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How Japan's Low Carbon Society and Nuclear Power Generation Came Hand in Hand　　低炭素社会と原発は抱き合わせだったーー「エコ」企業を目指した東電の

Furukawa Takuya

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

The "Egoism" of TEPCO "Ecoism"

Furukawa Takuya

Translated by Kyoko Selden

While tackling global warming issues has gained popular approval in the names of Eco and LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability), in recent years the voices of citizens against nuclear power have been suppressed in Japan's environmental protection movement. It is worth reflecting on the possibility that Japan's eco became warped in light of the fact that TEPCO became its big sponsor.

The Fuji Sankei Group sponsors a prize, the Grand Prize for the Global Environment Award, given annually to a company or a group actively engaged in protecting against global warming and supporting environmental protection. The twentieth recipient to be of the prize announced on February 25 this year was, ironically, the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), that is now the party concerned with the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

According to the Sankei article announcing the prize, TEPCO built, at a Kawasaki power plant, a system that recycled the vapor produced in power generation as an energy source. Apparently, judges on the screening committee including Mukuta Satoshi, managing director of Keidanren, highly evaluated this as, in Mukuta's words, "a good example of energy conservation that goes beyond a company's borders."

At this late point, this can only be called a black joke, and in April, TEPCO declined to accept the prize. In fact, the company had won a reputation as a leading Japanese company that invested in nvironmental protection.

Its publication, *Sustainability Report 2010*, introduces approximately fifty environmental activities including participation in Japan Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, preservation activities for the Oze National Park, sponsorship of the All-Japan Environmental Activities Eco Conference (Eco-Con), and for a fuel-saving eco school.

"The Oze Summit 2006" held for the purpose of making Oze a national park. Katsumata Tsunehisa, TEPCO president (chairperson then). (Kyodo News)

According to another TEPCO document, the 2009 budget allocation for environmental protection measures amounts to 179,600,000,000 yen ($220 million).

Yet TEPCO now seems to wish to keep these things concealed. The company's corporate social responsibility activities were earlier viewable on its home page. But since the Great East Japan Earthquake, the majority of the information has become unavailable. When I asked the company the reason for the deletion, they told me that "the contents were prepared before the earthquake, and some were deemed out of keeping with the present situation." (Public Relations Department)

Is total electrification LOHAS?

Since the earthquake, it has been pointed out that TEPCO contributed large sums in the form of advertisements to major mass media. The monthly magazine *Sotokoto* (Under the Tree, name based on a phrase in an African tongue) published by Kirakusha (with an official circulation of 100,000) is one of them.

According to its own analysis, the main readers are male businessmen in their thirties and forties, and women in their 20s and 30s who are strongly interested in food safety and slow life. In recent years, it is said that it has also been read by venture capitalists. It can be called a major presence among Japanese magazines addressing environmental issues.

However, almost every month it also publishes TEPCO's advertisement which defines total electrification as an Eco and LOHAS style. Thus in January 2011, it depicted "a stylish all-electrified house where one lives with pets" and in April 2011 it featured "an all-electrified sustainable café!"

TEPCO environmental initiatives

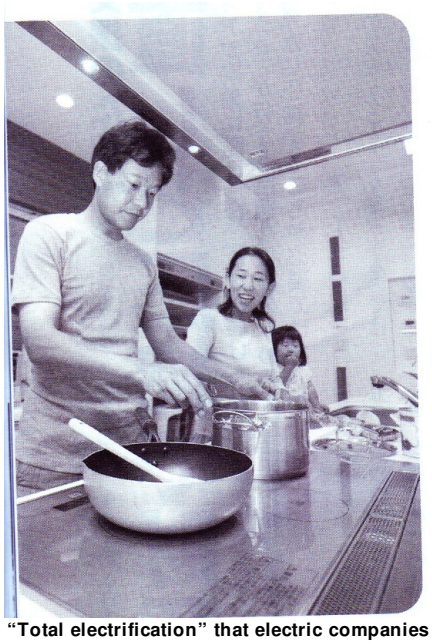
On inquiring into its relationship with TEPCO, I received the following response from the company:

"It is a

fact that we carried advertisement articles from TEPCO, but when we published articles on nuclear power generation in our April 2008 issue, we published both pro and con positions. We have never allowed our editorial policies to be influenced by accepting advertising from TEPCO." (Editorial staff member with the initial H.)

In the March issue of the magazine, which features energy saving, however, they explain Japan's energy situation in Q and A format. It answers the question "Is nuclear power necessary?" as follows. "Some problems remain to be solved. But at present, it is indispensable."

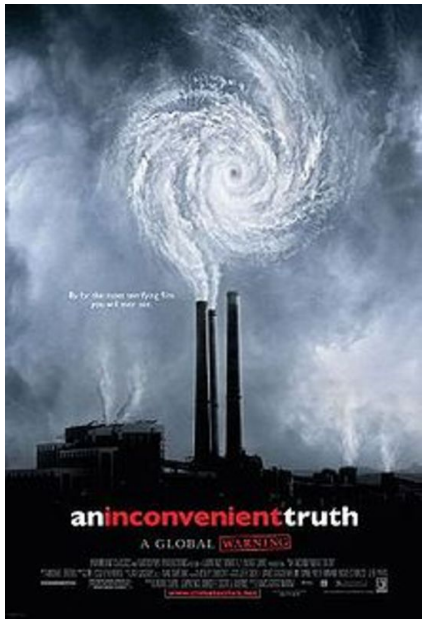
The same issue carries an article on "The future of totally electrified residences and Japanese style smart grids" which defines total electrification as a pleasant energy saving approach, without clarifying that this is an advertisement. Despite claiming that its sponsors never influence its editorial policies, at least in the present situation this seems to be the magazine's newest take on nuclear power generation.



"Total electrification" that electric companies have promoted. In order to spread the idea, they provided opportunities to stay in model houses or renovated rental apartments. (Kyodo News)

The translator of "An Inconvenient Truth" was sponsored by TEPCO

The film "An Inconvenient Truth" played a large role in alerting the world to the role of C02 in global warming. The environmental journalist Edahiro Junko, the translator of the book version of the film, a member of the Roundtable on Global Warming during the Fukuda and Aso administrations, and sponsor of a website called "My Forest: jp" (私の森 :jp) is a representative of the "e's" (ecology, english, empowerment; イーズ), limited.



The 2006 film about Al Gore's campaign to stop global warming

When I asked her about the deletion of the dialogue between her and Kageyama Yoshihiro, head of the environmental section of TEPCO, which was carried on that site until March of this year, she admitted to having received support from TEPCO.

"Because I was unable to meet the expenses myself for starting and maintaining the website, I looked for corporate sponsors. Among several that I approached, TEPCO supported my idea and decided to give support. I had the idea from the beginning of enlisting support from plural sponsors, and prepared pages to introduce their activities in return for their support. I spoke to a number of companies beside TEPCO, but was unable to get their cooperation. For three years, since starting the site in 2008, I continued the site with support from TEPCO.

I cannot reveal the amount due to the privacy of the contract, but the majority of the money was used to construct, renew and maintain the site through outsourcing. The rest of the money went for symposiums and leaflets announcing the site."

The reason that I took down the contents this year is that the term of the contract, which was for three years, ended in 2010." (Edahiro Junko)

Not limiting to *Sotokoto* and My Forest, what is common to groups handling global warming is the fact that their websites and publications cost money. In comparison with citizens groups opposing nuclear power or calling for its abolition, which fight their old age and walk around handing out leaflets printed from handwritten copy, it is needless to consider which is more likely to draw young generations.

Shiratori Yoshika of the Shizuoka Network for Thinking About the Hamamatsu Nuclear Plant, a representative group calling for the abolition of nuclear power, says that

"Groups calling for reduction of CO2 don't from the start conflict with government policies. So corporations can easily provide them with financial support. Such groups can expect to receive subsidies from both TEPCO and the government. Most of them can't be compared to self-supporting groups opposing, or calling for the abolition of, nuclear power. When considering the costs of printing leaflets and lawsuits for suspending the Hamamatsu Nuclear Plant, we are still in deficit."

Japan's environmental movement, particularly in this century, has seemed to concentrate on prevention of global warming and achieving a low carbon society. Of course, forestation itself should not be criticized, and reduction of CO2 should be promoted from the perspective of saving fossil fuels, regardless of whether CO2 and global warming are directly related, as some argue.

However, such an opportunistic logic as that developed by TEPCO and the government, which use reduction of CO2 as an excuse for nuclear power generation, should not have been permitted from the start. If, without being aware of that, they have accepted TEPCO's support, and even given it space for advertisement, environmental protection groups should accept some responsibility.

Furukawa Tetsuya is a reporter. This article was published in the May 13, 2011 Shūkan Kiny'ōbi.

Kyoko Selden is a translator and an Asia-Pacific Journal *Associate. Her translations include* Japanese Women Writers: Twentieth Century Short Fiction *and, most recently,* More Stories by Japanese Women Writers: An Anthology *(both co-edited with Noriko Mizuta).*

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