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Not a Wake Up Call

Japan's -- and the world's -- nuclear problem has been called a house built with no toilets. No one figured out a way dispose of one of the nastiest stuffs man has ever created, radioactive waste, before building Fukushima, or any nuclear power facility. Yet people cling to the illusion of nuclear energy as safe, even in the face of the evidence of the disasters at Fukushima and Chernobyl. Even the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), which is mandated to promote nuclear power, stated that much of the cause of the triple melt-throughs at Fukushima was related to the Japanese workers and citizens believing too much in this illusion. In July 2012, the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission concluded that the disaster was really no accident, but "man-made." Preventable but for the hubris of human beings who think we can actually safely contain and control radioactivity.

The black and blue bags filled with radioactive debris and contaminated topsoil, now synonymous with the Japanese countryside near Fukushima, remind us as Vermonters of the plastic wrapped white bales of hay we often see local farmers leave in the field before pick up. But in Japan, the bags are not so benign. There are now 20,000,000 such bags, 1 meter by 1 meter, a cubic yard of contamination at a time, row upon row at the side of farmers' fields and roadsides -- everywhere. These bags contain the work results of thousands of Japanese citizens whose job it is to pressure wash walls and roofs of buildings and peel away inches of topsoil, even tree bark, to decrease the amount of free-floating radiation left from the radioactive releases from Fukushima Daiichi that started March 11, 2011. More than 700 of these bags were swept away during a typhoon last fall, some ending up in rivers 160 kilometers away, according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

According to the Counterpunch, these bags numbered together could fill 15 baseball stadiums. Decontamination is a monumental and risky job that supposedly has payoffs in that some of the lesser contaminated areas may be opened to human occupation again. The heavily contaminated areas next to the Daiichi reactor may never be habitable by humans. This is just the contamination on land. Fukushima Daiichi continues to spew 300 + metric tonnes of contaminated water into the Pacific Ocean each day, roughly 1830 days so far. Fish are turning up dead and/or with gruesome mutations. The water and the contaminated air have already reached the United States. Maybe it has come home to roost.

The head of the "clean up" in Japan stated once that it would take 200 years to clean up the Fukushima disaster. Yet just this past month, Fukushima engineers stated that it will take "only" forty years to clean up Fukushima. I'm massively surprised that the site of Fukushima Daiichi can supposedly be cleaned up more rapidly than Entergy is willing to clean up the Vermont Yankee site. At VY we know where the high level nuclear waste is. In Fukushima, scientists have no idea where the radioactive fuel could be, much less how to control or contain it. Five years after the disaster, a technique for retrieving the lost fuel, which supposedly melted through the bottom of the reactor, has yet to be developed.

On this fifth anniversary of the beginning of one of the most horrendous man-made disasters ever, it is past time to recognize the lessons we need to learn. To honor the nuclear refugees who have lost their homes and livelihoods, who have already started developing serious medical problems and to the many more who will in the near future, we don't need to just make a few minor adjustments to regulations for nuclear power plants, as our Nuclear Regulatory Commission has done.

Fukushima was not a wake up call!
Fukushima is not over!
Fukushima was not a warning shot across the bow.
Fukushima presents mankind with an unsolvable riddle
(how to contain radiation once it is out).
Mankind's job is to solve the riddle to solution
not to push out more radionucleides

Fukushima proves that best technologies cannot protect our home - in fact
technology can help hasten the demise of the planet.

For Japan to be re-starting nuclear technology while tons of radiation flows into
the sea each day is shameful and disrespectful to all life forms.

We need to face the fact that we, as human beings, do not have the ability to prevent the terrible risks
inherent in nuclear power from happening, nor do we have the ability to clean up the consequences of
inevitable human error. There is no safe or responsible way to use nuclear power to generate electricity.
Nor is anything that can create a mess so toxic and long-lived that it takes 200 years to clean up, ever be
called "green." It is past time to devote our resources to sustainable power solutions and give up this
deadly illusion that nuclear power can be safe.