



The Fukushima Disaster Means No to Nuclear Power

Today people in cities all across the U.S. are marching and rallying to demand an end to the use of nuclear power, a technology that has proven to be irremediably unsafe and a threat to the world and all humankind.

Organized by Coalition Against Nukes, these rallies are demanding the abolition of nuclear power. *Detroit Workers Voice* supports this demand and says that the movement must be pushed forward and strengthened by mobilizing the working class. *No to Nukes!*

This movement has been triggered by the drastic Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, which is a stark illustration of the perils of nuclear power.

On March 11 of this year a very strong earthquake, rated near the top of the Richter scale at 9.0, struck Japan. The powerful quake itself did a lot of damage. 47 minutes later a gigantic tsunami crashed ashore, killing 20,000 people and cutting off electricity to the cooling mechanisms of the six nuclear reactors and destroying their back-up generators at Fukushima, 128 miles from Tokyo on Japan's northeastern shoreline. Within a short period of time three reactors melted down, hydrogen explosions took place and large amounts of radiation and radioactive pieces of spent fuel rods were scattered across the area, released into the atmosphere and into the ocean. This radiation contaminated parts of Japan and some of it was swept around the globe by the winds. The Fukushima disaster is already considered to be as bad as Chernobyl and it continues to deepen. Radiation is still being released now, five months later. The nuclear meltdown continues and may be worsening.

The consequences of this disaster on the lives and health of the Japanese people will be dire and are growing. The news media in Japan and the U.S. has instituted a blackout on this news. Children are being contaminated with radiation, the spread of radiation via uninspected food crops continues, and radiation hot-spots are found in areas outside of the evacuation zone. Water is still being pumped onto the reactors in hopes of stopping their reactions and much of it, contaminated, is flowing into the ocean.

The consequences of such a disaster are very long-lasting. The release of a large amount of radiation, as at Fukushima or Chernobyl, can contaminate large areas so badly that they become uninhabitable for centuries.

These events have illustrated the extreme peril of continuing to tolerate the existence of nuclear power and nuclear weapons. No nuclear site can be completely made safe from natural disasters, yet they have been built widely around the developed world.

You would think, in a rational world, that anything as potentially deadly as the creation of massive radioactivity would be outright banned or at least face very close governmental control. The consequences of error and disaster are too great. But these events and developments in the U.S. show that no serious care is actually taken to protect the people in the U.S. or Japan in the face of such danger.

The idiocy of building nuke plants on earthquake faults is brought home by the Fukushima disaster. Many nuke plants in Japan and the US, are built on earthquake faults. But even avoiding faults is not a solution. Recently the federal weapons lab in Los Alamos, New Mexico, which contains reactors and large quantities of dangerous nuclear waste, narrowly escaped being torched by an out-of-control wildfire. During the same period of time, two reactors on the Missouri river, the Cooper and Ft. Calhoun, came close to being inundated by the river's rising floodwaters. Then in August an earthquake of 5.9 on the Richter scale shook the east coast of the U.S. The North Anna, Virginia, nuke plant, near the epicenter of the quake, is only built to withstand earthquakes of 6.1 on the Richter scale. These close calls only indicate that no amount of preparation can guarantee the integrity of a nuclear plant.

Apart from the threat of natural disasters, the lack of care of the capitalist governments for the health of the masses is revealed in their neglect of simple safety regulation. The U.S. government has been allowing regulation of defects in American nuke plants to be steadily loosened as these plants get older and older and physically degenerate. What's a few busted pipes when there is real money to be made? And three-quarters of American nuclear plants, most of them located near populated areas, have been found to be leaking radioactive water.

Not to mention the dangers created by the huge amounts of nuclear waste generated by the process of nuclear energy production. Radioactive materials that are no longer useful in the generation of electricity still continue to emit radioactivity and will do so for centuries, even thousands of years. All over the US and all countries with nuke plants, these materials lie in water-cooling pools, potentially poisoning the environment on a large scale and often already doing so through leaks. Humanity has no solution for this problem.

How has this situation been allowed? There is big money in nuclear energy for the monopoly capitalists. They get their way partly by "regulator capture": the government regulator aspires to a good job in the nuclear industry after he leaves his government regulator job. So he treats the nuclear power companies very nicely so that they will hire him when he is out of the government. These "captured regulators" consistently ignore safety problems and the criminally risky construction of nuke plants. Profits come first under capitalism; poor people can just go die, painfully, as far as these capitalists and government bureaucrats are concerned.

Right up to the Big Regulator himself, the man in the White House, President Obama. He must be "captured" too. What, BP has a massive oil spill in the Gulf? Damn the torpedoes! Let offshore drilling go ahead! What, the coal companies are blasting the tops off of hundreds of mountains in West Virginia? Tough! Let 'em! What, the natural gas capitalists want to poison the rivers and water tables with fracking? That's green of them! Full speed ahead! And as for the nuclear industry, what, it had a little

problem in Japan? So what? It's the green future! General Electric knows how to build those plants! It designed Fukushima and most of the ones here! And it gives a lot of cash to my campaign!

The Obama administration is even pushing to raise the legally allowable levels of radiation exposure for the American public many, many times, so as to cover for the inevitable radiation releases from the old degenerating nuke plants and from the new ones Obama would allow to build. Since science shows that any significant increase in radiation exposure brings a concomitant increase in cancer and deaths, Obama is just trading people's lives for the profits of his buddies at General Electric and Duke Energy, who pay for his campaigns and get their execs positions in his administration.

Nuclear power and nuclear weaponry should be eliminated and banned worldwide. But it will take a powerful mass movement to make progress on this. It will be necessary for the anti-nuke movement, and the environmental movement of which it is part, to appeal to and mobilize the working class. Without the mobilization of the working class, the vast majority of society, these movements will not be able to generate the force to fight effectively the nuclear profiteers and militarists. An appeal to corporate "environmentalism" will only result in market-based ineffectual programs and such frauds as nukes as "clean energy," or "clean coal." In anti-nuke and pro-environmental work a program must be put forward to defend the livelihood of the working people. Otherwise the nuclear industry and the big capitalist polluters will be able to turn workers against the anti-nuke people and environmentalists. Activists against mountain-top removal in Appalachia have already confronted this issue and are struggling to solve it.

In addition, the anti-nuclear movement, like the environmental movement as a whole, must demand a turn away from market-based measures to outright government regulation in the interests of the masses. This means closings of nuke plants and the abandonment of nuclear energy. And it means strong regulation of a whole series of environmental problems.

**Down with nuclear power and nuclear weapons!
Build the mass movement against nukes!
Build a working-class environmental movement!
No Nukes!**



The free market vs. the environment

...capitalism is as deadly to the environment as to the workers. Each new environmental catastrophe shows that private property over the earth's resources means the earth's ruin. We have just seen a political crisis over overfishing in the north Atlantic. The destruction of the world's rain forests continues. The East Asian boom is straining the region's water supplies and bringing other environmental disasters. It's not that scientists and thoughtful people didn't see these catastrophes -- it's that marketplace forces are calling the shots. The marketplace is ravishing the environment. It's a deadly mixture: capitalism with the gigantic technological forces of today.

--From *The rebirth of communism*, article introducing the first issue of *Communist Voice*, April 15, 1995.

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