



JAPAN RESOURCES

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English web site:

<http://www.nishoren.org/en>



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CUJ Resolutions at the 42nd Annual Meeting in June, 2015

1) We oppose the security bills aimed at changing Japan's constitution, and urge the government to protect the people's right to live in peace and safety

70 years after the end of WW2, the Japanese government is introducing a number of controversial bills to change the post-war constitution, allowing for a more active military role for Japan. For 70 years, we have lived as peaceful consumers and workers. Our way of peacefully earning a living is now being destroyed as the Abe Cabinet tries to abolish Article 9 of the constitution, and allow for collective self-defense, which ultimately means Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) will be turned into a regular military force. This will also mean that Japan once again will be a country that can wage wars.

Consumers Union of Japan strongly opposes this as an attempt to infringe on our human rights. We want to remind the government that consumers have rights, including the pursuit of happiness and a safe livelihood. We take this to mean that we have the right to live in peace and safety. Consumers Union of Japan demands that the Abe Cabinet immediately withdraws the proposed bills to change the constitution and hereby declare that we are a part of the movement to oppose the proposed security bills.

2) We oppose the continued reliance on nuclear power

After the March 11, 2011 nuclear disaster at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, it became clear that relying on nuclear power is a dead end for society. In spite of this, the Abe Cabinet announced its new energy policy in April, 2015, stating that Japan should continue to rely on nuclear power, defining it as an "important base-load power source," and sticking to its policy of promoting the nuclear fuel cycle. The government is already set to approve the restart of the Sendai and Takahama Nuclear Plants, and is making efforts to export nuclear power technology to other countries.

Meanwhile, in Fukushima Prefecture, some 120,000 people are still unable to return to their homes near the site of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. We note that it was a man-made disaster, and that the melted-down reactors still emit over 320 tons of radioactive water every day as they must be kept cool. Efforts to create a frozen wall around the complex failed. Also, workers on the site are being exposed to radiation in a perfunctory and careless way by the management. This is a clear human rights violation. In January, the government and TEPCO suggested that radioactive water should be disposed of into the ocean, something we cannot accept.

The Japanese archipelago with its active volcanos and many frequent earthquakes is particularly unsuitable for nuclear power. When accidents occur, radioactive substances will be released into the environment, with radioactive fallout including plutonium. Spent nuclear fuel also cannot be reprocessed without creating plutonium, and so far Japan has created 47 tons of this extremely dangerous radioactive material which can be used in nuclear weapons. The "deathly ash" (highly radioactive waste) has a half-life of 10,000 years. Also, mining for uranium is fraught with danger. All this points to a collusion of lies and cover-ups to make continued operation possible, as the basic truth is that radioactive substances can never coexist with living beings.

At the moment, not a single nuclear reactor is in operation in Japan. Even so, we basically have sufficient electricity. Higher costs for electricity seem to be the only reason to restart the currently idle nuclear power plants. We support independent efforts to save energy and reduce energy consumption for a peaceful livelihood for everyone, including for future generations. We look forward to a society that wisely relies on natural, renewable energy based on the "local production, local consumption" principle for all the people in the world, with zero reliance on nuclear power.

3) We oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership that will destroy our livelihoods as consumers

At this very moment, secret negotiations behind closed doors for the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement is ongoing, involving 12 countries; Japan and the United States are among these. But in reality, it has nothing to do with “free trade” but instead, it will give immense powers to a handful multi-national corporations that want to create an overt supra-national framework to avoid national or local governmental control.

TPP is part of a larger global campaign for “free trade” agreements (FTAs) that will impose rules on intellectual property with extended copyright protection periods (including strengthened exclusive licensing, with consequences for access to medicines). The new rules being introduced for foreign direct investment are a direct threat to our public services, as foreign corporations will be able to sue governments if they feel they are treated unfairly under national or local rules. Various regulations to provide welfare services through public means could thus be challenged by privately held multinational corporations. In particular, obscure new ISDS rules would grant an investor the right to use dispute settlement proceedings against the Japanese government. The secretive TPP negotiation process indicates that the “profit for the 1% of the elite” will be creating much hardship for the 99% of the population who are workers, consumers, farmers/fishermen – the vast majority of citizens. This is the reason so many voices of opposition have been raised against the TPP.

To show our strong opposition to TPP, Consumers Union of Japan published an op-ed in October, 2014 together with Public Citizens. We noted:

What is important to consumers? Healthy and safe food. Banking and insurance services that protect their financial well-being. Affordable medicines and health care. Access to an open Internet and privacy protections. A clean environment. From what we know about the TPP text, it would undermine these critical consumer priorities, not promote them.

Meanwhile, under U.S. free trade agreements alone, other governments have been ordered to pay more than \$430 million in compensation to corporations – with \$38 billion more in claims now pending. And in some cases governments have also eliminated important consumer safeguards to avoid paying more. For consumers, rules that ensure the safety of imported food or information through mandatory food labels are examples of standards that TPP may do away with. For example, we are extremely concerned that Japan’s mandatory GMO labelling rules may be considered to fall under the category of “barriers to free trade” and become a target.

The fact that the TPP negotiations are not held in the open is a main cause of our concern. We remain in strong opposition to TPP for the dangerous reasons stated above, and resolve to continue to fight against it entering into force.

4) We oppose the bills for the expanded use of the National Identification System (“My Number”) and wire-tapping by the government

The Abe Cabinet wants Japan to “escape (or depart) from the post-war regime.” A National Security Council has been established, and a new law for special state secrets enacted. As part of this, expanded powers for wire-tapping of phone calls or emails have been introduced to aid criminal investigations. The new powers go beyond serious crimes (murder, drug dealing, weapon smuggling) to include general criminal activity of any kind. The extended rules for wire-tapping mean telecommunication carriers will now be monitored 24 hours a day, basically giving free range to the political forces that wish to monitor any phone calls or email activity.

The next target is a bill to criminalize so-called conspiracy. Potentially, this will cover any activity, including campaigns by non-governmental organizations, citizens groups or even consumer organizations. What the Abe Cabinet has said it wants to do is to create “the world’s most corporation-friendly country.” This explains the continued push for a national identification number system, known as “My Number” in katakana in Japanese. Under this system, everyone will be assigned a 12 digit number for total control of all citizens. Moreover, corporations will have easy access to each individual’s private information. The new bills weaken the Personal

Information Protection Law (2003) and in particular, by encouraging the creation of Big Data the current government is handing over information about our private worlds to the corporate world.

Already, information security is being violated. Driving home this point, important private information such as pension data was recently leaked in the spring of 2015. The national *pension* system was simply hacked, leading to 1.25 million cases of personal *data* being *leaked from the Japan Pension Service*. With more and more efforts to amass Big Data about consumer behaviour and other aspects of our daily lives, the potential for such violations are increasing.

We see similarities in how the new legislation will suffocate citizens, stifle journalism and limit our democratic rights – just like in the pre-WW2 period. In that era too, corporations were given increased power as the country headed for war. We find that unacceptable. Consequently, we oppose the bills for increased wire-tapping, the introduction of the “My Number” system, the revision of the Personal Information Protection Law (2003), and the new definition of conspiracy crime. We are strongly opposed to Japan becoming a country that can wage wars, and resolve to protect Japan’s democracy and human rights.

(Resolutions adopted at Consumers Union of Japan’s 42nd Annual Meeting on June 20, 2015)

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“Function Claims” Not the Same as Actual Benefits for Consumers

Consumers are facing a new range of “function claims” on foods as the government has introduced a novel scheme that allows companies to market foods without any independent review or approval process. The rules for the Food with Functional Claims (FCC) legislation have not yet been published in English. We are already seeing products advertised to the general public in Japan. Consumers Union of Japan and other organisations are very critical of this new approach to food labelling.

Since 1991, hundreds of products have been using the Food for Specified Health Uses ([FOSHU](#)) scheme which at least have some degree of regulatory control – but the industry has claimed that it is both [costly and lengthy](#), making it prohibitive especially for small and medium size businesses. CUJ has been increasingly concerned about FOSHU, and we protested when a cola product was able to get FOSHU status in 2012.

But the new FCC scheme is even worse – note that it just says “function claims” and these claims are only based on data that the companies provide themselves. There is no way for consumers or anyone to actually confirm if the claims are true or not. So, whatever the company claims, the government will rubber-stamp, although the rules actually specifically prohibit companies from advertising that the government has somehow “approved” the claims!

The first example of a FCC product comes from Fancl, promising consumers better eyesight... All these capsules contain is lutein (E161b) and some blueberry extract, plus additives and preservatives. Is this really a food, we wonder? Other supplement makers including DHG, Herbalife or Amway are sure to follow.

Expect more confusing “function claims” while a much better approach is to eat more vegetables, that naturally contain these substances in forms that the body easily benefits from.

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GMO Free Zone Meetings

The No! GMO Campaign and Consumers Union of Japan, together with other groups and NGOs, held the 10th GMO Free Zone meeting in Aso, Kumamoto on March 7, 2015. Over 500 consumers, farmers, scientists and others participated in the successful event. We also went to Berlin, Germany for the large European GMO Free Zone conference, with 450 activists from all over the world.



The grass root resistance against genetically modified organisms and GM food is growing even as the largest biotech company, Monsanto, is trying to take over its rival, Syngenta, to create an even stronger hold on GMO seeds and the agrochemicals needed for GMO farming. “Consumers Union of Japan started the No! GMO Campaign in 1996,” says Michiyo Koketsu, CUJ. “There is no commercial farming of GMOs in Japan, but a lot of soy, corn and canola is being imported. We think the labelling should be better so consumers can avoid GMO food.”

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Fair Finance Japan: Help Your Bank Become More Ethical!

Some banks and pension funds have rules about what kind of companies they invest in. For example, ethical investment means the funds do not support companies involved in weapons manufacturing or environmental destruction. Human rights and labour rights are other issues that many people should urge their banks to support.

Since starting in 2009, a Dutch initiative has grown into an international campaign, Fair Finance Guide. Now, Japan also joins this great project, started by A Seed Japan, JACSES and PARC. They have carefully investigated five of Japan’s largest banks. Their new website (<http://fairfinance.jp>)* will help you compare their score on a range of issues.

For example, Mizuho Bank scores relatively high on transparency, but low on environmental issues like forestry protection. All five get “Zero” for their investments in armaments, except Mitsui Sumitomo Trust, that scored “One” which is still terrible. Resona scores worse than the others on climate change and food issues (including GMO and pesticides). No bank scored a perfect “Ten” any of the issues, as determined by Fair Finance Japan.



There is clearly room for improvement. You can help by clicking on the links on the website. A message will be sent to Fair Finance Japan and then directly to the different banks. In Europe, reports about how banks invest in questionable corporations have led to the emergence of a large number of ethical pension funds, as people increasingly want their life savings to support good practices. I think this is a really good idea!

*[Fair Finance Japan](#) is supported by SIDA

(English version of Martin's essay published in CUJ's Shouhisha Report No. 1570)

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Symposium & Documentary Film Events: Globalism and the Commercialization of Life

Date: February 7, 2015

Time: 13:30-16:00

Place: Tokyo Toshima Ward Labour Welfare Hall

We will screen *Eggsplotation*, a new documentary film about the infertility industry in the United States, which has grown to a multi-billion dollar business. Its main commodity is human eggs. In Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government also wants to expand the life business and medical treatment sector. This includes efforts to spur research and development in new fields such as IPS cells, genetic diagnosis, and synthetic biology, that are running out of control. We are aiming to create a movement against this trend and invite everyone to participate.

Speaker: Amagasa Keisuke, CUJ

Produced by [The Center for Bioethics and Culture](#), *Eggsplotation* spotlights the booming business of human eggs told through the tragic and revealing stories of real women who became involved and whose lives have been changed forever. The film's Executive Producer, Director, and Writer, Jennifer Lahl is founder and president of The Center for Bioethics and Culture Network. Lahl couples her 25 years of experience as a pediatric critical care nurse, hospital administrator, and senior-level nursing management with a deep passion to speak for those who have no voice.

The film will be shown in English with Japanese subtitles.

Documentary Film: Cowspiracy

We will hold an informal viewing of the groundbreaking documentary, Cowspiracy, at the CUJ office on March 11, 2015. The video is in English with Japanese subtitles. Start: 15:00.

About the film:

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret is a groundbreaking feature-length environmental documentary following intrepid filmmaker Kip Andersen as he uncovers the most destructive industry facing the planet today – and investigates why the world’s leading environmental organizations are too afraid to talk about it.

Animal agriculture is the leading cause of deforestation, water consumption and pollution, is responsible for more greenhouse gases than the transportation industry, and is a primary driver of rainforest destruction, species extinction, habitat loss, topsoil erosion, ocean “dead zones,” and virtually every other environmental ill. Yet it goes on, almost entirely unchallenged.

As Andersen approaches leaders in the environmental movement, he increasingly uncovers what appears to be an intentional refusal to discuss the issue of animal agriculture, while industry whistleblowers and watchdogs warn him of the risks to his freedom and even his life if he dares to persist. This shocking yet humorous documentary reveals the absolutely devastating environmental impact large-scale factory farming has on our planet, and offers a path to global sustainability for a growing population.

You can order your own copy of the film on the [Cowspiracy website!](#)

Date: March 11, 2015

Time: 15:00-17:00

Place: CUJ office, Nishi-Waseda, Tokyo

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Japan’s Booming Tourism Industry Needs a Reality Check

To be a tourist in Japan can be both wonderful and frustrating at the same time. There is a lot to discover and many truly beautiful places to visit. For people who come to Japan for the first time, the delicious food is always one of the highlights, even if most menus are still only printed in Japanese. Oh well, sometimes sign language and a nice smile will save the day. And a little confusion can be a fun story to tell, at a later date.

However, the Japanese government seems hell-bent on further increasing the number of foreign tourists, without any concern for the real problems.

Popular places like Nara and Kyoto suffer from severely over-crowded roads. Even near the most famous temples and shrines, there are no efforts to ban cars and facilitate pedestrian safety. Last fall I was surprised to see thousands of visitors stand in line to get to see the illumination at Kiyomizu Temple, while taxis and even large coach buses were trying to reach the same spots on the narrow slopes. It wasn’t chaotic, but if an emergency had happened, there would have been no way for an ambulance or fire trucks to arrive.

Tokyo has the only proper tourist information center to cover all of Japan, located in a small office near Tokyo Station, and while their website is very good, most tourists prefer to use guidebooks written by foreigners. Smaller offices elsewhere are understaffed and can’t deal with all kinds of requests. For over 13 million foreign visitors arriving to Japan in 2014, that is clearly not enough. But the government seems hell-bent on counting heads (and revenue) rather than really considering the consequences.

Tourism is a service industry with very direct consumer issues. Hotels that don't have non-smoking rooms, or restaurants with poor service, can ruin the experience of an expensive over-sea trip. For example, how are tourists supposed to know that there is almost no space for suitcases on the Shinkansen? Many promises are made that cannot be kept, but there seems to be nowhere to turn with legitimate complaints...

(English version of Martin's essay published in CUJ's Shouhisha Report No. 1569)

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Japan Resources is published by Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ). CUJ was founded in April 1969 and was officially certified as a non-profit organization on May 1, 2006 by the new Japanese NPO legislation. We continue to be a non-political and financially independent organization (NGO). CUJ is funded by membership fees and donations. The main concern of CUJ and its members is to realize a world of liberty and equality, a world free of economic, social and legal discrimination, and to preserve a safe and healthy environment for our children's future.

CUJ pursues the following goals on behalf of consumers: (1) To secure for ourselves and our families safe and healthy lives, (2) to establish systems/laws to protect the rights of consumers, (3) to promote peace, social justice and economic fairness, (4) to support and empower consumers who care about the environment, and (5) to cooperate with foreign consumer groups/organizations.

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