Clean Coal Day: Third Year for Coal PR Activities

By Yugeta Eiichi

"Clean Coal Day" was inaugurated to promote awareness among the general public and coal users and local governments about the importance of coal as an energy source, and its current cleaner use. Although coal will be an important energy resource for Japan's future, due to its abundant reserves, stable supply and high economic efficiency, it has not received a fair amount of public recognition. This day also provides an opportunity for people involved in the coal industry to reaffirm their commitment to actively work on solving current problems the industry faces, such as global environmental concerns.

To ensure the effectiveness of the day, the executive committee, comprising eight coal-related organizations including the Center for Coal Utilization, Japan (CCUJ), held a commemorative inauguration ceremony in Tokyo in September 1992, inviting Watanabe Kozo, then minister of the International Trade and Industry Ministry, as the main guest. The committee organized several commemorative activities, including international symposiums, inspection tours of coal-related facilities, mass media blitzes in 1992 and 1993, and is now preparing for the third round this September 5.

Current situation

Due to a scarcity of domestic energy resources, Japan relies on overseas sources for about 84% of its primary energy needs. This self-sufficiency rate of only 16% is considerably lower than most major industrial countries, approximately 48% for France and former West Germany, 85% for the U.S. and 98% for the U.K., the exception being Italy at 17%. With such low supply capacity, Japan's energy policy has as the first priority securing a sufficient supply of energy, emphasizing a stable oil supply, lower oil dependency and energy conservation efforts. Since the two oil crises, the government has especially tried to promote the use of coal.

Japan's coal demand reached approximately 120 million tons by fiscal 1993, with more than 90% being imported, with Australia, Canada, the U.S. and China supplying more than 110 million tons. This means, on an average, each of the approximately 120 million Japanese consumes about one ton of coal a year. Japan is the world's largest coal importer, accounting for about 30% of the total world coal trade of about 300 million tons.

According to a long-term energy demand outlook issued by the Advisory Committee for Energy in June 1994, the nation's coal demand is expected to increase to 130 to 134 million tons by 2000. But domestic coal supplies have been shrinking, almost halving in six years to less than 8 million tons in fiscal 1992. This is due to the more than 200% price difference between domestic and overseas coal, reflecting higher domestic mining costs as miners have to operate at deeper underground levels. Since domestic coal production is expected to decrease further as structural adjustments in the mining industry proceed, any future increase in demand will have to be met with imports.

A new coal policy

In addition to increasing Japanese coal demand, developing countries in Asia and the Pacific Rim are also expecting a sharp increase in coal demand, in line with growing energy demands. Therefore it is necessary for highly import-dependent Japan to respond appropriately to secure a stable supply of overseas coal.

Japan also needs to develop related technology to appropriately respond to global environmental problems, such as the greenhouse effect and acid rain. Taking these needs into account, MITI's Agency of Natural Resources and Energy drew up a "New Coal Policy" in 1991, as summarized below.

•Securing stable coal imports

As the world's largest coal importer, Japan needs to make efforts to secure a stable overseas supply, not only for its own sake but also, with consideration to global issues, to contribute to the stabilization of the world coal supply. To this end the government will extend financial, budgetary and tax support to promote the establishment of a coal distribution infrastructure (coal chain), which holds coal centers and overseas coal development projects at the core.

•Developing clean coal technology

To solve the greenhouse effect and acid rain environmental problems, thought to be the result of coal combustion, it is necessary to develop and make widely available clean coal technologies. The following are currently under development:

1) To prevent global warming, technologies to lower the level of carbon dioxide released through higher thermal efficiency are under development, including fluidized bed boilers, direct iron ore smelting, and fluidized bed cement calcination technology.

2) To help reduce acid rain, technology to lower SOx and NOx emissions from burning coal, including simultaneous desulfurization, denitrification and fluidized bed boilers development, as well as technology for the efficient use of an expected huge amount of coal ash that accompanies increasing coal consumption.

•Promoting international cooperation

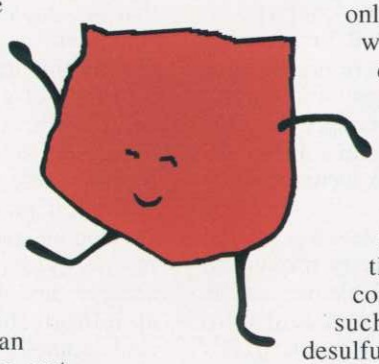
In light of global environmental concerns and a desire for a stable international coal supply, the government will promote international cooperation in utilization, production and security with developing countries that expect a surge in energy demands in the future. To achieve this, it is important to develop an infrastructure for transferring clean coal technologies to those countries. In practice, while setting up model enterprises engaged in desulfurization and other technologies jointly with China and other Asian and Pacific countries, Japan should work out a master plan for

Greetings by the minister of the International Trade and Industry Ministry at the first inauguration commemorative ceremony. (September 2, 1992, Tojo Hall)

coal utilization that suits local environments as well as socioeconomic realities. In addition, the government will strengthen international relations via ODA base technology transfer, cooperation in line with APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), IEA, and bilateral cooperation agreements.

Inauguration of Clean Coal Day

The aforementioned action program for the New Coal Policy also proposed to develop and promote comprehensive PR activities to erase the traditionally dirty image associated with coal and gain proper recognition and consideration from the public. In line with this, the inauguration of Clean Coal Day and carrying out commemorative events were suggested. In response, eight coal related organizations—the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO), the Japan Iron and Steel Federation, the Federation of Electric Power Companies, Japan Cement Association, Japan Coke Association, Japan Paper Association, Japan Coal Association, and the CCUJ— formed an executive committee to develop an action plan. The committee reported the following decisions.



•Commemorative day

To choose a date, we considered every date of historical importance related to coal, not only in Japan, but worldwide; for example, the discovery of coal; the start of mine development; people, like James Watt and George Stephenson, who contributed to massive coal use; and the initiation of clean coal utilization in Japan, such as the date the first desulfurization plant for coal boilers began. We finally decided to pick September 5 due to its linguistic association to clean (9) coal (5) in Japanese and because it falls in a season most appropriate to conducting ceremonies in Japan. We decided to set up several promotional events during the two months before and after this date.

•Title and subtitles

We chose "Clean Coal Day" as the formal title and decided to add a subtitle each year to make it easy for the general public to understand. To date we have selected the following subtitles: Coal is the fundamental power of the earth (1992); Coal is an earth-friendly energy (1993); and Coal is the energy for the 21st century (1994).

•Sponsors and supporters

Considering the need for broad backing from people concerned in order to carry out our promotional events, we sought wide sponsorship and support. In addition to MITI, we are now sponsored by the embassies of the five major coal exporters to Japan (Australia, Canada, the U.S., China and Indonesia). We also have the support of 17 organizations, including the Japan Institute of Energy, the Japan Boiler Association and the Coal Mining Research Centre, Japan.

•Purpose

The purpose of the commemorative day is to let the public know about the importance and current clean utilization of coal.

Promotional Events

•Commemorative inauguration ceremony

We held the first commemorative inauguration ceremony for Clean Coal Day in Tokyo on September 2, 1992. Hayashi Masayoshi, chairman of the executive committee and president of NEDO, began with a speech representing the organizers and expressed the committee's commitment. This was followed by Minister Watanabe's greetings:

> "On this occasion, I would like to address my greetings to the inauguration of Clean Coal Day. A stable supply of energy is a crucial condition for Japanese economic development, and coal, among other forms of energy, is expected to continue playing an important role as one of the main alternatives to oil. On the other hand, given increasing interna-

tional concerns about global environmental problems, we have promoted the development and dissemination of more environmentally friendly technology for coal utilization, dubbed as clean coal technology. As a result, Japan has become the most advanced in the world in coal utilization technology. We are planning to set up the Clean Coal Technology Center within NEDO in October this year to develop higher coal utilization technology.

I believe the inauguration of the commemorative day to ensure public awareness of the importance and current environmentally friendly utilization of, and future outlook on, coal is most appropriate in timing. I also hope those people concerned will reaffirm the importance of coal on this occasion, and commit themselves to further reduction in environmental load factors."

Following, greetings were given by representatives of Australia, Canada, and the U.S., representing the sponsoring foreign embassies.

•International symposium

Another event held on the same day was the International Symposium on Clean Coal Technology '92. It was addressed by seven lecturers, including four foreign experts of clean coal technology, to report on the current situation in each country, including Japan.

•Inspection tour of coal-related facilities

Given the special PR emphasis on the general public's awareness coupled with the rare occasions that people actually see how coal affects their daily lives, it is important to visit coal-related facilities, such as coal-fired power plants and steel mills, coal centers where coal is stored and coal research facilities.

In 1992, about 1,700 people, including housewives and primary school children, visited four coal-fired power plants, a coal gasification pilot plant, a coal center, and a coal research institute, among other places. Many comments were voiced: "I was impressed by the clean use of coal, as I had a dark and dirty image of coal"; "I thought we must not waste electricity, as I saw that a huge amount of coal was needed for a large power plant"; and "I'm glad to know that coal, which is no longer used in the household and is seldom seen, is still playing a very important role in our lives."

•Media coverage

In the second year, 1993, in addition to international symposiums and inspection tours, we arranged a TV program on coal and produced a general PR video, *Coal—The Earth-friendly Energy*, to be shown during the inspection tours.

An inspection tour of coal-related facilities in 1992 (Primary school children visiting CWM production plants at Onahama Factory, Japan COM Co., Ltd.)

An inspection tour in 1993 (Housewife organizations visiting Sendai Power Station, Tohoku Electric Power Co., Ltd.)

Conclusion

For this third year, we plan several commemorative events, including a newspaper advertisement. Through these PR activities, we will try to make people understand—in addition to the importance and current clean use of coal—that even for coal, which has the largest reserves among fossil fuels, these resources are limited and that the industry is making efforts to develop cleaner and more efficient utilization technologies which pay attention to the global environment.

Our greatest satisfaction would be if the general public becomes aware, through these PR activities, of the importance of energy, which tends to be assumed as being as abundant as water or air. We also hope that similar activities will be carried out in other coal-using countries.

Yugeta Eiichi held various positions at MITI until 1982, including director of the Coal Department at the Agency of Natural Resources and Energy. He is now president of the Center for Coal Utilization, Japan (CCUJ).