The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
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74% of Japanese Favor Nuclear Phase-out 日本人の７４％が原子力廃止に賛成

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Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

According to a survey conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* in mid-June, nearly three-quarters of Japanese voters favor an immediate or gradual phase-out of nuclear power.

In mid-April, the Japan Research Center and Gallup released poll results indicating that Japanese support for nuclear energy had declined from 62% before the earthquake – one of the highest support levels internationally – to 39% in the aftermath of 3/11 and the Fukushima crisis. Rates of opposition increased from 28% to 47%. The more recent *Asahi* poll shows an even more dramatic shift to anti-nuclear positions.

Japanese are not only expressing anti-nuclear views through opinion polls, however. The shifting public mood is also evidenced by widespread anti-nuclear demonstrations which have gained in momentum since April. On June 11, protests were held at 130 locations nationwide to mark the Fukushima accident's three month anniversary. The demonstration held in central Tokyo is reported to have drawn 20,000 people. Footage from the Tokyo demonstration is available here.

These indications of shifting Japanese public opinion come at the same time as a dramatic referendum in Italy in which 94% of voters rejected plans to develop nuclear power plants in the country.

Included below are detailed results of the *Asahi* survey and a commentary that brands nuclear energy "a ticking time bomb to human health" – an indication of an increasingly powerful anti-nuclear tone in the newspaper, which has now joined the *Mainichi* in editorializing against atomic energy (while many editorials are no longer available on the *Mainichi* website, a representative example is reproduced here).

74% of voters back dumping nuclear power

2011/06/15

Seventy-four percent of voters support abolishing nuclear power after a phase-out period, compared with 14 percent opposed, an Asahi Shimbun survey found.

According to the nationwide telephone survey on June 11 and 12, 37 percent support nuclear power generation, while 42 percent are opposed.

Even among those who support nuclear power generation, more than 60 percent support phasing out nuclear power generation and abolishing it at a later date.

In a survey in April, 50 percent supported nuclear power generation, while 32 percent opposed. But opponents outnumbered supporters in a survey in late May, at 42 percent versus 34 percent.

In the latest survey, 50 percent of female respondents were opposed, up from 37 percent in the April survey.

The increase of male opponents was more moderate from 27 percent to 34 percent.

The latest survey received valid responses from 1,980 voters.

Voters were asked if they support restarting nuclear power plants shut down for regular inspections on condition that safety measures required by the government are taken.

Fifty-one percent support restarting them, while 35 percent are opposed.

In 13 prefectures that host nuclear power plants, the percentages of opponents were slightly larger than the national average.

Sixty-four percent said renewable energy such as wind and solar power will replace nuclear energy in the future, while 24 percent said they do not think so.

Sixty-five percent said the percentage of renewable energy in total electricity generation should be increased even though electricity fees are raised.

Nineteen percent said the percentage should not be increased if electricity fees are raised.

Voters were almost equally split over a government panel's proposal to gradually raise the consumption tax rate to 10 percent by fiscal 2015 to finance social security, with 43 percent supporting it and 44 percent opposed.

-- The Asahi Shimbun, June 14

VOX POPULI: Nuclear energy ticking time bomb to human health

2011/06/15

Writer Natsuki Ikezawa made the following comment in the serial column "Owari to Hajimari" (The End and the Beginning) that recently ran in The Asahi Shimbun: "Somehow fundamentally, nuclear energy is beyond human control. That is why when we try to use it beyond the limits of reason, we have to base it on a pack of lies."

"Lies" must be one of the keywords concerning nuclear power. The documentary films "Genpatsu Kirinukicho" (Nuclear Power Generation Scrapbook) and "Ima Genshiryoku-Hatsuden wa ..." (Nuclear Power Generation Now ...), both of which are currently showing at Tokyo's Iwanami Hall, clearly illustrate the deception of the industrial world, governments and academia.

Although both films were produced about 30 years ago, it is as if they foresaw today's disastrous situation.

"Kirinukicho," which comprises newspaper articles, starts with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The military and scholars knew what happened. However, the initial report said, "It appears (Hiroshima) suffered slight damages." Although times and circumstances differ, I sense something in common with the way information was disclosed then and about the current accidents at Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

The phrase that "radiation has no immediate effect on human health," frequently used by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Naoto Kan also reeks of deception. "Kirinukicho" director Noriaki Tsuchimoto (1928-2008) said three decades ago: "What I found frightening was the time difference that (people who were exposed to radiation) got sick and died 20 to 30 years later." This is the scariness of the "time bomb" that stays inside the bodies of sufferers for a long time.

Lies are demons that need coats to hide their true nature. According to an old Western saying, in order to keep a lie, one must invent 20 more. That must have been the truth of the safety myth. Even the parties directly involved in nuclear power generation must be finding themselves at a loss over what is true and what is false.

I wish to consider the pros and cons of nuclear power generation not based on the reality that Japan has 54 nuclear reactors, but by going back to the inhumane nature of atomic bombs. What should we pass on to the future? We now stand at a crossroads that must not be trifled with in the least.

--The Asahi Shimbun, June 14

Asia-Pacific Journal articles on related subjects include:

Furukawa Takuya, How Japan's Low Carbon Society and Nuclear Power Generation Came Hand in Hand

Peter Karamoskos, Fukushima Burning: Anatomy of a Nuclear Disaster

Matthew Penney and Mark Selden, What Price the Fukushima Meltdown? Comparing Chernobyl and Fukushima

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