Press Release

People Power!

JFE Steel and Chugoku Electric Power Co. drop plans for coal-fired power plant in Soga after citizens of Chiba and Tokyo metro region fight for clean air

December 28, 2018
FoE Japan

On December 27, Chugoku Electric Power Co. and JFE Steel announced that they had cancelled plans for a coal-fired power plant in its “Soga Thermal Power Plant Construction Plan (tentative name)” (1,070 MW, planned operation in 2024) in the Soga district of Chiba City, facing Tokyo Bay, and would start considering project feasibility for joint construction of a natural gas thermal power plant.¹ The reason for cancellation, as stated on the company website, was “We do not anticipate adequate business viability with this plan.” FoE Japan joins the collaborating local groups and environmental groups in welcoming this decision.

In response to the original plan, the “No Coal – Citizens Group on the Soga Power Plant Project” was launched in April 2017, led mainly by local residents, and it conducted a dynamic campaign including distributing flyers, appealing to the public at busy train stations, handing out public surveys to gather input, observing official meetings such as environmental committees of Chiba City and Chiba Prefecture, and reaching out to the corporate headquarters of the project proponents. They also joined forces with citizen groups where coal plants are being planned around Tokyo Bay, as well as environmental groups like Kiko Network and FoE Japan.

Despite the opposition, the proponents proceeded with the formal environmental impact assessment process and in January 2018 published a document proposing the methodology. This triggered even greater public opposition at public information meetings, etc.

The problems of the project as identified by community groups included:
1. The project went against the current global trend of ending coal dependency in context of climate change.
2. Even if they are built using the latest technologies, large coal power plants are serious air polluters, emitting many air pollutants (SOx, NOx, PM2.5, mercury, etc.) and their impacts spread over a wide area.
3. Soot and dust are already falling in the area from other industries.
4. The site is in close proximity to many public facilities, including a soccer stadium immediately adjacent, plus schools and hospitals nearby.
This decision by the proponents to give up on coal is a direct outcome of vociferous opposition from the local community and environmental NGOs, including numerous written appeals and actions in various forms. This is a victory for People Power.

In November 2018, FoE Japan recorded video interviews with members of the “No Coal – Citizens Group on the Soga Power Plant Project” and posted many of them online (in Japanese).

- Video: The story behind everyday life: Soga, Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture
  http://www.foejapan.org/climate/nocoal/soga.html
  (Links to interviews and articles are at the bottom of this post.)

- Interviews and articles (in Japanese)
  【The story behind everyday life vol.5】Takashi Watanabe
  https://foejapan.wordpress.com/2018/12/19/soga_1/
  【The story behind everyday life vol.6】Kuniko Yamazaki
  https://foejapan.wordpress.com/2018/12/26/soga_2/
  【The story behind everyday life vol.7】Tomomi Shinada
  【The story behind everyday life vol.8】Yukiko Konishi

Despite this one cancellation, a total of 34 coal-fired thermal power plants are still being planned or under construction in Japan. In the Tokyo Bay area, planning is still under way for the Sodegaura and Yokosuka coal plants. Now that one proponent has found that coal is not viable, FoE Japan calls for the other coal plans to be cancelled, and will continue to speak out in solidarity with other local communities.

LINKS
- “No Coal” website news related to the Soga Thermal Power Plant (in Japanese)
  https://nocoal-tokyobay.net/tag/chiba/

- FoE Japan: Negative side of electrical market liberalization – The rush for new coal-fired power plants! (in Japanese)
  http://www.foejapan.org/climate/nocoal/index.html

- No power plant needed in Soga: New construction plan proceeding in an area with a history of industrial pollution (October 2017 article, in Japanese)
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