

CHICAGO SAFE-ENERGY ADVOCATES PROTEST JAPAN PLANS TO RE-START NUCLEAR REACTORS

Protest events scheduled in other U.S. cities, Japan

P.M. Noda gives re-start OK to earthquake-threatened reactors

CHICAGO—There is an old saying in Japan that “The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.” On Friday, safe-energy advocates in Chicago and around the world stood in solidarity with 10,000 angry and defiant Japanese nails, and protested outside of the Chicago Japanese Consulate against Japan’s plans to re-start two reactors at the Ohi nuclear power station, in Fukui Prefecture in Western Japan. The event was scheduled to coincide with massive rallies against the re-start taking place in Japan Friday. Other events are planned throughout the U.S. through Monday.



“We ask the Consul General Yoshifumi Okamura to convey to Prime Minister Noda our support for a nuclear free Japan and a nuclear-free world,” stated David Kraft, director of Nuclear Energy Information Service, a nuclear-power watchdog organization based in Chicago. “We stand in support of the people of Japan, and members of Noda’s own party who reject nuclear power as too dangerous. We say ‘No more Hiroshimas! No more hibakusha. No more Fukushimas!’”

Over 75 individual letters signed by Illinoisans – themselves in the most nuclear-reliant state in the U.S. – were delivered to the office of Consul General Yoshifumi Okamura for delivery to the Prime

Minister, supporting the request of the Japanese people for a nuclear moratorium.

“We ask Prime Minister Noda to keep the Nuclear Power plants closed and move rapidly towards real sustainable, safe energy sources, such as wind, solar, geothermal and tidal, so that his people can heal from the Fukushima catastrophe and start to live a life free from Nuclear Fear!” said Dr. Lora Chamberlain of Nuclear Free Illinois.

Demonstrations were scheduled throughout Japan Friday and through the weekend, protesting the Prime Minister’s call to re-start the two shuttered Ohi reactors despite deep local and national opposition. Over 10,000 protestors showed up in front of his Tokyo office Friday. Historically in Japan no reactors are allowed to restart without the approval of the local and prefectural government. These officials have been heavily pressured into giving their consent for the Ohi restart, violating this “states’ rights” principle.

Recent polls show support for nuclear power badly eroded in Japan. And even Prime Minister Noda’s own party is split nearly 50-50 on abandoning nuclear and moving towards renewable energy and efficiency.

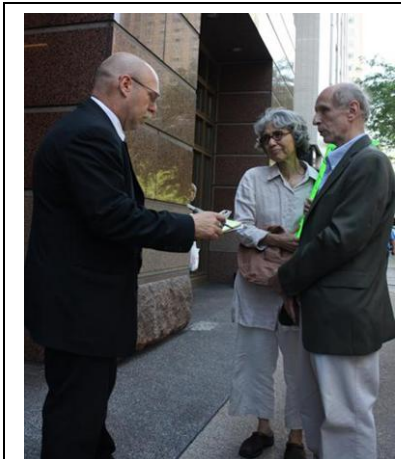
“Many Japanese are prepared to weather another hot summer without the so-called benefits of nuclear-enabled cooling,” says Dr. Norma Field, Robert S. Ingersoll Distinguished Service Professor in Japanese Studies in East Asian Languages and Civilizations at University of Chicago. “It is evident that Mr. Noda is determined to force economic “necessity” as a rationale for a policy that is the very opposite of life-enhancing.”

“Nuclear power is simply the *kamikaze* energy choice – short term gain at destructive cost. Japan has 54 reactors all in a geologically unstable and active part of the Pacific Ring of Fire; has not yet implemented safety recommendations; has no independent Nuclear Safety Agency; has already endured 2 nuclear bombings and several severe nuclear power accidents. Why the government wants to create a new generation of *hibakusha* is simply irrational and indefensible,” Kraft asserts.



Illinois is home to four operating reactors of the type that exploded and melted down at Fukushima in 2011. The threat from nuclear power – which began with the first controlled chain reaction here in Chicago 70 years ago this December – is not lost on the protestors, notes Dr. Chamberlain.

“We in Illinois are looking for the same thing from our Governments, for them to recognize that accidents happen and that when accidents happen at Nuclear Power plants, they often get out of hand quite quickly and degenerate into dangerous situations for millions of people. We in Illinois want a future free from Nuclear Fear as well,” Dr. Chamberlain says.



Security guard accepts letters for General Consul Okamura from Dr. Norma Field (center, Univ. of Chicago), and Dave Kraft, director of NEIS in Chicago.

CONSULATE DISRESPECTS LOCAL JAPANESE

When the protestors in Chicago attempted to deliver the letters signed by members of the public to Consul General Okamura, his office refused to grant them entry. Nor would they send down a representative to accept the letters.

It was explained to the Consul staff that among the protestors was a 2nd generation Nagasaki survivor, and that it would look very bad for the Consul General to disrespect such a person and the others gathered this way, but to no avail. When asked for a reason why the Consul staff would not allow protestors to deliver the letters, the reply was simply, “No comment.”

NODA AUTHORIZES RE-START ANYWAY

In spite of the huge rally outside his office, and numerous actions worldwide, Prime Minister Noda gave the go-ahead to restart the Ohi reactors on Saturday. He cited the possible economic damage to Japan if there were a shortage of electricity this summer, or if business were driven out of Japan due to higher electricity prices as his main reasons.

On Friday anti-nuclear activists led by Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe delivered petitions with over 7.5 million signatures, calling for the abolition of nuclear power in Japan.

Most disturbing were recently published remarks by Mitsuhsa Watanabe, Professor of Sociology, Toyo University (Tokyo, Japan). Professor Watanabe examined all original documents relating to the licensing and conditions at the Ohi reactors, and came to the following conclusions:

“I am not against the use of nuclear power. However, at present, the evaluation of active faults in the vicinity of nuclear facilities **is clearly mistaken**. I have pointed out that **underestimation has been rampant**, and have called attention to the fact that, due to erroneous assessments, the assumption concerning the degree of ground motion has been under-estimated, and, damage that can result from dislocation along active faults has been ignored.

“With respect to the active faults around the Ohi Nuclear Power Plant, there is no doubt that the issues mentioned above remain to be examined. If it can be confirmed that the F-6 is not an active fault, and that seismic safety is ensured even if it is assumed that there is linkage from the Fo-A fault to the Kumagawa fault, I would have no opposition to the resumption of the operation of the Ohi nuclear power plant. However, at this stage, I believe those who want to give the green light to the restart of these reactors should not propound indirect arguments, but rather should state clearly, **“Safety is not secured, but we are allowing restart for various other reasons.”** (emphasis ours)

Critics have also pointed out that Japan has still not established an independent Nuclear Safety Agency; that the “stress tests” that Ohi reactors were subject to were inadequate, and that improvements suggested from even these inadequate tests have not yet been implemented.