

INTRODUCTION

We are living the inauguration of the 8th one of the coal congresses which have cumulatively been filling a wide gap in our mining sector, ever since the initiation of the first one held in 1978.

The major objectives of the coal congresses which had traditionally been organized by the amateur efforts of the Zonguldak Branch of our chamber, have always been directed to the optimal evaluation of the national coal reserves, to exchange information and to debate on the problems of coal mining.

The rate of increase of raw material requirements of the countries has recently acquired a daily acceleration, depending on the demand trends observed on a global scale and the rate of consumption of coal in electricity production had remained over 50 % for the entire length of the last decade. However, we have nowadays been a coal importing country, despite the long term self sufficiency of the local coal reserves. At the last point achieved, importing of coal has nearly become the official mining policy of the Republic of Turkey.

The reflections of the idea about the privatization of the Public Economical Enterprises (PEE) onto the screen of mining sector, has conclusively brought about the crisis jeopardizing the life of the mines. We are all surely aware of the fact that the coal, like any other mineral, is a finite and depletable kind of natural resource and that the abandoned mines are almost impossibly difficult to reaccess and to reoperate. Coal mining policies of our country carried out in the last decade, had only been based on such parameters as "cost versus profit" without regarding the social and national aspects of the problem and the international conjuncture.

The PEE have, all the time, been considered as a hump on the back of the national economy, whilst the hump of the political power on the back of the PEE was omitted to take into the account. As a natural result of the policies carried out in the last decade, public mining institutions have had vitally important bottlenecks and some coal mines of the private companies have been shut down. Local mining sector has been seriously injured by the imports of coal, whilst the coal extracted within our country forced to be stockpiled.

Present tragic situation of our coal mining is, in fact, a resultant of the decades-long accumulations of political negligence which led the way to the emergence of several complicated problems, waiting for urgent solution. The complexity of the problems have gained such huge dimensions that it is not likely to find a way out by the sole efforts of an authority or an institution. From now on, all the mechanisms of decision and of execution have to be urgently left to authorization and to the initiative of the specialists, in every aspect, from planning to production and from employment to occupational safety. Moreover, every relevant civil institution like municipal managements, engineers chambers, unions, etc. should equally share the responsibility and the authority in the decision making processes for forming and of executing the policies of coal mining.

Besides the papers to be presented in this congress, the delegates and guests are going to have a chance to listen to the speeches of the specialist, from inland and abroad, who are invited to join the panels included in the programme, to be able to enlighten the way of solution of the problems of Zonguldak Basin.

I, hereby, would like to thank the Executive Committee firstly and every other person or institution for the precious time and labour they have spent during the organization of the congress.

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