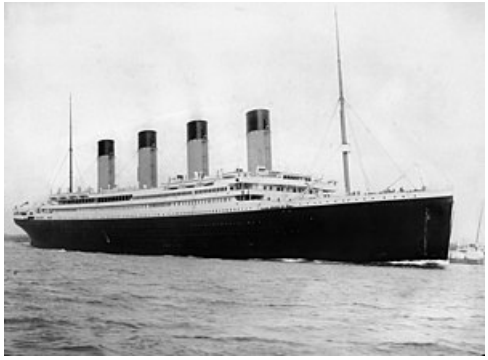

Presenting technology as completely safe, trustworthy or miraculous may seem to be a thing of the past, but the parallels between the Titanic and Japan's nuclear power industry could not be clearer. Japan's nuclear power plants were, like the Titanic, advertised as marvels of modern science that were completely safe. Certain technologies, whether they promise to float a luxury liner or provide clean energy, can never be made entirely safe.

In both cases, contingencies plans failed: the Titanic carried too few lifeboats; Tokyo Electric Power Co. failed to develop evacuation and backup plans for its Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The design, construction, materials and safety checks were all compromised. The main difference is that the catastrophic effects of the Fukushima fiasco are more far-reaching and long lasting. The plant's name has already become synonymous with disaster.

In an article not long after the Titanic sank, writer Joseph Conrad commented on the tragedy by noting the "chastening influence it should have on the self-confidence of mankind." That lesson should be applied to **all "unsinkable" undertakings that might profit a few by imperiling the majority of others.**

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