

Nuclear Plant and Education

The Japanese Government has promoted nuclear power generation as a "national policy" and spread the "safety myth" to children through school education.

The Government spent two years to produce a guidebook for schoolchildren entitled "Wakuwaku Genshiryoku Land (Exciting World of Atomic Energy)" designed to underscore the safety of nuclear power plants. It was aimed at reassuring children by stating that "nuclear plants are protected with five-ply walls that can contain radioac-

tive substances" and that "they are built strong enough to be able to withstand huge earthquakes and tsunami". In April, a month after the Fukushima Daiichi Plant accident, the guidebook was severely criticized in the Diet and was retrieved from schools. The new guidebook is designed to make children believe that "radioactivity is not so dangerous as it is believed to be" by overly emphasizing the fact that radioactive matters are normally present in nature.

In addition, the "Atomic Energy Society Special Committee on

Atomic Energy Education Research", made up mostly of pro-nuclear plant scholars and power company representatives, has been putting pressure for many years for distorting the contents of school textbooks on atomic energy. Any reference to the dangerousness of nuclear power plant and of radiation has been judged "inappropriate" and replaced with statements like "nuclear power generation is clean".

What is needed now is an education that nurtures scientific thinking based on truth and facts.

International Activities

Zenkyo President Attends EI World Congress

The Education International held its 6th World Congress in Cape Town, South Africa from July 22 to 26. President Kitamura was invited to attend the Congress as guest. (More on page 3)

Korean Teachers' Union Representatives Participate in "Education Rally 2011 in Chiba"

"Education Rally 2011 in Chiba" was held from August 19 to 21 in Chiba Prefecture. The Vice-President and a Member of the Executive Committee of the Korean Teachers' Union (KTU) attended the fair and delivered solidarity greetings to the participants at the opening plenary session. They also took part in workshops on different teaching subjects and themes and had close exchanges with the participants.

CGT France Donates Books to School Libraries in Disaster-stricken Area

French trade union confederation CGT presented books of 2 million yen in value to school libraries in

Ishimaki City, Miyagi Prefecture devastated by the earthquake and the tsunami. A CGT delegation came to Japan end September and visited one of the primary schools and local education board in Ishinomaki City, accompanied by Zenkyo Assistant General Secretary Nakamura and Expert Committee Member Yoshida.



Peace Tour in South Korea Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Zenkyo's Women's Committee

In celebration of its 20 anniversary, Zenkyo's Women's Committee organized a peace tour in South Korea from December 26 to 29. The members of the tour visited the Museum on the history of military comfort women and met with former comfort women now called harumoni (grandmothers) in the "House of Sharing". They also joined the rally held on every Wednesday in front of

the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to call for the settlement of military comfort women issue.



Young Teachers' and Staff's Tour for Peace 2011 to Visit Czech Republic and Austria

Zenkyo's Youth Committee organized a peace tour from December 26 to 31 to Czech Republic and Austria. The tour made up of 36 young teachers and school employees visited "Terezin Concentration Camp" and met with members of "Hiroshima Group" which has been working over 30 years for peace and nuclear disarmament in Austria.



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Actions for Relief of Victims of the East Japan Great Earthquake, Tsunami and Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant Accident

On March 11, 2011, at 2:46 p.m., a big earthquake of magnitude 9.0 on Richter scale, followed by a gigantic tidal wave or tsunami, hit vast areas in East Japan. It caused a tremendous damage: 15,854 people died while 3,155 others are still reported missing (figures provided by the government on March 10, 2012). Huge tsunami that rushed to the Pacific coast of the Main Island (Honshu) utterly destroyed and washed away many towns and villages, claiming a large number of human lives. The disaster also took away from those who narrowly escaped death their houses, their jobs and their peaceful day-to-day life with all the fond memories.

All this was followed by a severe nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, later rated "level 7" like Chernobyl accident. People living around the plant had to evacuate the area leaving their homes behind. Even today, nearly 100,000 citizens of Fukushima Prefecture are still forced to live in shelters within or outside the prefecture.

According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEXT), the earthquake also had considerable impacts on children and schools: 641 pupils, teachers and school staff died, including 494 children, teachers and other employees in the primary and secondary schools and 92 others who are still missing.

In addition, 12,150 schools suffered damage on the school buildings. As of October 1, 2011, of all the public schools in the three disaster-stricken prefectures of Iwate, Fukushima and Miyagi, 106 had to use other schools' buildings and/or other facilities to continue education activities. As far as schools and education activities are concerned, the efforts for complete recovery and restoration have just begun.

Zenkyo, immediately after the earthquake disaster on March 14, set up the Headquarters for East Japan Great Earthquake (later joined by the Liaison of Teachers' and Staff's Unions) and has organized fund-raising, collection and distribution of food and other supplies and recruited and sent volunteers to help the sufferers in the disaster-stricken regions.

As a result, Zenkyo collected 66 million yen of donations by the end December 2011. Most part of this money was given to the local education boards of the three prefectures and 34 municipalities. It will be used for establishing a special scholarship fund of municipalities' or education workers' unions, so that the donations will be utilized for providing direct assistance to children.

Volunteer relief operations, organized on three occasions in May, July and August in the areas around Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture. 2,000 teachers and school employees in total, coming from all over the country, took part in these operations that consisted of removing heaps of rubbles, restoration of oyster aquaculture facilities, cleaning of cemeteries, assistance to refugees accommodated in prefab shelters etc.

The accident in Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant deprived the people living around it of everything they needed to live. Entire towns and villages had to move to elsewhere considered "safe" from radiation. For those who had no choice but to remain, the fear of radiation contamination of children and other vulnerable family members is putting a considerable physical and mental stress. Zenkyo has issued a series of "Recommendations for Protecting Children from Radiation Contamination and Damage" and petitioned the National Government, political parties and MPs to take these recommendations into account. It also calls on local education boards and parents and teachers associations to have consultation on these proposals.

As children in Fukushima Prefecture are saying they want to "take a deep breath without any fear", we call on teachers' and staff's unions around the country to host Fukushima children's stay in their communities during summer vacation.

These initiatives help to increase Zenkyo's visibility among teachers who are now becoming more supportive and more trustful to Zenkyo's actions. This is reflected in the fact that some young teachers who participated in Zenkyo's volunteer relief operations later came to join the union.



Democratic Party Government Losing Popular Support



Neoliberal "structural reform" policy is aggravating poverty and social inequalities and seriously affecting jobs and living conditions of workers and the population. In that context, in the general election held in summer 2009, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took over the power from the Liberal Democratic Party, gaining a wide popular support for its public commitment to give "priority given to the im-

provement of people's livelihoods". The change of government itself provided a precious lesson that taught the people that they are capable of changing the government

if they overwhelmingly demand a change in politics.

At the beginning, there were high expectations that the DPJ government would concretize its public election promises included in its Manifesto. In fact, right after the government change, the bill for "free high school education", one of the DPJ's election promises, was discussed, and starting from April 2010, high school education became free.

In the following year, the size of first-year classes in primary school was brought down to 35 children for the first time in 31 years. These remarkable "progresses achieved in the area of education" on the background of teachers' and staff's long years of campaigning were seen as the symbol of the new government policies.

However, the DPJ Government soon began to break its public commitments including the relocation of the U.S. bases in Okinawa. It is now losing the popular support that once took it to power. What is worse is that the return to the old LDP policies is becoming more apparent: considerable delay delivering relief and restoration activities to deal with the damage caused by the great earthquake disaster, introduction in the Diet of a bill for reducing the pay of national government employees, a drastic adverse revision of the social security system and increase of consumption tax rate, relaxing of the legal restrictions on temporary work etc. The new Government is now facing strong workers' protests.

What Happened to Small-size Classes?

For the first time in 30 years, the standard class-size for primary and junior high schools has been revised for the better. Starting from April 2011, a standard class in the first year of primary school should not include more than 36 children.

Hand in hand with parents, teachers and school staff and local residents all over Japan, Zenkyo has been campaigning for a quality education. This campaign has been de-

veloped around a signature collection campaign named "Nationwide Signature Campaign for Education" that succeeded in gathering in 410 million signatures within a space of 23 years. It has served as the driving force for pressing both the National and Local Governments to promote small-size classes. As a result, in many regions, increasing numbers of municipalities have established their own standard class size. So far

8 Prefectures have introduced "small-classes with less than 35 children" for all grades. 12 other Prefectures have made "classes with less than 30 children" as the standard for first and second grades in primary schools. It can therefore be said that in Japan small-class system has developed from local level.

The State has decided to extend classes with 35 children to the second grade of primary school starting from April 2012. However, it intends to do so by appointing temporary teachers to avoid amending the existing law. The attitude of the State is extremely irresponsible, in contrast with that of local governments that are trying to provide quality education despite strong financial constraints.

Zenkyo is resolved to continue the campaign to demand that the State achieve "30 children class" everywhere on its responsibility.

Table1: International comparison of number of children per class

	Japan	U.S.A.	U.K.	Germany	France	OECD average
Primary	28.0	23.8	25.7	21.7	22.6	21.4
Junior High	32.9	23.2	21.0	24.6	24.3	23.5

Source: "Education at a glance", OECD, 2011. The figures are for 2009.

Zenkyo President Attends the EI World Congress

The Education International held its 6th World Congress in Cape Town, South Africa from July 22 to 26, 2011. Zenkyo sent its President Yoshihisa KITAMURA to attend the Congress with the aim of collecting first-hand information about the ideals and campaigns of the EI as well as the realities regarding its management, so as to provide positive inputs into the internal discussion going on within Zenkyo about applying for EI membership. To Zenkyo's request to attend the Congress, the EI leadership responded very positively by inviting President Kitamura as guest,

President Kitamura was very pleased to see that the Congress was steered orderly, respecting democratic procedures as well as to hear quality discussions about the Congress policy document "Building the Future through Quality Education". It was a golden opportunity to deepen understanding about the Education International.

In addition, during the 5 day-Congress, he had the chance not only to meet again with representa-

tives of teachers' unions of different countries with which Zenkyo already had exchanges but also to make new contacts with many

other unions from across the five continents. It was a rare valuable experience for Zenkyo to increase international relations.

The 29 Statutory Convention Approves Zenkyo to Apply for Education International Membership



Campaigning for a Base-Free Okinawa

It has been almost two years since Japan and the U.S. agreed to relocate the Futenma Base within Okinawa Prefecture, moving it from Ginowan City to Henoko area in Nago City by 2014. During these two years, the protest of the people of Okinawa Prefecture has held back the planned "relocation of the base within Okinawa".

Even the U.S. admits that the Futenma Base is the "most dangerous base in the world". It occupies the central part of the Ginowan City. Due to the deafening noise of jet planes flying in or out of this base, it is daily bread for children living in the surrounding areas to have their classes interrupted sever-

al times within a day. In 2004, a U.S. helicopter crashed on the college campus near the base. The removal of the Futenma Base is a legitimate demand for ensuring the livelihood and safety of the local people.

However, to move the base to Henoko does not solve the problem at all. It is also planned that Osprey helicopters will be deployed in the new base to be built in Henoko. Nago citizens would be exposed to terrible noise and the risk of crash of these helicopters and the natural environment in Henoko including the sea with clear water where dugongs live would be irreparably destroyed.

This is why, despite various

pressures placed on them, the Okinawans are resolutely opposing the "relocation of the base within Okinawa". The Japanese Government at the end of 2011 forced the Okinawa local government to receive the "Environmental Impact Statement", a requirement for proceeding quickly with the construction of a new base. However, such a high-handed attitude of the national government is in turn fanning the anger of the population. Sharing with the Okinawans the desire to "hand on a base-free peaceful Okinawa to our children", Zenkyo continues to campaign to get rid of U.S. bases from Okinawa.