

**A Drunken Psychopath At the Wheel: Fukushima Revisited**  
by John Reimann

Like a psychopathic drunk driver careening down a busy street, capitalism on its last legs is creating untold disaster in its wake. One of the most serious is the ongoing example of Fukushima.

The 2011 earthquake in Japan and the resultant tsunami are events largely forgotten or otherwise ignored by the corporate media. Likewise for the disaster of the nuclear plant at Fukushima. Recent events, however, are forcing the corporate media to start to pay attention once again. As they say, the prospect of hanging forces the mind to concentrate wonderfully.

**400 metric tons daily of water**

The plant's owner, Tepco, is using some 400 metric tons per day of water to cool the damaged fuel rods in plant number four. However, a greater problem is that an equal amount is flowing from surrounding mountains underground under the plant and into the ocean.<sup>1</sup> Some of this runoff is entering the basement of the stricken plant and becoming contaminated. It, along with the used cooling water, is being stored in giant tanks that are on the grounds of the plant. It was discovered that one of these tanks is leaking -- at least weeks after the start of the leak.



But the issue of what to do about the runoff remains, independent of the leaking tank. After months of ignoring this problem, in July of this year Tepco started trying to deal with the problem. "in July (Tepco) started to inject the ground near the coast with chemicals that hardened it into an underground barrier. But since then, groundwater levels in the area have risen faster, as they hit the barrier. Recently, it has found that the groundwater has risen to around a meter below the surface—already above the level of the underground barrier, which starts 1.8 meters down."

**Earth Softening**

This poses another, and even more, serious risk:

<sup>1</sup><http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323420604578651713545887032.html>

"Tatsuya Shinkawa, nuclear-accident-response director of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, at a news conference last month (said) *the water could pool dangerously underground, softening the earth and potentially toppling the reactor buildings.*"<sup>2</sup>

As a result of this plus leaks from storage tanks, Tepco has raised the alert level from level one to level three. Given their record, whatever level they place it at should probably be doubled or tripled.

**Legal Responsibility**

Compounding their crimes, Tepco is now denying any responsibility for what could be called collateral damage. They have responded to one lawsuit against them by claiming that once the radiation leaves their property, it belongs to whoever's property it lands on, thus absolving Tepco of the resultant damage. "Radioactive materials (such as cesium) that scattered and fell from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant belong to individual landowners, not TEPCO," they wrote in a court action. This is like somebody shooting somebody else with a gun and then claiming no responsibility since the minute the bullet enters the victim's body it belongs to the victim. Or more like Obama denying responsibility for deaths caused by drone bombings, since the bombs land on the ground of another country.

**Possible Steps**

There are some potential solutions to prevent further disaster. They are building a steel structure to hold a crane that would remove the fuel rods. However, this operation is extremely risky since if the rods get too close to each other during this procedure it can set off an uncontrollable chain reaction.



George Monbiot: *Silent on this issue now*

**Monbiot & Hansen Silent**

Prominent environmental journalist George Monbiot has also been remarkably silent. A convert to nuclear energy, in the past Monbiot simply repeated the nuclear industry's claims regarding Chernobyl and Fukushima. Since the above mentioned book was published, and

<sup>2</sup><http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323420604578651713545887032.html>  
WSJ Aug. 6

since the new crisis at Fukushima was revealed, Monbiot has had nothing to say on the issue.

Like Monbiot, the most prominent scientist advancing the proof of human-caused global warming - James Hansen - is also a convert to nuclear energy. Like Monbiot, Hansen sees development of nuclear energy as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They ignore or deny the extreme dangers such as what the Fukushima disaster exemplifies. Their support also rests on the claims of efficiency of nuclear power.

### **Government Subsidies**

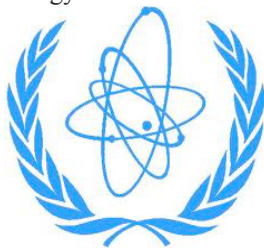
In doing so, they fail to consider the question: If nuclear power is so efficient, why is construction of nuclear power plants dependent on all sorts of government subsidies? For instance, according to a report from the Union of Concerned Scientists "subsidies (to new nuclear plants) could be worth between 4.2 and 11.4¢/kWh, or as much as 200 percent of the projected price of electricity when these plants are built."<sup>3</sup>

### **Regulation**

Also, there is the issue of regulating the industry. Even if nuclear power could be made safe, which in this writer's opinion it can't, there is no chance that this could be done under capitalism. Every government regulatory body always ends up being controlled by the industry it regulates, and the nuclear industry is a case in point.

### **IAEA and Chernobyl**

The main agency related to nuclear power is the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency. Set up in 1957, its charter says that the IAEA's purpose is, in part, "to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy."



Thus, the IAEA has apparently been involved in covering up the number of deaths resulting from the Chernobyl disaster. In that case, the industry and the IAEA claim only a few dozen deaths. A book published in 2011, however, documents nearly 1 million and counting. This is on top of chromosomal damage as well as widespread damage to plants and wildlife. (There are reports, for instance, of swallows being born with two heads and two tails.) As the book's editor said, 'speaking of the IAEA's and WHO's dealing with the impacts of Chernobyl, commented: "It's like Dracula guarding the blood bank. ..."' Of her reflections on 14 months editing the book, she said: "Every single system that was studied — whether human or wolves or

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press\\_release/nuclear-power-subsidies-report-0504.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/nuclear-power-subsidies-report-0504.html)

livestock or fish or trees or mushrooms or bacteria — all were changed, some of them irreversibly. The scope of the damage is stunning." <sup>4</sup>

As the state representative of the nuclear industry, the IAEA continues to obscure the facts surrounding Chernobyl.

The same is true regarding the results of Fukushima. For instance, there are 150 US Navy sailors suing Tepco on the grounds that their health was permanently damaged due to having been stationed on a ship a short distance from Fukushima in the aftermath of the earthquake. Meanwhile, across the Pacific off the west coast of Canada fish are being caught that are bleeding from their gills and eyes. Scientists, typically, are looking for the virus that is causing it, rather than investigating whether a possible nuclear cause.<sup>5</sup>

### **Global Climate Disruption/Global Warming**

Contrary to the views of Monbiot and Hansen, global warming is an additional argument *against* the further use of nuclear power. As global climate disruption/global warming worsens, this will cause the seas to rise, threatening many nuclear power stations that are built along various coasts. The same is true regarding the worsening storms that will accompany global climate disruption. Then there is the inevitability of major social disruption as a result of climate disruption. This will endanger smooth operation of remaining plants as well as storage of spent nuclear fuel.

In 2011, fossil fuel subsidies in the US added up to \$523 billion, while similar state subsidies for renewable energy was a mere \$88 billion.<sup>6</sup>

### **First Steps**

It is difficult to see how the situation at Fukushima can be resolved without further huge major environmental damage, just as it is difficult to see how global climate change will not create equal damage, even if real steps were taken to cut the release of greenhouse gasses immediately. However, a first step as far as Fukushima would have to be immediate establishment of worker/community investigation of the situation there and consultation with various experts - nuclear experts, engineers, etc. - to make an independent assessment of the situation and determine the best "solutions".

<sup>4</sup><http://www.globalresearch.ca/new-book-concludes-chernobyl-death-toll-985-000-mostly-from-cancer/20908>

<sup>5</sup><http://thetruthwins.com/archives/11-facts-about-the-ongoing-fukushima-nuclear-holocaust-that-are-almost-too-horrifying-to-believe>

<sup>6</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy\\_subsidies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy_subsidies)



One thing that such an investigation would reveal is the necessity to start the process of shutting down all nuclear plants immediately. This would have to be accompanied with the massive funding of research into developing renewable energy sources as well as reduction of energy usage, which could start with "decommissioning" the military-industrial complex.