

Japan: N-Industry donations to the fundraising arm of the Liberal Democratic Party

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Utility executives began political donations after firms ended payments

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Executives and retired officials of Tokyo Electric Power Co. and eight other electricity businesses started donating money to ruling lawmakers in 1976 at the latest, two years after power companies decided to stop making political donations amid public frustration about money and politics, an analysis of donation data by Kyodo News showed Saturday.

The data of donations to the fundraising arm of the Liberal Democratic Party, which held power in Japan for decades until 2009, showed executives of similar ranks at these nine companies handed out like amounts, suggesting an industry-wide orchestrated attempt at replacing corporate donations with individual contributions.

First executives' donations, confirmable from government gazettes and securities report filings, were made in 1976. Individual donations reported in gazettes in those early years were in amounts of 100,000 yen or more. Kyodo News checked the names on the gazettes and executive rosters of these companies in the corresponding periods.

Of the nine companies, executives of five companies — Tokyo and Chubu, Kansai, Shikoku and Kyushu electric power companies — made a total of 17.58 million yen in donations to the LDP's People's Political Association.

By executive rank, a president mostly paid 360,000 yen, followed by 240,000 yen by a vice president and 100,000 yen by a director — a pattern followed at those five companies.

Data showed the sum of contributions by executives gradually grew from 17.88 million yen in 1979, five years after the self-imposed industry-wide ban on donations, to 37.59 million yen in 1999.

From the early 1990s, executives at all nine companies started making donations, hinting that an orchestrated effort expanded across the industry. The nine firms — out of Japan's 10 power companies — include Hokkaido, Tohoku, Hokuriku and Chugoku electric power companies and run nuclear power plants.

The tenth — Okinawa Electric Power Co. — does not own nuclear power facilities and its executives

did not make political donations.

The nine companies had been paying several hundred million yen to the precursor to the People's Political Association until 1973. The sum in that year came to just 400 million yen. They had also donated another 12.08 million yen to the fundraising arms of LDP factions and other relevant bodies.

The power industry decided to end corporate donations to the governing political party after politicians and business came under fire for their cozy ties through money links in an election in July 1974, following sharp hikes in electricity tariffs in the wake of the first oil crisis that hit Japan.

Some people at that time staged a movement to refuse paying a nominal 1 yen from their electricity bills, claiming it was the amount given to politicians.

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<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/news/20110724p2g00m0dm074000c.html>

Power firm execs account for 72% of individual donations to LDP in 2009

TOKYO (Kyodo) — More than 70 percent of donations made by individuals in 2009 to the political fund management body of the Liberal Democratic Party came from executives, including retired ones, of Tokyo Electric Power Co. and eight other utilities, according to data compiled by Kyodo News.

With the finding, donation-based relations between politicians and electric power companies, which have promoted nuclear power generation, are expected to draw fire in the wake of the crisis at Tokyo Electric's Fukushima Daiichi atomic power plant crippled by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami disaster, analysts said.

Kyodo analyzed the People's Political Association's income and expenditure reports on political funds for 2007 to 2009 released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

In 2009, the association received 64.85 million yen in political donations from individuals. Of the total, 47.02 million yen or 72.5 percent came from executives of the nine electric power companies.

Tokyo Electric executives contributed a total of 14.27 million yen, or 30.3 percent of the 47.02 million yen, to the political fund management body of the LDP, which was voted out of power in 2009 after a nearly continuous rein over the previous half century.

Donations from executives amounted to 6.80 million yen for Chugoku Electric Power Co., 6.15 million yen for Chubu Electric Power Co., 6.12 million yen for Shikoku Electric Power Co., 3.13 million yen for Hokuriku Electric Power Co., 3.04 million yen for Hokkaido Electric Power Co., 2.75 million yen for Kyushu Electric Power Co., 2.63 million yen for Tohoku Electric Power Co. and 1.86 million yen for Kansai Electric Power Co.

Okinawa Electric Power Co. executives made no donations.

Donations by power firm executives came mostly in December, indicating that they were made

systematically.

In 1974, the electric power industry declared an end to political donations by utilities amid strong criticism of their cozy relations with politicians.

Among other findings, 141 or 92.2 percent of the 153 executives at the nine power companies in 2009 made donations to the LDP's political fund management body.

Donations by power executives to the association amounted to 56.69 million yen in 2007 and 58.66 million yen in 2008, accounting for 63.5 and 70.1 percent of total contributions by individuals, respectively, in those two years.

Kyodo confirmed no contribution from the executives in 2009 to the political fund management body of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan.

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<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/07/23/20110723p2g00m0dm022000c.html>
