

Consumers Union of Japan

Japan Resources

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From the Editors:

Renewal of Japan Resources

Welcome to issue No. 163 of Consumers Union of Japan’s English newsletter. This time, we have changed the format to focus on a theme, Consumers and Japan’s Constitution.

From 2016, we will also start sending you updates about our campaigns and events by email. We hope you will stay updated with CUJ’s activities and news on our English website!

Protect Article 9!

Consumers Union of Japan participated in a large demonstration against the changes in Japan's constitution. The event was held on November 19, 2015 outside the Parliament in Tokyo, and some 9000 people participated. We were joined by our new group, Consumers and Citizens for Article 9, and the photo shows our two flags at the evening protest as we wish to collect 20 million signatures until April, 2016 to abolish the changes made to the "Peace Clause" of the post-war constitution.



Consumers Union of Japan strongly supports Article 9

Protest Action against Arms Trade

***Protest Action against
Japan's new Acquisition,
Technology & Logistics
Agency (ATLA) under the
Department of Defense on
October 1, 2015***

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his administration has done everything in his power to change Japan's peace constitution, defying the peaceful wishes of a majority of the people. His government abolished the nation's Three Principles banning exports of weapons in April, 2014. The plan is to make Japan a major weapons producer and arms exporter.

“Making a profit selling weapons is a most contemptible act, but the Abe government is now attempting to engage in this vile behavior as a state enterprise,” comments Koa Tasaka, co-chairman of Consumers Union of Japan, who participated in the demonstration on October 1, 2015.

Koa Tasaka further notes, “I would like to step up the activities to bring down Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s administration in the next election as he is persevering in his immoral support for the weapons industry.”

Koa Tasaka explains: “Production and exports of arms should be stopped. Exporting weapons and weapon systems evokes war and prolongs suffering.

More and more people have become aware of the importance of peace, especially considering the horrible impact war has on children around the world. In spite of this, Shinzo Abe’s government and Japan’s Federation of Economic Organizations (Keidanren) are behind the immoral promotion of this, giving priority to money over the lives of human beings.”

RENUNCIATION OF WAR

Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Source:

The Constitution of Japan

http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

120,000 People Demonstrated Against War Bills

By Yoko Sugiura, Consumers Union of Japan

CUJ participated in the large demonstration outside Japan's parliament on August 30, 2015, against the proposed war bills, demanding that the Abe government withdraw the bills. Our goal was that over 100,000 people would participate, but the organizers estimated that over 120,000 people showed up.

It was the first time we brought the blue flag of our new group, Consumers and Citizens for Article 9. Together with Consumers Union of Japan's green flag, we shouted our slogan, "We oppose the war bills!"

"It's my first time to participate in a demonstration," said a friend as we walked together in the light drizzle.

The demonstration in central Tokyo was one of more than 300 all over the country during the weekend protesting Abe's move to loosen the post-war, pacifist constitution's constraints on the military.

We oppose the legislation that would allow Japan's military to fight overseas, and want to save Article 9 of the constitution, the popular and important "Peace Clause" that renounces war.



Campaign:

Say No to “My Number”

On September 11, 2015, CUJ sent a letter to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, urging the government to put the implementation of the “My Number” system on hold

From October 2015, the people living in Japan will get a notice in the post from the government, including foreigners. It will contain an ID number consisting of 12 digits.

All Japanese citizens and foreigners who reside in Japan will be included in the new system.

The government claims that the system is necessary “to manage information efficiently in the fields of social security, tax and disaster management.” But it will also cover many other issues, including giving the government access to data about bank accounts and even medical information.

There is also a controversial proposal to link the ID number to applications for reduced rates when the consumption tax will be increased from 8% to 10%.

We can certainly imagine how the My Number system will continue to cause increased anxiety about privacy and personal integrity.

Consumers Union of Japan opposes the My Number system that allows the state to unify and centralize all information about citizens. We demand that the implementation of the system, which was decided on September 3, 2015, should be put on hold.

Consumers Union of Japan also thinks people should have the right to opt-out of the system and that compensation issues must be clarified. Individuals should not be forced to prove damage in the legal sense in cases of data leaks of ID number related information.

Newsflash:

Consumers Want Better GM Food Labels!

Petition campaign launched

Keisuke Amagasa, author and chairperson of the No! GMO Campaign since 1996, explains: “Currently, only a few foods must be labelled if they contain genetically modified organisms (GMO). These include tofu, natto and miso, for which the GM food labelling has been mandatory since 2001.”

Keisuke Amagasa notes: “However, what consumers in Japan really want is for all foods that contain GMOs to be labelled properly. We are concerned that due to the Trans Pacific Partnership, it will become more difficult to get stricter rules for food labelling, because the new trade pact will make it easier for the US government and transnational corporations to challenge others for imposing what they call trade barriers.

During 2015, we initiated a campaign to collect signatures to pressure the Japanese government to improve the GM food labelling law. We think this is the last chance. We really want this petition campaign to be a success!”

While Japan’s mandatory GM food rules from 2001 allows for contamination of GMOs up to 5%, other countries have stricter limits. The European Union only allows for 0.9% contamination, while Taiwan is in the process of changing its limit from 5% to 3%. China’s limit is 1% which basically means that no contamination is allowed.

“We base our demands on the consumer’s right to know, a fundamental principle,” notes Keisuke Amagasa. “It also ties in with the right to have correct information, and to have the data to be able to choose.”

Opinion:

Learning from the Tragic Events in Fukushima

By Koa Tasaka

After the nuclear meltdowns at the Fukushima Nuclear Plant in March, 2011, all the nuclear reactors in Japan were shut down one by one and in May, 2012 Japan was able to supply energy without relying a single nuclear plant. The government started a new system to control the nuclear industry by establishing the Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NRA) which set several criteria for the approval of restart of the plants in July 2013. Many electricity companies tried very hard to clear the new criteria.

The Sendai Nuclear Plant in southern Kyushu was the first to clear the new hurdles in July, 2014. When this result was announced, Prime Minister Abe told the media that the NRA approved the safety of the plant, but, Mr. Shunichiro Tanaka, the Chair of the NRA explained that the Sendai Nuclear Plant just

cleared the criteria, and the NRA did not determine that it is safe. However, the Abe administration went on to approve the restart of the operation after getting the agreement of the Kagoshima Prefectural government and the local governments around the reactors.

It is interesting that the local court in Fukui Prefecture made a completely different assessment. On April 15, 2015, they made a judgement that the criteria which was set for the NRA to make judgement on the safety of the nuclear plants does not have logistic reliability. Therefore, the judge concluded that the Takahama Nuclear Plant which had received an OK sign from the NRA can not restart the operation of its reactors!

It is my opinion that the Abe administration has not fully reviewed any of the three reports which have been published after the 2011 disaster in Fukushima. Why did TEPCO lose control of the Fukushima reactors?

In the past three years, I have been studying one of the reports by the foundation called the Rebuild Japan Initiative led by Dr. Kouichi Kitazawa together with a group of engineers including Dr. Kubota, former Professor of Tokyo Institute of Technology. If Mr. Abe really learn from the sad accident at Fukushima, he would not hasten to restart the nuclear plants in Japan. The report clearly tells us that we should not keep nuclear plants operating. Rather, we should encourage natural energy sources to replace the nuclear plants which are beyond our human capacity to control.

Koa Tasaka, co-chairman of CUJ since 2014 is also Board Member at Asian Rural Institute and sits on the Steering Committee of the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PANAP).



Consumers Union of Japan

CUJ is a politically and financially independent non-governmental organization (NGO). We are funded by membership fees, sales of publications and donations.

CUJ was founded in April 1969 as Japan's first nationwide grassroots consumer organization. CUJ is officially certified as a non-profit organization by the Japanese NPO legislation.

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