



BANNNG
Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group



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Nuclear Power Stations – “Condominiums with no toilets”, says Japanese expert

What happened at Fukushima could happen at Bradwell or Sizewell, meeting told.

Nuclear power stations are like ‘condominiums with no toilets’ - their unwanted waste is simply left with the risk of radioactive contamination threatening present and future generations. They also need vast volumes of cooling water and as soon as supplies are cut off reactors rapidly go into meltdown, as happened at Fukushima. The accident is a warning of what could happen at coastal nuclear power stations around the world, like Bradwell and Sizewell.

These were just three of the points made to a packed public meeting in Colchester on Monday, 18 June organised by the Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNNG). The guest speaker was Japanese lawyer and philosopher Yoshi Takamura, introduced by BANNNG’s Chairman, Professor Andy Blowers. The meeting was filmed by ‘Russia Today’ for its news programmes which reach a global audience.

Mr. Takamura, on a visit to Britain, pointed out that Japan had suffered three nuclear catastrophes with which the cities of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and now Fukushima would always be identified. Himself a citizen of Hiroshima, Mr. Takamura said, ‘For the Japanese people the links between nuclear power and nuclear weapons are clear. Human beings cannot coexist with them’.

Mr. Takamura told the meeting of the suffering endured after Fukushima. People within 20km of the plant were told to prepare for the worst and leave their homes. Many rushed out of their houses with only the clothes they wore. Cows were left to die of starvation. With people dispersed all their efforts to produce milk, vegetables and fish had come to nothing. As contamination spread, people were evacuated to areas that themselves became contaminated. In some areas where people had been allowed back, children could not play outside and people must cover their heads, wear masks and carry dosimeters. ‘Since Fukushima, the Japanese people just want to breathe air and eat food with ease and safety’, Mr. Takamura said.

He went on, ‘The disaster at Fukushima has only just begun. The operation to clean up is not going well; there is no way of getting rid of radioactive pollution in forests, in the air or in the sea. There is no place to bury the enormous volumes of contaminated soil.’ When an accident like Fukushima happened there was no way to control the spread of radioactivity and the impacts were boundless in time and space.

Andy Blowers spoke on Fukushima as a moral issue. He pointed out that if a similar accident occurred at Bradwell, for example, a wide area of Essex would have to be evacuated, including Colchester, Clacton and Maldon – possibly extending as far as Braintree, Chelmsford and Southend. ‘A nuclear accident anywhere is a nuclear accident everywhere’ he said. Fukushima was not simply a one off; nuclear accidents were, in fact, ‘normal’, the inevitable product of the tight coupling of complex material and organisational systems. Three mega accidents had occurred within the space of a generation at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and now Fukushima, with evidence of many smaller but dangerous accidents across the globe.

Nuclear energy could not be justified on any moral grounds. It was not necessary since alternatives existed for future energy supply in renewables and energy efficiency, which would ultimately displace fossil fuels and nuclear power. In any case, nuclear energy was too costly with companies increasingly reluctant to invest without subsidies. Nuclear was a moral issue in its global impact and the long-term irreversible consequences. The links to the bomb and the resultant dangers of terrorism, diversion and proliferation made nuclear energy a terrifying prospect. And there were as yet no solutions to the long-term management of nuclear wastes, which would lie around on sites like Bradwell and Sizewell indefinitely.

Both speakers stressed how nuclear energy and its dangerous wastes imposed burdens on vulnerable communities, which were often in remote and poorer locations. It also imposed burdens on people in the far future who had no presence, no vote in the present. There seemed little concern for the future in current proposals for new plants and waste stores in places like Bradwell and Sizewell, which would be inundated within the next century or so. As Mr. Takamura put it, ‘It is unfair that for the sake of 50 years of convenience now, future generations will be faced with managing radioactive waste for at least 400,000 years’.

‘In truth’ Mr. Takamura said, ‘the only reason to build nuclear power stations is because it is extremely profitable; the more built, the more profit. It is misguided to give economics priority over human life’.

In concluding Andy Blowers said, ‘On every moral count we must conclude there are no circumstances in which the further development of nuclear energy can be justified. Of all the energy options for the future, nuclear power should not be one of them’.

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