

Public Acceptance Activities by the Rokkasho Project



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1. Prolougue

Japan has been developping the nuclear energy for these 30 years.

As of January, 1993, the total nuclear generating capacity in commercial operation amounts to 33 million Kilowatts, which is the third in the world following U.S.A and France.

The number of nuclear generating reactors are 41.

About 30 percent of electricity generation in Japan is supplied by nuclear power reactors in 1992. According to the present plan the ratio will rise to 43 percent in 2010. As mentioned above, in Japan, nuclear power plays the main role in its energy supply.

Therefore it is indispensable to establish the nuclear fuel cycle because Japan relies on overseas energy resources completely.

Besides even uranium resources is to be limited in the future.

With respect to uranium enrichment we depend on U.S.A and France.

With respect to spent fuel reprocessing, we depend on France and The United Kingdom.

In the nuclear fuel cycle, uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing are two major key elements.

It is important for us to establish enrichment and reprocessing domestically as soon as possible.

Japan Nuclear Fuel Limited, incorporated by mainly ten Japanese utilities, engages in constructing and operating nuclear fuel cycle facilities such as reprocessing, uranium enrichment and low level radioactive waste disposal at Rokkasho village in Aomori prefecture, 600 kilometers north of Tokyo, where is the most northern part of Honshu island.

2. The Rokkasho project

(1) The Summary of enterprise

The planned capacity of enrichment service is 1500 tonSWU per year in 2000

which can supply one fourth of all Japanese uranium enrichment demand.

The low level radioactive waste disposal center is able to dispose about 1 million drums of 200ℓ capacity at the first stage, and 3 million drums at the final stage, which will be enough to dispose low level waste come from all Japanese nuclear reactors by the mid of the next century.

The capacity of the reprocessing plant is 800 tonU per year which can deal with most of spent fuel in Japan.

The storage capacity of returned high level radioactive waste is 1440 canisters in the present stage and reaches to some 3000 canisters in the future, which are to be returned from France and The United Kingdom in connection with the reprocessing contracts.

(2) Schedule

The enrichment plant started in operation in March, 1992, with the capacity of 150 tonSWU per year, reaching at the capacity of 1500 tonSWU per year in 2000. The low level radioactive waste disposal center came into operation in last December.

In last December we obtained a construction permission for the reprocessing business and will start the construction coming March. The plant will be in operation in 2000.

The temporary storage facility for returned high level radioactive waste is under construction since May last year, and will be in operation in 1995.

3. The situation concerning the Rokkasho project and our public acceptance activities

(1) Expansion of anti nuclear movement

By the affection of the chernobyl accident, anti nuclear power movement spread not only Aomori prefecture but also all over Japan.

In 1988, 16 anti nuclear groups including labor union organized the committee for the purpose of a campaign to collect signatures for anti nuclear fuel cycle facilities.

Moreover, those groups brought in a lawsuit against the Japan Nuclear Fuel Limited, for stopping the construction of enrichment plant.

In 1988, anti nuclear groups in big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka posted cards to farmers in Aomori, appealing "If nuclear fuel facilities are built in the Aomori prefecture, we will refuse to buy agricultural products of your

prefecture because your agricultural products will be contaminated by the radioactive effects caused by the dangerous nuclear fuel cycle plants. " Anxiety had grown among farmers. In December, 1988, anti nuclear fuel cycle appeal was resolved in the convention of Aomori farmers' Association. The farmers' Association, which had usually supported the Liberal Democratic Party, formed an alliance with the Socialist Party against the nuclear fuel cycle project. In the 1989 election of the House of Councilors, anti nuclear fuel cycle candidate supported by the Socialist Party and the Aomori farmers' Association won an overwhelming victory against the pro nuclear fuel cycle candidate of the Liberal Democratic Party. In the election of Rokkasho village mayor held in December, 1989, Pro nuclear fuel cycle candidate was also defeated.

Next, in the election of the House of Representatives held in February 1990, the Liberal Democratic Party lost 2 seats in Aomori prefectural assembly though it hold all 7 seats before the election, and The Socialist Party got 2 seats.

(2) Public Acceptance activities

Facing furious anti nuclear fuel cycle movements in Aomori prefecture, the Federation of Electric Power Companies decided to restrengthen the public acceptance activities and established the Nuclear Fuel Joint head office together with Japan Nuclear Fuel Service Co. and Japan Nuclear Fuel Industry Co..

To this new organization many excellent members were dispatched from all electric power companies.

The target area for public acceptance activities expanded from the surrounding area to all area of Aomori prefecture.

The first policy of public acceptance activities is "Appealing by face to face" which means the direct personal contact with people being anxious about nuclear fuel cycle facilities.

The second main policy is "Seeing the plant itself is better than persuading orally."

Details are as follows.

(a) To visit and contact with leaders of various groups, organizations and autonomies in the Aomori prefecture

farmers' association 95. autonomies 67

chambers of commerce and industries 62.

(b)As a result of contacts mentioned above, to hold explanation meetings and conferences with rural people, in most of cases, which were held in our site of Rokkasho village by our invitations.

Most of people visited visitors center, the enrichment plant and other facilities' construction sites.

1938 times 59636 persons.

(c)To invite many people to The Tokai reprocessing plant of the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation, or nuclear power stations of electric power companies.

Among all, this activity is very effective for people to understand the safety and obtain reliance on our project.

(d)To advertise chances of cost free visit to our facilities or Tokai reprocessing plant on newspapers.

117 times 4364 participants.

(e)In September, 1991, we built a new visitors center at the cost of about 3 bilion yen.

Some exhibitions are as large size as real equipments of our plant, and some moves as if those were real parts of our plant.

This new visitors center are so popular that it now becomes one of famous sight-seeing places in the area.

140 thousands visitors. (our original estimate : 40 thousands)

(f)We also appeal that our company contributes to the promotion of the culture in the Aomori prefecture.

We held some music concerts for people without fee by inviting foreign children chorus, a famous orchestra and so on.

5 times 10360 audience.

(g)During summer vacation we rent one floor of a department store and prepared entertainments for children to play and learn knowledges about natural radiation while their parents did shopping in the store.

2 times 27345 persons.

(h)The Japanese government sent excellent experts of the Tokyo head office to many places of the Aomori prefecture in order to explain the necessity and safety of the nuclear fuel cycle project to rural people directly.

65 times 2500 persons

Because during these three years we have carried out the public acceptance

activities mentioned above, some press men said that the public acceptance activities by pro nuclear side exceeded the activities by anti nuclear side. According to our research one out of twelve of adult residents in the prefecture has some connections with our activities such as participating meetings.

(3) For the local development

We also appeal our contribution to progress and develop the local economy.

(a) Investment of the Rokkasho project is estimated 1250 billion yen which equal to double times of one of Sinkansen Express railroad extension project.

During the construction period the reprocessing plant will contribute to local economy by 725 billion yen, and after the operation 25 billion yen per year.

Recent Japanese economy is in the depressed situation. However, The Aomori prefecture shows high growth of investment due to our project.

(b) Tax revenues

The Aomori prefecture will get 46 billion yen to be paid by the government according to the national law instituted to promote siting of power station. In addition to that, the prefecture will get 70 billion yen during ten years according to the local law by imposing on our nuclear fuel cycle facilities.

(c) The development foundation

Ten electric power companies and the local government established the development foundation of which fund is 10 billion yen. Every year interest which yield from the foundation are invested into many companies and organization in response to local people's proposals.

408 cases 1.3 billion yen

(d) The Federation of Electric Power Companies tries to promote other industries' investment to the Aomori prefecture.

In response to the Federation's promotion, 22 plants are being sited or planned as of December, 1992.

(4) The change of situation

Owing to these energetic acceptance activities in Aomori and the Liberal Democratic Party's predominant atmosphere at the nation wide level, the Pro nuclear fuel cycle candidate defeated the anti nuclear candidate in the Aomori prefectural governor's election in February 1991 which was regarded

as the most important choice on whether the Rokkasho project was accepted or not. This victory changed the situation drastically.

At the end of same month, 1991, in the by-election of the House of Councilors pro nuclear fuel cycle candidate got a win again.

In April, 1991, The Socialist Party and the Communist Party, both parties leading anti nuclear movements, were defeated losing 9 seats in comparison with previous 10 seats in the election of Aomori prefectural parliament.

In the election of the House of Councilors, 1992, anti nuclear candidate was defeated completely again.

Continuous defeats have affected the unity among anti nuclear groups.

The cooperation between the Socialist Party and the Farmers' Association are facing to break off.

Local newspapers say that appealing the fear of nuclear facilities was not so effective to get votes nowadays.

The data shown below is the result of a survey conducted by a newspaper company in respect with the public acceptance of our project.

July 1989		July 1992	
approval	7%	approval	19%
slow down the pace of the project	41%	approval with feeling strong anxiety	43%
opposite	41%	opposite	26%

By the above data, we can recognize the favorable change of the public acceptance to our project.

However, we also have to recognize that most of people still have anxiety about the nuclear fuel cycle facilities and we shall continuously promote the public acceptance activities.