

## Interview with Japanese Diet Member Yosuke Kondo, Secretary General of DPJ's Energy Policy Research Committee

One day before the formation of the Hatoyama Cabinet on September 16, the Atomic Industrial Journal (AIJ), published by JAIF, interviewed Chairman Yosuke Kondo of the Energy Policy Research Committee, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) policy board. The interview focused on the party's energy policy, as well as measures to combat global warming.

Mr. Kondo was appointed to Parliamentary Secretary for Economy, Trade and Industry on September 18.

*Interviewer: Kiyoshi Kono (JAIF)*



*—What is the basic nuclear policy of the DPJ?*

KONDO: As Mr. Mashiko already told you [see interview with Teruhiko Mashiko, FOCUS, September 14, 2009], the DPJ's stance toward nuclear power changed substantially in May 2007, when we switched from considering it as "transitional energy" to viewing it as a major power source to be steadily promoted. That was confirmed by our "next cabinet," in which I served as the shadow Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry.

*—Please tell us the reasons for that.*

KONDO: The catalyst was a bill on disposal of high-level radioactive waste (HLW). We established a nuclear fuel cycle subcommittee in the DPJ and discussed many issues in depth, step by step. Eventually, we supported the law. Although it took us three years, our position on nuclear energy evolved.

*—The series of policies issued by the DPJ states that the government should have final responsibility for the final disposal of high-level radioactive waste. What does that mean?*

KONDO: The current main body for implementing disposal is an incomplete organization. It is neither a national body nor an independent administrative agency, nor is it a private company. We are concerned that it cannot effectively guarantee, for example, something 300 years in the future, or that it can convince residents of a siting area. Even if it requires revising the law, we think that the government should get out in front and establish a system whereby it is responsible for establishing the technology and has final responsibility for disposal.

*—On several occasions, the national government has passed down judgments differing from those made by prefectures: not just about HLW disposal, but the operation of nuclear power plants (NPPs).*

KONDO: We say that we will develop a legal framework whereby the government and municipalities in siting areas have sufficient opportunities to talk. We want to eliminate ambiguity – for example, what the authority of municipalities is, and how the safety of local people should be ensured.

*—The DPJ has also clearly stated that it wants to create a Nuclear Safety Regulation Commission.*

KONDO: We think that regulatory reform is necessary, but don't think it necessarily requires reorganization. What is most important is to safely improve availability factors at nuclear power plants – i.e., what should be done for that. Given that the creation of an Energy Ministry was once discussed, some people think that it is better to unite nuclear affairs under a single nuclear administration. That would include such things as moving nuclear R&D, currently under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). But if we fiddle around with the organization of government departments, it will take time, and such things do not always turn out as well as hoped. We need to handle the matter carefully.

*—The DPJ's target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is very ambitious. How practical is it?*

KONDO: When the DPJ previously introduced bills in the Diet on global warming measures, we said that a 25% reduction would be quite hard. By giving top importance to nuclear power generation, we will work and mobilize to achieve it using all possible measures, including energy conservation and the development of new energies.

*—Based on its full commitment to its manifesto, the DPJ has won the chance to govern as Japan's ruling party. How confident are you that you can realize your policies?*

KONDO: Needless to say, we will work seriously to fulfill our campaign pledges. Some may be more difficult or take more time than others, and economic and social conditions may also change. In any case, we will fully explain what we are doing and why, and the Japanese public will make their judgment in the next election. We will work realistically and are not worried. In short, nothing is more important than the trust of people.