

The Voices of Ten Million: Anti-Nuclear Petition Movement Launched in Japan 十万人の声—反原子力陳情運動、日本で始まる

Matthew Penney

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

Matthew Penney

A group of Japan's most prominent public intellectuals have launched a movement to amass ten million signatures calling for an end to Japanese nuclear power. The group, which includes Uchihashi Katsuto, Ooe Kenzaburo, Ochiai, Kamata Satoshi, Sakamoto Ryuichi, Sawachi Hisae, Setouchi Jakucho, Tsujii Takashi and Tsurumi Shunsuke, also plan a nationwide series of protests on September 11, the six month anniversary of the tsunami and the beginning of the Fukushima crisis.

The group's [website](#) (English [here](#)) describes their plan as follows:

Affected by the earthquake on 11th March, the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant of TEPCO is

suffering meltdown, the worst possible situation, in its reactors number 1 to3.

This has become an unparalleled disaster, where high level radioactive materials have been released, following hydrogen explosions and the damages to the reactor buildings, into sea water, air and soil, contaminating the environment.

Even two months after the earthquake, the reactors show no sign of coming back to control and the situation continues to be extremely unstable. It is feared that there would be immeasurable effects on the health and lives of not only the local residents and the workers at the power plant but also the future children yet to be born.

We have always been aware that humans cannot live with nuclear. We are deeply regretting that even though we knew this fact, our protesting voices and actions against nuclear energy have been far too weak.

We are determined to take actions for a "peaceful and sustainable society", reconsidering our lifestyles that exploit nature and waste limitless energy, and focusing on natural energy.

For that purpose, we set the following goals:

1. Cancellation of construction plans for new nuclear power plants
2. Planned termination of existing nuclear power plants, including the Hamaoka nuclear power plant.
3. Abolition of “Monju” and nuclear reprocessing plants which use plutonium, the most dangerous radioactive material.

We will achieve these goals in order to save our own lives, and fulfill our responsibilities to the future children.

We will hold the “Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants” Rally as follows. Please join with your friends and families.

Date: September 19th, 2011, Starting at 13:00
Place: Meiji Park, Tokyo (Five minutes walk from JR Sendagaya station, two minutes walk from metro Oedo line Kokuritsu Kyogijo station (Exit E25))

Expected number of participants: 50,000(There will also be a parade after the rally.)

The group has also launched a Japanese language [newsletter](#). Below are translations of short essays from the first issue by Sawachi Hisae, Uchihashi Katsuto, and Kamata Satoshi prepared for the Asia-Pacific Journal by Matthew Penney.

The politicians cannot ignore the voices of ten million

Sawachi Hisae (non-fiction author)

The Liberal Democratic Party Secretary-General Ishihara Nobuteru has apparently called the anti-nuclear movement “mass hysteria”. Looking at newspapers or television, we see comments like “everything’s okay now” or “if we shut down the nuclear plants, Japan will be ruined”, trying to bring people with doubts about nuclear power back on side.

I think Japan should take the global lead and change our political system so we can move in a direction not only to eliminate nuclear weapons, but nuclear power as well. Is this, however, really a society where people who hold such views can voice them on television or in the newspapers?

On the way here, I said these things to the taxi driver and he replied “Please stick with it.” I believe there are many people who are thinking “Is there anything that I can do?” If we do nothing, I fear that we will only continue in the same direction. Fifty-four nuclear reactors were built before we knew it. Just as we feared, a nuclear accident occurred and so did a hydrogen explosion.

The information provided by the government, the Nuclear Safety Commission, and the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, was contradictory from day to day. They did not show us real, clear data. In effect, they put us in a position of ignorance despite the fact that we have a right to know.

In the middle of all this, I started to think about what I could do. Even though I don't have much power myself, I have the feeling that nuclear power is bad, and a feeling of shame before the world. From the Lucky Dragon No. 5 to the Tokaimura accident, Japan carries the burden of a history of radiation exposure that others do not.

This same country has nuclear power plants and it has now been revealed that safety oversight was fundamentally flawed. Even during the current crisis, of the first three workers who were irradiated, two of them entered water contaminated with radiation without wearing rubber boots and were exposed. This lack of care, this ignorant attitude toward the power of the atom, makes me feel pain for the workers who were exposed and at the same time, a sense of shame before the world.

That children's bodies can take lethal damage is something we know from stories of the Chernobyl disaster. Now, the government is saying that it is safe, but at the same time is not allowing children to play outside and is making them play in rooms with all of the windows closed, thus also indicating that it is absolutely not safe. Is there nowhere where doubts about this can be aired?

The power of one is small. However, if ten million people sign a petition saying "nuclear power is bad", no matter how stupid the politicians are, I do not think that they can ignore it. A million is not enough. I feel that the number that will really move people to action is ten million. We can make ten million signatures a reality. Right now, separate movements are beginning all over the place, however, we have to set one pattern [of action], the organizers

have to take a leadership role, and together confront the politicians.

This accident is not simply a matter for Japan. The sea offers no barriers. The air offers no barriers. In the Korean Peninsula, America's west coast, Taiwan, and elsewhere, radiation damage will occur and there is a good chance that those countries will protest. What Japan did is akin to striking a critical blow to the earth and I want to express this shame to the world.

Everyone, we must solve this problem and spread the word. Please help us.

Nuclear Power is "Policy without Consent"

Uchihashi Katsuto (journalist/author)

25 years ago, I wrote a book called "Nuclear Warning" (原発への警鐘). In the beginning, I took neither a pro nor anti-nuclear position. I then began examining things with my own eyes. Even now, some things stand out in my memory. One is that people who harbored doubts about nuclear energy were called "the Don Quixotes of the scientific nation". In Japan, a country built on cutting edge science, they were treated like backward remnants from the last century, or Don Quixotes-like eccentrics.

The second was the public hearing by the

Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan on the occasion of the addition of a second reactor to the Shimane Nuclear Power Plant. I realized that it was nothing but a ceremonial gesture. A young mother asked a question that made my chest go tight, “If there is an accident, what do you expect us to do? Just jump into Lake Shinji and swim away?” The chairman of the Nuclear Safety Commission, however, totally ignored it. The whole affair was run through with a tone of “We are here to listen to your opinions, we will not offer our own.” What was the result? It was “policy without consent”. Nuclear energy is described as public policy, but when has there ever been a broad public consensus? Who offered that consent, and when?

As I was looking into the truth, I came to realize that nuclear power is not something that should be placed in human hands. On top of that, Japan is an earthquake archipelago, and in this seismically-active small island nation, loaded with nuclear power plants as a foundation of national policy, I have come to have grave doubts that this can ever lead to safety and happiness for the people.

We have detailed testimony about the process of construction of the first reactor at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, which is now the source of the problem. Fukushima reactor No. 1 is a “full turnkey”. You just get the key, turn it, and your plant is up and running. Everything came from America’s General Electric. In addition, GE technicians came to Fukushima and set up the entire village. Nobody was allowed to raise any doubts. We just received everything as is. Japanese technicians had a mere two weeks of training in America, that’s it.

At the same time, nuclear interest groups were

formed. Ordinary people can only cast one vote in elections, but these groups hold another election of their own. One business organization rates the policies of the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party and gives them a ranking based on whether they are pushing for expansion of nuclear power or opposed and decides the amount of political contributions based on this. This is the form of interest groups who have cordoned off nuclear power in Japan.

In “Our Shared Earth” ([共生の大地](#)) I have written about the energy decisions of various European countries. It is when people are free to make choices about what forms of energy to use that technological progress takes place.

In Japan, nuclear energy has been given a special status, and we have ourselves limited the breadth of energy choices available. This is what has brought us to the present situation. It goes without saying that 3.11 will have effects on people and the world. I cannot stress enough the tragic nature of this accident.

The nuclear industry is like the postwar version of the prewar armaments industry. It is a system where billions of yen go for a nuclear plant, and by building these things the economy can grow even if personal consumption does not. In the prewar period, to escape from the Great Depression, military industries were prioritized and this led to war. In postwar nuclear energy, we can see the shadow of these military industries. No matter what happens, we have to put a stop to this.

Now is our chance to overturn the nuclear system through the power of ordinary citizens

Kamata Satoshi (journalist/author)

All of the areas that now have nuclear plants are regions that once had anti-nuclear movements. They all had anti-nuclear movements, but in each place, they were crushed. I have been to all of them and in every one the movements were brought down with money. The energy companies donated whatever was wanted and bought them over with cash.

In line with the Three Power Source Development Laws (電源三法) if you make a single nuclear plant you get fifty billion yen in the decade leading up to construction and over forty billion in the decade after it begins operation, that is nearly 100 billion in twenty

years. Include another 500 billion yen for plant construction and we have a tremendous amount of money flowing into the region.

Establishing an anti-nuclear movement is very, very difficult. Now, there are very few activists remaining and most have been defeated. I feel that nuclear plants are immoral entities. They were established through cash.

To form the nuclear system, the state, bureaucracy, politicians, academics, the media, and the courts all came together and dominated everything. Now, tragically, an accident has occurred, and while it was too late to prevent it, at least it has become easier to talk about Japan's nuclear system. Now is our chance to overturn things with a mass movement.

It is my strong desire to proceed from petition to demonstration. I want to bring forth a power to surpass that seen in Europe.