A REVIEW OF COAL MINING AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS, CHARLES UDosen (ED.)
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The book Coal Mining and Environmental Concerns, Charles Udosen (Ed.) draws our attention to the attendant ills of unguided exploitation of natural resources. The 259-page book has captured in one volume virtually everything one would want to know about coal, its origin, formation, types of coal mining methods as well as global distribution, reserves and the Nigerian situation, including dangers to miners and safer times in modern mining and environmental concerns. Perhaps the most unique aspect of the book is the combination of experts from various fields of endeavour including Linguistics in the Faculty of Arts, through Geography, Sociology and Political Science in the Social Sciences to Botany and Ecological Studies, Microbiology and Soil Science in the Life Sciences, and Agriculture, Chemistry and Physics in the Physical Sciences. Meaning, the environment concerns each and every one of us.

A major issue that occupied the world, particularly the industrialized nations in the 1960s is the subject that has been generally termed “environmental degradation”. In 1962 for instance, Biologist Rachel Carson published “Silent Spring” which documented the pollution of air, water and wildlife from pesticides such as DDT. This influential book helped broaden the concept of resource conservation to include the preservation of the environment (the quality of air, water and soil). With the discovery of the use of fire, pre-historic man took a giant leap in his development. It meant good food and better living conditions and later, a source of energy that largely replaced muscle power. Since then, energy has been an important fac-

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the earth’s crust over hundreds of millions of years ago. The simple truth is that fossil fuels are just trapped energy – trapped, burned and heated by the earth’s crust. And when we burn coal, oil or gas we release that energy in the form of heat while releasing other chemicals into the atmosphere – most notably carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and other oxides of sulphur. Thus, in our extravagant exploitation of energy resources it was conveniently forgotten that on all fronts, short term economic gains were being won at the expense of huge but latent environmental losses. By the late 1980s, global environmental damage began to make headline news such as:

- Loss of tropical forest cover
- Widespread dying of savannah margins
- Regional pollution of inland seas and oceans
- Atmospheric contamination on a vast scale in the form of increased acidity and greenhouse warming
- Growing alarm over the distribution of toxic chemicals in consumer goods and waste

Serious attention needs to be paid to the attendant ills of unguided exploitation of natural resources. Ideally, this work can be seen as comprising three parts, namely:

Part one is made up of the first four chapters:
- History of Mining – Chapter 1
- Coal Mining in the U.S. – Chapter 2
- Mining Techniques – Chapter 3
- Global Perspective of Coal Production – Chapter 4

Indeed, one is hard-put to find out the place of Chapter 2 in this part. The materials could either have been used in Chapter 1, where coal mining in post 1900 period is treated for five major world producers including the United States of America or in Chapter 4 where the Global perspective of Coal Production is considered. However, four novel ideas worth mentioning in this part are:

- The rationale for trade unionism alongside coal mining and community realities – Chapter 1
- We see here that the use of strike to press for genuine demands by workers did not start today. Thank God the Industrial Arbitration Panel has confirmed the inalienable right of the Nigerian Worker to use this weapon for collective bargaining.
- The exposition on the various methods of surface mining as well as the five principal underground mining methods. Worthy of mention are the section on Dangers to Miners and Safer Times in Modern Mining – Chapter 3
- The African Scenario – Mining and Environmental Concerns, and Lessons from the Developed World, both in Chapter 4

The last two chapters – Chapter 8 – Environmental Impacts of Coal Mining and Chapter 9 – Acid Mine Drainage constitute the third part of this laudable work and indeed, herein lies the crux of our concern. The general delivery of the work is highly commendable. The font is quite large, easily readable and the page set-up, reader friendly. Most of the tables are well arranged and carry significant information relevant to the text. The only problem is that some of them are not referred to in the text and thus, wrongly placed. The figures on the other hand, need reworking and should be the first area of concern in subsequent editions. So also the plates and as a matter of fact, Figure 7.7 on page 136 should rather be a plate.

**CONCLUSION**

The most unique aspect of this work which indeed is its strongest point, is the combination of expertise from Linguistics in the Faculty of Arts, through Geography, Sociology and Political Science in the Social Sciences to Botany and Ecological Studies, Microbiology and Soil Science in the Life Sciences and Agriculture, Chemistry and Physics in the Physical Sciences. What a blend! This portrays vividly that the environment concerns each and every one of us. If the six-fold objective of the book as stated by the editor is anything to go by, I find this work marvelously in conception and excellent in delivery.

**REFERENCES**

