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Will San Onofre Be Our Fukushima?

By Faith Attagui



Not if Ramona resident Dave Patterson has his way...

March 11, 2012 (San Diego's East County)--A member of Vietnam Veterans for Peace, Mr. Patterson joined about 300 activists today coming up from San Diego, down the coast from Eureka, and across the ocean from Japan. They converged at the San Onofre nuclear power plant for two reasons.

One was to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster.

The other was to demand the permanent shutdown of the San Onofre nuclear power plant.

Fukushima is an ongoing disaster not yet under control. The potential for a hydrovolcanic explosion in Reactor #3 still looms. And Reactor #4, with a full spent fuel pool on its roof, is on the brink of collapse.

San Onofre hasn't yet reached that state of emergency, but severe mechanical problems in Reactors #2 and #3 have resulted in a shutdown of both.

Dave Patterson was there to make sure they remain shut down. Speaking to the crowd, he said,



“San Onofre has 30,000-40,000 tons of spent fuel. If something happens and there’s a disruption to that spent fuel, it’s all over. It’s guaranteed all over within a 10-mile radius, and within 50 miles we’re talking about the disruption of more than 8 million people’s lives. Every day this plant runs, toxic waste is created that remains toxic for tens of thousands of years. They are willing to do that to make a few bucks.... Let’s put them out of business. Let’s shut this plant down!”

Carlsbad resident Ace Hoffman added technical explanations as to just why San Onofre should remain in shutdown mode. Reactor #2 has experienced severe wear in many of the thousands

of tubes housed within its newly-installed steam generators. The steam generators of Reactor #3 are also experiencing serious problems. He said,

“And they don’t know why. So right now we are in 100% shutdown. That started with the people in San Onofre. They don’t want to run that reactor because they don’t think it’s safe. Well, we don’t want to run that reactor because we don’t think it’s safe, either. But there’s one difference. None of us are making any money from the reactor when it’s running. And they are losing about \$1 million/day per reactor.”

According to Solana Beach resident Torgen Johnson, San Onofre is nothing else but a ticking time bomb. A graduate of Harvard and USC and father of three, Mr. Johnson recounted his suspicions right after the Fukushima disaster when governmental officials assured everyone “not to worry” because fallout would never get to the U.S.

He was privy to the fact that natural forces and wind currents are capable of carrying particles across oceans in a matter of days under the right conditions. He knew a radioactive plume from Fukushima was on its way.

Worried about possible radiation exposure to his kids, he bought a Geiger counter.

He tested his new purchase on one of his children’s favorite drinks: a half-empty gallon of organic milk sitting on a shelf in his refrigerator. His Geiger counter found detectable radiation in the milk. Johnson warned,

“If any of you drank milk since April 2011 you’ve ingested some of this. We were never told about that.”

A recent U.S. Geological Survey has predicted an imminent megaequake in Southern California. Starting on the San Andreas fault, it would move northward from the Salton Sea up through Santa Barbara. The damage would be terrible.

But the most serious devastation would involve that caused by destruction of the San Onofre nuclear power plant. Ruptures caused by an earthquake such as that predicted by the U.S.G.S. could result in radioactive poisoning of some 8 million people in the surrounding population. Johnson concludes,

“This particular power plant produces only 7% of California’s energy. And yet it risks up to \$1 trillion worth of land and improvements, and it’s not just the monetary costs. It’s all of our lives.... You hear the sirens go off, and you’ve got a few hours to gather everything, and then you’ve got to jump into gridlock, roll your windows up and pray. Because there’s no viable evacuation plan here. They plan for 10 miles out but outside of that, you’re on your own....”

A number of other speakers took part in the afternoon events. These included Ms. Kyoko Sugasawa and Mr. Hirohide Sakuma, two guests from Japan who live near Fukushima.



Film star Mimi Kennedy asked in reference to the effects of radioactivity on all aspects of life, “What are we doing to the DNA, the genetic blueprint of this earth on which we depend?”

And Cori Schumacher, a world-renowned surfer from Cardiff, spoke of personal experiences surfing the waters on the beaches south of San Onofre. “We’re canaries in the coal mine,” she said. “We surf the runoff of progress.”

All speakers agreed that San Onofre should be permanently shut down. MC’d by Ray Lutz and supported by more than 30 anti-nuke, Occupy and other political groups, this event placed public support for San Onofre’s permanent shutdown firmly on the map.

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