

## Gov. Sato Challenges AEC Council Decision

At the beginning of the 15th meeting of the Long-term Program Council of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), held on December 22, Gov. Eisaku Sato of Fukushima Prefecture was given a chance to voice his opinion of the council's proceedings. He said that the council's discussions on nuclear fuel cycle policy had been inappropriate, and asserted that the AEC should have proposed to the Cabinet that the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) be separated from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI).

Referring to fuel cycle policy, the governor said, "I had the impression that as soon as enough had been heard to support a judgment, the council came to a conclusion. For a 'national consensus,' there should have been more time taken to hear and consider the various arguments. Rather, the council appears to have come to its conclusion based on expectations of uranium testing and back-end taxation. Most of the members of the council are known to support reprocessing, and I find it hard to accept that sufficient discussions were carried out. Nor can I understand how someone responsible for a nuclear accident could speak at the council on ensuring safety."



Gov. Sato (center) challenges council members.

The governor also labeled "inappropriate" NISA's judgment on the thinning of pipe walls at the Fukushima I-5 NPS (BWR, 784MW), and asked for verification by the council. He continued, "In order to maintain constructive tension with the electric power utilities, NISA should be separated from METI."

In response, members of the council defended themselves. One member, Pres. Shimpei Kojima of Fukui University said, "We did our best to thoroughly discuss the fuel-cycle policy. It was appropriate to hear from parties related to the electric utilities." Another member, the lawyer Hiroko Sumita, stated, "As a disinterested individual, I am indignant at the suggestion that we 'forced through' the policy. Our task was to decide what should be done, not defer a conclusion." Chairman Shunsuke Kondo opined, "I think it was appropriate to hear explanations from the electric power companies about their activities to ensure safety. The council should not be a place to discuss individual cases."

*Editor: Noriyuki Ishii, JAIF*