million tons by 2020, 3) investment in energy conservation and development of clean energy and 4) set the base year for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to the year 2000. Environmental organizations are insisting on the promotion of energy conservation and sustainable energy, changes in the industrial structural to reduce energy intensity, setting the base year for greenhouse gas emissions to an earlier year, phasing out of nuclear power, and the establishment of institutional measures for the freedom of information.

Taiwan and Japan are promoting nuclear power as a solution for global warming. However, the nuclear option is not economical. In the case of nuclear power plants built in Taiwan fourteen years ago, construction costs rose to become two to three times the initial budget estimate. The costs for the fourth nuclear power plant, which Japan is planning to export to Taiwan, may rise even more than that. De-



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 veloping countries incur huge debts in order to construct nuclear power plants. It takes those countries many years to repay the loans provided for the construction of such plants.

A Sustainable and Peaceful Energy Future in South Korea

Jong-dall Kim

Primary energy consumption in South Korea has been doubling every ten years. Expect for the year 1998, when consumption decreased more than six percent, the energy consumption has increased on average 10.3% every year since 1985. The average GDP growth rate from 1991 to 1996 was 7.4%. This is lower than the energy consumption growth rate, and therefore indicates a low energy efficiency. In 1995, CO₂ emitted per person was 2.25 TC (tons of carbon), and the growth rate was 8.9%. About 40% of the CO₂ emissions were from the industrial sector, and 20% each from the electricity, transport and residential/commercial sectors.

My research shows that Korea's consumption of primary energy will be 249.4 MTOE (million tons of oil equivalent) in 2010 if policies to recycle steel and paper, and to conserve energy through the use of compact fluorescent lights and industrial co-generation are introduced. This is 24% less than the expected 328.1 MTOE that would result from a failure to introduce such policies. An approximately 28% reduction in CO₂ emissions also results from this saving of energy.

The South Korean government invested a lot of money in the implementation of a Clean Light DSM Program two years ago. We may move to motor and other recycling sectors later on. However, the existing policy is designed for efficiency in the residential/commercial sector, not in the industrial and transport sectors,



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which are the main problems. Therefore, it is important to refocus the target of the energy efficiency programs in the future.

In 1996, the percentage of renewable energy sources in total primary energy consumption was only 0.71%. Approximately 90% of this 0.71% came from waste heat. Solar, wind or biomass energy have not yet been introduced to South Korea. Although the government plans to increase renewable energy production to 2% by 2006, this target is still very low.

It is difficult to achieve high proportions of renewable energy without changing the existing energy structure. It will be necessary, for instance, to phase out nuclear power. It is also important to develop a new partnership model between government, research institutions, specialist organizations and so on in order to change the focus of energy policy from the economy to the environment. Further, it will be necessary to build cooperative structures through which industrial restructuring and the change over from current conservative energy structures to the future sustainable energy systems can be implemented.

DSM Programs in Thailand

Chirapol Sintunawa

In 1991, an energy conservation program was launched in Thailand in order to promote the importance of energy saving and to increase public awareness concerning energy use. It costs one million dollars to construct an electric power plant. On the other hand, it costs only \$200,000 for an advertisement campaign.

There are three ways to save energy. Firstly, reduce losses in energy use. Secondly, alter consumption patterns. Thirdly, use technology

that costs less and has a better energy efficiency.

An example of the loss of energy is that about 10% of electricity is lost while transporting the electricity from a remote generating station to an urban area. If electricity can be produced by a small power plant where demand exists, energy losses of this nature can be avoided.

People often leave lights and TVs on, and cool or heat rooms more than necessary. In Thailand, we launched an advertisement campaign called "1/2 Campaign" in order to change consumption patterns. This promotes the reduction of energy and natural resource consumption without reducing personal happiness and quality of life.

ENCON, established in 1992 under the energy conservation law, pays for this campaign. ENCON also has a program which advises large-scale energy consumers to establish an energy coordinator and set goals and plans for energy conservation. ENCON funds come mainly from a small percentage of petroleum tax. This tax is also used for environmental conservation and water conservation.

Although savings of up to 30% of energy are possible through the advertisement campaign, further reductions are more difficult. It is necessary to promote the efficiency of machinery. It is time for us to work hard for energy conservation. I hope that Japan will supply high quality energy-efficient technology to the world.

(At the seminar, the audience saw some "1/2" TV commercials on video. The commercials showed a man who committed suicide because of an extremely high electricity bill, and an air conditioning unit being arrested because of its low energy efficiency. The commercials were creative, effective and extremely humorous. They were quite different from the Japanese style of promoting energy conservation, which emphasizes sacrificing the people's daily life.)



Dr. Chirapol Sintunawa, Mahidol University, Thailand

Current Situation in Japanese Nuclear Industries

The Japan Atomic Industrial Forum (JAIF) has released the result of its survey carried out in the nuclear industries in fiscal year 1997. This was compiled from the answers to a questionnaire that JAIF sent to 566 companies, including electric utilities, trading, nuclear equipments and construction companies.

According to the results, sales in nuclear related mining and manufacturing companies were 1,804 billion yen, the lowest since 1991. The balance of orders also hit a low at 2,279 billion yen.

For expenditures of electric utilities, construction costs were 315 billion yen, the lowest since 1980, but operation and maintenance costs were 871 billion yen, the third highest so far, and three times larger than construction outlays. Nuclear fuel costs were 455 billion yen, the highest ever, exceeding construction costs for

the first time. 131 billion yen more was spent compared with the previous year, a 140% increase. Advance payments for the construction of Rokkasho reprocessing plant and increased consignment costs for overseas reprocessing were responsible for the increase.

It is obvious from the result that nuclear related industries in Japan are desperate to obtain orders and that they are likely to try even harder overseas if the situation is not promising within Japan. It is also revealed that (a) operating and maintaining current reactors and (b) dealing with spent fuel and radioactive waste are now becoming a big burden for the utility companies, and that constructing new reactors is no longer their priority.

Management and disposal costs of radioactive waste is included in "others" in the table.

by Baku Nishio

Figure 1: Indices Associate with Nuclear Power Industries

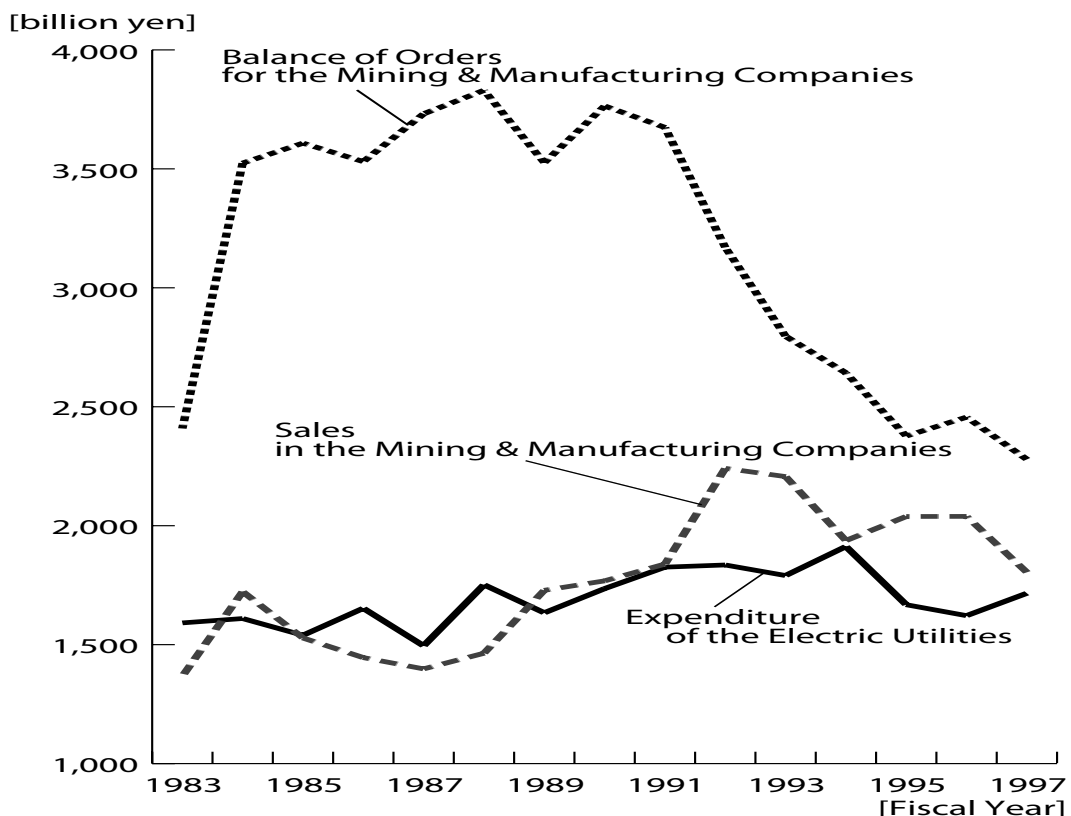
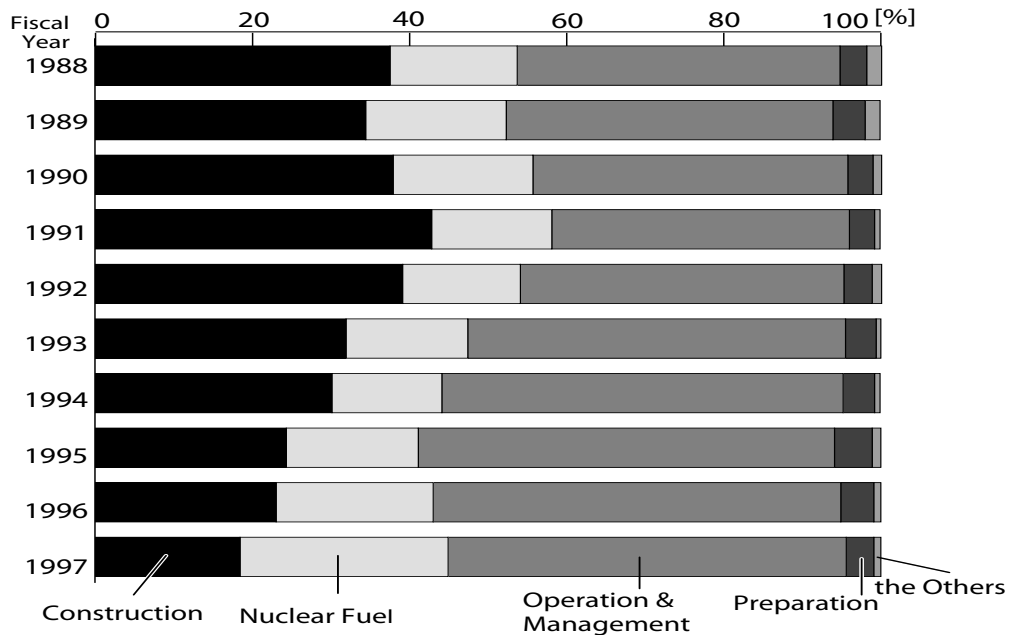


Figure 2: Electric Utilities' Expenditure Composition Associate with Nuclear Power Generation



TV Documentary on

Dr. Takagi's Life as a Nuclear Scientist

On 6 February a documentary film entitled, "Bringing Science back to the People - Jinzaburo Takagi - A Message from a Nuclear Scientist" was broadcast on channel 3, Japan Broadcasting Corporation's educational channel. The 75-minute documentary was shown from 9pm to 10:15pm.

Dr. Takagi underwent an operation in October last year and since then has been trying to recover from his illness. The film shows how he first became a nuclear scientist and then an anti-nuclear activist/scientist.

Dr. Takagi completed his studies in nuclear chemistry in university and then joined a nuclear power development company that was working on Japan's first experimental reactor. However, he began to realize that there were still a number of questions to be worked out before a commercial reactor could safely commence operations. The company ignored his views. So he quit, returning to the university as a researcher. Being a scientist again, he felt extremely happy, studying background radiation levels in nature. In his studies he found that artificial radiation levels in nature to be high. He was shocked. The high levels had come from a numerous number of atomic bomb testing. As a nuclear scientist he felt responsible for the contamination and decided to do something about it. He was promoted to an associate professor at the university and also became involved in the student movement that was quite active at that time. He was drawn as well to the anti-airport struggles in Sanrizuka where farmers were strongly resisting attempts by the government to forcefully take over their farmland in order to build a large international airport. It was authority versus farmers and Takagi decided that he should be on the side of the farmers and to support them as a scientist.

He resigned his position at the university and started Citizens' Nuclear Information Center with some other people. Since then, he has been active as an anti-nuclear scientist and activist. In 1997 Dr. Takagi received the Right Livelihood Award. He used the prize money to start the Takagi School for Alternative Scientists. A large number of young science students have come to the School.

While he is still fighting his illness, he hopes to complete his studies as a scientist and to hand over his accomplishments to future generations.

Anti-Nuke Who's Who

Ikuo Kusaka "Ishinomaki People Against Nuclear Power"

by Takefumi Kondo

Ishinomaki People Against Nuclear Power

Ikuo Kusaka is one of the plaintiffs in the trial to halt Onagawa nuclear power plant, in which an attempt is being made to sue an electric utility for the first time in Japan. The ruling of the appeal trial will be given soon. (Onagawa is in Miyagi Prefecture and located about 400 km north of Tokyo on the Pacific coast.)

"Ishinomaki People Against Nuclear Power" was formed after the Three Mile Island accident by people in Ishinomaki who became concerned about the danger of living next to Onagawa nuclear power plant. This group has been active for almost 20 years, opposing the building of further reactors, submitting opinions for the municipality's nuclear accident prevention plans and exercises, setting up self-learning classes and public lectures on the dangers of nuclear power and radiation, sharing information with other anti-nuclear groups, sponsoring rallies with other groups in Miyagi Prefecture and so on.

Right now "Ishinomaki People Against Nuclear Power" is working hard to set up a reliable and efficient plan for local residents to deal with accidents. As long as two reactors in Onagawa are in operation, there is always the possibility of accidents. Since we cannot halt the operation of the plants themselves, we should at least set up this kind of plan so that the residents would receive the least amount of contamination in the case of accidents. We have been demanding that municipal and prefectural governments prepare for accidents by initiating the following procedures: all accidents should be reported to Ishinomaki city swiftly, iodine preparations should be distributed to schools and public health offices within 10 km from the plant, shelters should be established for people, and evacuation procedures should be practiced.

Mr. Kusaka also has been concerned about the victims of the Chernobyl accident for some time now and once worked as a coordinator for a group, "Summer Holidays for Chernobyl Children-Miyagi". He organized a group, "Chernobyl Support Miyagi" in 1994. He has visited Chernobyl five times so far,



Ikuo Kusaka, left, with Prof. E. Burlakova

doing research on contamination levels, the health condition of local people, the medical situation and so on. He has also been sending vital goods, such as medication and milk to the hospitals and schools in Gomel state in Belarus and orphanage in Bryansk state in Russia.

In April, Professor E. Burlakova from the Emanuel Institute of Biochemical Physics, Russian Academy of Sciences will visit Japan and give lectures at seven different locations about the Chernobyl accident and the danger of low-level radiation. The lecture tour was planned by Mr. Kusaka and he organized a Committee for Prof. Burlakova's Lecture Tour with four other groups that had been active in helping the children from Chernobyl. This is the fruition of Mr. Kusaka's long-time work of collecting information in the Chernobyl area and keeping strong links with the local experts.

Mr. Kusaka has been active in the anti-nuclear movement for more than twenty years. When he meets with government officials, he tries to obtain as much information as possible beforehand, classifies materials, and talks to them logically, so they have a hard time justifying their positions and often become emotional or upset. Then Mr. Kusaka has to tell them to be more rational.

How Mr. Kusaka sees and understands the situation, keeps his stand as a local resident and fights strongly against the authorities or the government is really wonderful. What makes this possible is his constant sharing of up-to-date information with other groups throughout Japan, and utilizing it as effectively as possible.

We hope Mr. Kusaka will continue to be active in Miyagi Prefecture as well as in his local town of Ishinomaki.

NEWS WATCH

Nuclear Power Plants Might Be Safe for 60 Years?

Agency of Natural Resources and Energy submitted a report on 8 February to the Nuclear Safety Commission, claiming that Japan's first three reactors, which have been in operation for nearly 30 years, could run for up to 60 years. They are Tsuruga 1 (BWR, 357 MW, first operational in March 1970), Mihama 1 (PWR, 340 MW, November 1970), and Fukushima I-1 (BWR, 460, March 1971). The report was prepared by the owners of these reactors, Japan Atomic Power Co., Kansai Electric Power Co. and Tokyo Electric Power Co., and then approved by the Agency.

The utilities, however, emphasized that although these reactors could run for up to 60 years, how long they would actually continue in operation is unknown. There is no legal duration limit for operation in Japan.

Nuclear Budget for 1999

The Japanese government announced that its total nuclear budget for fiscal year 1999 (April 1999 to March 2000) is 477 billion yen, a 2% increase from last year. For the last few years the allocation has been decreasing annually, but the trend was reversed this year. Expenditures for new site promotion are 88 billion yen, an 18% increase from last year. However, remaining expenditures are less than what was allocated last year. Only items of the budget devoted to site promotion have increased. The government is still trying to promote nuclear power by distributing large sums of money in areas where the construction of nuclear power plants has

been accepted, in order to quiet down strong opposition.

Budgetary allocations formerly provided to the Power Reactor & Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation (PNC) were supposed to have been scaled down with the creation of the Japan Nuclear Cycle Development Institute (JNC). However, JNC has been given a total of 144 billion yen, almost the same amount as was allocated last year. For the crippled FBR (Monju) project, 10 billion yen was allocated for maintenance and reform work. A total of 11 billion yen has been designated for continuing construction of the Recycle Equipment Test Facility to reprocess spent fuel from Monju, an allocation that is totally unnecessary.

Japan Helps Russia to Dismantle Nuclear Arsenal

Science and Technology Agency and the Japan Nuclear Cycle Development Institute (JNC) on 23 February revealed a plan for Japan to help Russia rework dismantled plutonium into fuel for its FBR BN600. An official contract may be drawn up sometime in March. The plan calls for a five-year period of cooperation between JNC and Russia's Obninskoye Physical-Technical Institute and Atomic Reactors Scientific Research. The first two years will be spent on preliminary experiments. They will then start producing MOX fuel using dismantled plutonium and about 0.3 tons of plutonium will be burned annually from 2002. Plutonium will be simply burned and not breed.

STA is saying, "The cooperation in burning plutonium will show the world that

Japan possesses nuclear power for peaceful purposes only and has no intention of developing nuclear arms from plutonium." However, the development of the technology to fabricate MOX fuel from dismantled plutonium and to burn it could be considered to take Japan one step closer to arms production. Therefore, this will only make the rest of the world even more concerned about Japan's intentions about nuclear arms development.

Court Rejects Tomari Nuclear Power Plant Closure

The Sapporo District Court on 22 February handed down a ruling on the claim for suspension of Hokkaido Electric Power Co.'s Tomari 1 and 2 (PWR, 579 MW each). It rejected a lawsuit brought by about 1,000 local residents, stating "the court does not accept that there exists a concrete risk of danger that would harm the plaintiffs' health or life."

In the ruling Judge Yoshihiro Katayama also said that "the possibility of a nuclear accident cannot be completely denied and the problem of the disposal of radioactive wastes is not yet solved." He then continued, "As we approach the 21st century and look toward the future of humanity, it is now time for us to seriously discuss the meaning of nuclear power. Some people argue that nuclear power will help combat global warming. It may be one option. However, suspending nuclear reactors that produce radioactive waste could be one path to reducing electricity consumption while at the same time enduring some

inconvenience. What are we going to leave for future generations? We must encourage thorough discussions from a number of different angles and choose the wisest solution possible."

Such a comment, which could overturn his own ruling, is extremely unusual in the Japanese court. Even though some plaintiffs were critical of his ruling, saying, "We filed a law suit because we, the local residents, were being deprived of the basic right to make our own decisions and the ruling does not relate to that at all."

Ohi 2 Has Control Rod Trouble

During the annual check-up on 29 January at the Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Ohi 2 (PWR, 1175MW) control rods slipped from the control rod drive mechanism (CRDM) and fell into the reactor core. The incident happened during the last stage of check-up procedures and when the reactor had just been started up in order to confirm the function. When power reached 38%, one of the 53 control rods slipped from the CRDM, falling into the reactor core which reduced power to about 35%. As workers began to bring the reactor to a stop in order to determine the cause of the slippage, another rod was found to have malfunctioned. They immediately made an emergency stop. When the operators checked the function of all the rods they discovered another two had fallen and two more had malfunctioned.

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