

# Japan: power companies still bought up political fundraising party tickets

Sunday 11 December 2011, by [Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 1 December 2011).

## 9 power companies bought up political fundraising party tickets despite pledge

Nine power companies that own nuclear power stations bought tickets to politicians' fund-raising parties despite a pledge dating from the 1970s never to extend political donations, the Mainichi Shimbun has learned.

The nine companies admitted to having purchased party tickets in interviews with the Mainichi.

In most cases, the companies bought up to 200,000 yen worth of tickets on a single occasion, which politicians are not legally required to declare in their political fund reports.

The revelations have suggested that both legislators and the utilities are trying to keep the purchases secret.

In 1974, the nine electric power companies declared that they would no longer make political donations, which they described as inappropriate as public utilities amid mounting criticism against "money politics."

However, it later came to light that they have been purchasing tickets to legislators' fund-raising parties. Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) — operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant — disclosed at a news conference in October that it had done so over the past several years. Moreover, individual power supplier executives have extended donations to fund-raising bodies of the largest opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

All the nine companies declined to identify the individual politicians holding the parties or specify the amounts.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Michihiko Kano and House of Representatives member Mitsu Shimojo, both with the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), are the only legislators who disclosed their sales of fundraising party tickets to power suppliers in their respective political fund reports for 2010. Kano reported that he sold 400,000 yen worth of tickets to Tohoku Electric Power Co., while Shimojo sold the same amount to TEPCO.

Of 35 legislators who belong to or previously belonged to a parliamentary league related to the electric power industry, two from the LDP responded that they have sold party tickets to power companies. One of them admitted having sold 30,000 yen-worth of tickets to TEPCO in 2010. Five said they have not sold such tickets to utilities.

A former secretary to an LDP member of the House of Representatives admitted having sold remainder tickets to TEPCO. "When I had trouble dealing with unsold tickets, I would visit the general affairs manager of TEPCO. Such practices deserve criticism that they could lead to collusion."

TEPCO says it has not bought such tickets since the Great East Japan Earthquake in an effort to reduce expenses.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, December 1, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/01/20111201p2a00m0na013000c.html>

---

## **TEPCO boss part of utility group in shady deal on publication of radiation books**

The education ministry commissioned a group managed by top executives of utility firms to produce supplementary books on radiation for elementary, junior and senior high school students even after the outbreak of the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, it has been learned.

The Japan Atomic Energy Relations Organization (JAERO) won a contract from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to produce supplementary books on radiation for school children before the outbreak of the crisis at the Fukushima nuclear complex on March 11. But the ministry did not change its decision to ask JAERO to produce the educational materials even after the nuclear disaster.

Toshio Nishizawa, president of Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), and other top executives of utility firms are JAERO's board members. Critics say the selection of the group as a subcontractor for the contract is not appropriate in light of the situation gripped by the ongoing nuclear crisis in Fukushima.

JAERO won the contract at a competitive auction for about 21 million yen on March 9. Because previous supplementary books said in part that "Nuclear plants are designed to withstand major earthquakes and tsunami," the ministry suspended the use of the educational materials at schools in the wake of the nuclear accident. The ministry decided to then produce new supplementary books. But the ministry reviewed the details of the contract for the project without changing the subcontractor and increased the project cost to about 37 million yen due to rising expenses.

Setting an agenda of enlightening the public on the peaceful use of nuclear power, JAERO earned a total of about 1.2 billion yen in fiscal 2010, about 40 percent of the total revenue came in the form of funds in trust from government bodies such as the education ministry and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The full-time executive director is a former employee of Kansai Electric Power Co., and three of the four part-time executive vice-presidents are former employees of utility firms, including a former chief of the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Part-time executive board members include TEPCO president Nishizawa and Kansai Electric President Makoto Yagi.

On the reason why the ministry did not change the subcontractor for the project after the outbreak of the nuclear crisis, an education ministry official in charge of the project said, "There is no change in their knowledge of radiation." On its relationship with utility firms, JAERO commented, "It does not affect the content of the supplementary books."

On behalf of the education ministry, JAERO had 13 radiation experts and teachers form a production committee to write and edit the supplementary materials. The books are focused on the basics and

convenience of radiation, with only a brief mention of the nuclear accident in the preface. Hisashi Nakamura, the production committee chairman and professor emeritus at Tohoku University, said, "We produced them from the standpoint of knowing about radiation correctly. The committee checked the content independently from the executive office (JAERO)."

Hideyuki Ban, a co-director of the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, a non-profit organization in Tokyo, lashed out at the content of the supplementary books. "They highlighted coexistence with radiation. They treated radiation risks lightly." On the subcontractor, he said, "I don't think it reasonable for an organization that promotes nuclear power generation to be entrusted with the project. Soul-searching on the nuclear accident is lacking."

*Mainichi Shimbun*, December 8, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/08/20111208p2a00m0na021000c.html>

---

## **Hokkaido Electric solicited staff for pro-pluthermal nuke project opinions**

SAPPORO — A Hokkaido Electric Power Co. staffer issued an internal memo encouraging employees to voice support for the so-called pluthermal project at the Tomari Nuclear Power Plant's No. 3 reactor, according to sources close to the matter.

Plutonium-thermal or "pluthermal" power generation uses plutonium-uranium mixed oxide (MOX) fuel in regular reactors, and remains an experimental technology.

"Hokkaido Electric employees are also local residents. We are also accepting opinions from those who request anonymity," the memo says. It also mentions asking members of a group of intellectuals set up at the time by the Hokkaido prefectural government to study the safety of the pluthermal program to speed up deliberations.

The memo was purportedly prepared by a Hokkaido Electric employee who attended a meeting between the utility and the Hokkaido government's nuclear power safety section in July 2008.

A third-party investigative panel established by Hokkaido Electric found the memo among internal e-mails in September this year, but its content was not released at the time as the Hokkaido government believed it lacked credibility.

According to sources, Satoru Murai — then chief of the nuclear power safety section and now director general of the prefectural government's Kushiro promotion bureau — was quoted in the memo as saying, "Only opinions against" the pluthermal project have been heard, adding, "Hokkaido Electric employees are also local residents, aren't they?" and "We are also accepting opinions labeled, 'XX town, name withheld by request'."

The memo also noted that the national government had suggested that members of the study panel without expert knowledge of nuclear power be given basic lectures. It also contained remarks calling for stepping up deliberations to get a midterm report by mid-September.

The chief of the Hokkaido government's general affairs department told the *Mainichi* that he cannot comment on the memo because the third-party investigative panel is looking into the matter. Hokkaido Electric announced last month that it will freeze the pluthermal power generation project

due to the scandal.

**Mainichi Shimbun** , November 18, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/11/18/20111118p2a00m0na006000c.html>

---