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Congressional Record S. 21973 - Alternative Solutions to the Energy Crisis

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE ENERGY CRISIS

Mr. MANSFIELD, Mr. President, in the past year Western coal resources, in the estimation of some people, have become the answer to the Nation's energy crisis. As I have repeatedly stated, this is not the simple solution as so many believe. Coal in the West can be utilized to help in meeting the crisis but it is not the only solution. We must think in terms of other alternatives. There is too much at stake in the future of the Western States.

The Federal Government owns minerals on 113.03 million acres of land in the United States. Thirty-eight percent of these minerals lie beneath privately owned surfaces. Data is incomplete as far as coal deposits on Federal lands are concerned. Estimates from the Bureau of Land Management indicate that the Federal Government has title to 56.4 billion tons of coal which are considered available for surface mining; 14.16 billion tons of this total lie under nonfed-
erally owned surfaces. This means that little more than one-fourth of the Federal coal has been affected by my amendment to S. 425 which would prohibit coal strip mining or open pit mining when the Federal Government owns the minerals and the surface is held by private individuals or corporations.

The Bureau of Land Management reports that a total of 233 billion tons of Federal coal have already been committed on long-term contracts to supply electric generating stations or coal gasification plants over the next 30 years. This is a relatively small percentage of the total Federal resource.

Second, the President of the United Mine Workers, Arnold Miller, has made an excellent plea in behalf of the coal mining industry and, most especially, deep mining, for the economic and consideration for the miner. The article appears in the November-December 1973 issue of the Center Magazine, and I ask the President that the article be printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. (See exhibit 2.)

Mr. MANSFIELD. In addition, Mr. President, the Senate passed S. 425, the Surface Mining Reclamation Act that included my amendment which would, admittedly, create a checkerboard pattern, cause some inconvenience for development of properties where the Federal Government is the complete owner or where the minerals and the surface are held by the United States. This amendment is not intended to stop active and existing coal surface mining regarding coal-mineral arrangements.

There is a lot of coal in the eight Western States which provides the basis for the statistics just cited—Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, and New Mexico. The theme that I have attempted to project is that the resource planners should not stop planning just because they assume that they can dig up the West and forget about alternative and more efficient and environmentally favorable processes for generating energy.

What we face in the West is a sudden change from what is largely an agricultural concern to a dependency upon a coal economy. The rugged individualist of the West has always been an important element in our Nation's history. Extensive coal strip mining, oil well operation, strip coal gasification plants, and unscrupulous brokers are the greatest threat to this heritage that has ever occurred.

May I continue to inform my colleagues in the Congresse as well as the Nation, on the potential difficulties that might arise from a crash program on coal development as the most immediate answer to the energy crisis, I would like to ask unanimous consent to have several items printed at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. (See exhibit 1.)

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, first of all, one of the most eloquent presentations of the problems we face in Montana was made by K. Ross Toole, a professor at the Montana State University, at a public forum entitled "Political Power in State Government" which was sponsored by the Montana Committee for the Humanities. Dr. Toole raises a question which has been paramount in my own mind for sometime, "Must we trade short-range advantages as we have so consistently done, for long-range devastation?"

This is an important question. Montana, in my opinion, has been milked and mined from the resources of its choice for the purpose of serving the interests of the United States. I do not want to see the same thing happen in the development of the Powder River and the Fort Union basins in eastern Montana.

Second, the President of the United Mine Workers, Arnold Miller, has made an excellent plea in behalf of the coal mining industry and, most especially, deep mining, for the economic and consideration for the miner. The article appears in the November-December 1973 issue of the Center Magazine, and I ask the President that the article be printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks.

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EXHIBIT 1

THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL POWER IN STATE GOVERNMENT

(By K. Ross Toole)

In certain essential respects, political power in Montana (or the lack of it) has differed from that power in other states not merely in degree but in kind for sometime.

Nothing I have to say will be new to any of you who have made a study of this state's history.

The difference I have referred to (i.e., the difference in kind rather than in degree) causes. Sometimes we overlook these utterly basic considerations and tend to believe that we have been solely the victims of political control by venal outside interests and unscrupulous exploiters. Indeed, we have been exploited and there has been reaping in it. Economic power exerted by peoples and corporations far from our borders has been translated far too often, and for far too long, into political control. And the result has been an essential subversion of our political processes and our economy. We have not been a sovereign people—not since the turn of the century, and probably we have been led to emerge from that rather remarkable kind of political servitude.

We are still very inexperienced in self government—precisely because we have been at it for so short a time.

What were these root causes to which I referred earlier? First, this is a large state (147,000 square miles huge). And even today there are only 4.7 persons per square mile rattling around in that hushness.

Secondly, we were endowed with enormous riches, forests, rivers, the richest native grasslands in Western America, and mineral wealth of almost incomprehensible value.

No wonder, in the 1870's and 1880's and 1890's the most hopeful, ebullient and optimistic people in America were perhaps Montanans. Their accounts—newspapers, letters to the states, diaries, the published reports of visitors (both American and foreign) clearly reveal this extraordinary sangfroid.

But there was a problem—and it lay in the very nature of that wealth itself and it also lay in its location.

Montana was a forbiddingly distant place—distant from the rest of the nation, from the east-west axis of that trade; distant from the great population centers; distant, in short.

And the wealth itself was locked onto the land or deep beneath its surface. And so, the condition that caused the state to remain divided, and that materials and hence into wealth in a money setting, was nil so simple, and no simple fix. And at heart—this layer complex. At the heart of the complexity lay capital.

And capital was not here. Even when, in the 1890's the richest of Montanans pooled their wealth (which they did) it was hopelessly inadequate.

And so, starting in the 1870's, the cry for outside capital began. In the 1880's it was almost a crescendo.

Why? Because all around them these Montanans saw, indeed, literally lived in, and understood, that outside capital could not get at it, couldn't use it. Not without the help of capital from elsewhere, and in large quantities.

That capital came. For the cattle industry came from Scotland, England, France and the Atlantic seaboard.

For timber, it came from San Francisco and New York.

For gold, silver and copper it came from San Francisco, Boston, New York, the House of Rothschilds in London, the House of BLEICHROEDER in Germany, and the two largest banks in France, the Bank of Paris and the Comptoir des Comptes.

For sheep and wool it came from Boston. By the turn of the century Montana was in the midst of an unparalleled expansion. Montanans were much too busy, much too optimistic and, too far, perhaps, from the essential things to notice that the source of the incoming capital had changed. This is perhaps the rub of its matter. All Western States and territories needed outside capital.

Instead of flowing from many sources, east and west and Europe, local battles, far, far from where the raw wealth was being fought for control over the raw wealth, were lost. For control to be won, the prize was enormous.

If Montanans had been carefully reading such esoteric publications as the American Journal of Economics, the London Economist, The Engineering and Mining Journal, The Commercial and Financial Chronicle and the Boston Beacon, they would have had cause for alarm. But there is no hint of alarm here however diligently one searches the contemporary local sources.

These battles for control of Montana's wealth were fought between 1884 and 1900—fourteen years. The battles involved great capital control over Montana's wealth in America and Europe. The battles were great because the prize was great. The prize was our wealth. The object was an end to competition among outside sources of capital.

It would take a thick volume to chronicle the battles. It will have been here for me to say that the war was at last won by Standard Oil Company of the United States. And the date of the war's end was April 27, 1899 when the Standard Oil Company bought the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and then began very quickly and voraciously to devour all competitors, not merely on the Butte Hill, but in the forests of the west and in many other places in many other ways.

Idaho, too, was a rich country. Politically it developed very differently from Montana, however. The key to that difference lies in the fact that the capital for the development of Idaho's riches remained diversified. Let that, too, be said of other rich western territories, perhaps California. As long as competition existed among those seeking out the wealth of the earth, the political process could work, because it could pit one power against the other. But, once that idea, indeed, has worked as effectively and as freely as it should—and it could still work. In Montana it could not.
December 6, 1973

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The story is too complex even to review very briefly here. But let me try to get at the essence of the matter.

The wealth in grain, cattle and sheep in the eastern and central states is indeed very great. But it is and was fragile wealth upon a fragile land. The great trauma for that region was the possibility that that land, by too many people, too fast and with too little knowledge of the land, its cyclic use and the other patterns of growth. And between 1909 and 1917 roughly 80,000 people came into eastern and central Montana because a great national campaign was conducted by the railroads, Chambers of Commerce and by state government itself.

They came to engage in dry land farming. They came to plow deep and sow wheat. And from 1909 to 1917 they did well. The wet period was upon land. A war was raging in Europe and the price of wheat was high. So they plowed up millions of acres. They built dozens of new towns. They formed 23 new counties and, as it inevitably must, as it has, periodically, for thousands of years, the drought came. And between 1917 and 1928, 60,000 of the 80,000 people who had been more than ever before. That is a situation without parallel in the history of any state in the Union. The people of the region, will and must wither without a free press. Our dilemma.

Secondly, to control a legislature, grown very fractional in the three years between 1900 and 1803, the Company announced that unless the legislature met in special session, it would close all its enterprises in Montana.

And it did precisely that. On October 22, 1917, the Montana Company's Union went out.

The Boston Beacon described the results. Noting that 20,000 men had been precipitously thrown out of work, the Beacon remarked: "The effect of this act is to bring home to the body of the people their utter dependence on the good will of the trust."

Indeed, it was so. Roughly 3/4 of the wage earners of the state, directly and indirectly were dependent on the Company.

This closure meant, in other words, the total, complete and cataclysmic economic paralysis of the state's design state of Montana.

The governor had no choice. He called the special session met in special session. The Montana Company threatened again to do what it had done once— and to do what is so clearly had the power to do again.

If the press was now captive, so was the legislature. And it was not until the late 1940's that the legislature began to assert its power, slowly, its independence. That captivity, like the captivity of the press, has never happened in any other state in the Union. The Company's slow decline in power meant Montana's.

So, political power in Montana has, historically, been unique—because if one defines the term of political power as expressing their will through a popularly elected legislative body, Montanans have simply not had it. And that is why the Company's slow decline in power meant Montana's.

Unfortunately, it is not merely in regard to mining and lumbering that we have suffered an economic decline. The state has also seen in its own hot crucible.
There are other hidden costs in coal. Underground waste and gob piles. Strip mining destroys mountains and poisons watersheds. And the most obvious people's lives. It is probably nothing worse than knowing those big shovels are coming to your land and house you grew up in. If you are poor, you don't have too many ways to fight back, and it is tempting to take what you can get. That is what brings me back to John Muir's idea about everything's being hitched together to everything else. You are poor in the first place because of the coal industry—if you live in an Appalachian coal camp. They make you poor and then they come and take advantage of it. That is a hidden cost. Anybody who has had a right to the coal industry knows what it is like to pay it.

We have learned from bitter experience that when you fight the coal industry, there are terrible odds against you. The concentration in the industry is extreme. Of course, the industry says it is ridiculous. The industry spokesmen are always pointing out that there are five thousand mines and 1,200 mining towns, and they ask how any industry with that many companies in it could possibly be concentrated. They get away with this because few people know anything about the industry. But the simple fact is that fifteen companies produced 500 million tons in 1972, which was fifty-one per cent of the total. The top fifty companies produced 400,000,000 tons—two-thirds of the country. I am not an economist, but you don't have to be to know that any industry which has half of its production controlled by fifteen companies is concentrated. It is more concentrated, in fact, than the steel industry. And what is really important is to understand where the concentration goes—which the puppet strings lead to, and where it is paid out.

First, let me list the top fifteen companies by their coal industry names, and you can see how much you recognize. Peabody Consolidation, Island Creek, Clinchfield, Ayrshire, U.S. Steel, Bethlehem, Eastern Associated, North American, Old Ben, Freeman and United Electric, Westmoreland, Pittsburg & Midway, Utah Coal, and Central Appalachian Coal, Windsor Power House Coal, Central Coal, and Southern Ohio Coal. If you have not been than five of those names, you must have grown up in Appalachia, or you have been studying the mining industry. But it is harder. Who owns those fifteen companies? How many of them speak for themselves?

Peabody is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kennebec Copper. Consolidation Coal is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Continental Coal. Island Creek is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Occidental Coal. Clinchfield is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Pittston Company, which operates oil refineries and owns the Brink's armored car company so that it won't have to pay someone to carry its cash around. Ayrshire Coal is a wholly-owned subsidiary of American Metal Climax (Amax). U.S. Steel and Bethlehem own their own coal-mining operations. Eastern Associated is a division of Eastern Gas & Fuel. North American Coal is independent. (You have to look down to number nine on the list to find an independent company.) Old Ben is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kohl of Ohio. Freeman Coal and United Electric are wholly-owned subsidiaries of General Dynamics. Westmoreland, Pittsburg & Midway is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Gulf Oil. Utah International is independent, but affiliated. It has worldwide operations in copper, iron ore, and other minerals. And that last group—Ben, Freeman Coal and United Electric, Windsor Power House, Central Coal, and Southern Ohio Coal—is a division of American Electric Power, the largest public utility company in the world.

You realize very quickly that the coal industry is not what it used to be at first glance. You have oil companies controlling two of the three biggest eastern companies. You control the biggest of them all—a company which produced nearly seventy-two million tons of coal in 1972. This company, which gets about eighty per cent of its coal from strip mining, produces about twenty-five per cent of the industry total. In fact, Peabody alone outproduces the combined effort of the seven companies at the bottom of the top-fifteen list.

In the coal industry a very small number of very large companies not only sets the pace for the rest but also has the power to swamp them financially. What other industry has this same pattern? Everybody knows: oil. But not everybody knows that the oil industry effectively controls the coal industry. It shows that one company, to some degree, with other industries—with Kennebec, with the steel people, and with utilities. I don't deny that things are changing from time to time, and maybe even a little competition. But not very much competition, and not very far away.

We are all slowly learning that the oil industry is more than that. It has wide-ranging influence. It is in the coal industry. It is an energy industry, though that is too polite a name. The Federal Trade Commission recently observed that "the industry operates much like a cartel" and filed suit to try to break up the horizontal agreements of the Appalachian Coal Strip Mining Association. Shell, Standard Oil of California, Atlantic-Richfield, Standard Oil of Indiana, and Mobil between them controlled all the coal used in crude oil production, sixty-four per cent of crude oil reserves, fifty-eight per cent of all refining, fifty-nine per cent of refined gasoline, and fifty-five per cent of gasoline marketing. "A nation that runs on oil can't afford to run short," they say in their advertising. In the long run, it may be much more true that a nation that runs on energy can't afford to fall into the hands of a cartel. We already have some first hand experience with shortages. But today's are nothing compared to tomorrow's. I think shortages are directly connected with concentration. The experience of the coal industry here is likely to be educational.

It should be admitted right off that concentration in the coal industry has had some notable advantages, even though we have not all been allowed to benefit from them. In the earlier part of this century, the coal industry was about as mixed up as a pig's breakfast. Many thousands of companies with each company getting into the business without much money. If you could get a railroad to put some tracks near your mine and send you a few empty cars every now and then, you could fill them up and send them away and make a profit. The lower you kept the wages of your miners, the more money you made. But there was geographic concentration and, after 1920, when oil and natural gas began creeping into coal's heating markets, the overproduction got worse with every year. It was a logical thing for the bigger producers to work at getting still bigger and combining their assets to reach that one-day total of over three thousand million tons and more. And the advantage is that you have a secure place for themselves. They did that. They did it with increased speed after World War II, when mechanized mechanization into the mines by driving wages up to the point where it was cheaper to pit produce more than the mines there. It was to pay pick-and-shovel men.

The coal mechanization was something only big companies could afford for it out of working capital or with long-term loans at relatively favorable interest rates. The smaller companies couldn't keep
This was true even before they started being devoured by the oil industry; it is twice as true now. The oil industry knows with something like nine out of ten that you think the country will need, because if you do, the price will go down. In the days of competition, the country would ask the manufacturer to keep the total production. These days, when competition in the oil industry is a joker, you can see that there is something like a miracle of manipulating, starting with the White House and the Interior Department and going on through the A.E.C., the companies combine and sit on vast reserves of readily recoverable coal. But that coal will come out of the ground only when the men who own it can be sure of the price they will get for it.

That is a simple objective, but it immediately becomes complicated. Coal, oil, and gas are largely interchangeable as far as electric utilities are concerned. They all produce BTU's. Many generating plants have been designed to take any or all three. If coal were out more than 15 per cent competitive, there would be an incentive to mine more of it, sell it to the utilities at the lowest possible price, and then use it for the purposes for which it is increasingly difficult to find and bring to market, especially if you have to pay- over a hundred dollars a ton per cent competitive. It has problems of environment, but you have to trade off transport efficiency. More importantly, however, is that it is being kept in the back room by the oil industry. Its advantages are gone from the shelves, the industry will bring out coal. And it will sell for what the industry wants to sell it for.

Long ago I was reading the testimony of John O'Leary, the director of licensing of the Department of the Interior, before the Senate Interior Committee during its June hearings on energy problems. Mr. O'Leary for years was the assistant director of the Bureau of Mines until he was writing a book of him. He knows a great deal about oil companies and their interests in coal and other fuels. I was impressed by the clarity of something he said:

"Oil companies today have two overwhelming interests. The first is to increase the value of their domestic reserves, thereby enhancing their book value. The second is to liquidate as rapidly as possible their foreign holdings, thus maximizing current income from these holdings. The reason for one reason or another be denied in the future."

These strong and practical motivating forces run absolutely counter to the current public interest in energy research and development, which calls for rapid development of alternatives to conventional fuels. For the oil industry as a whole ... a world without alternatives to conventional oil and gas is a better world than one which has available the sorts of alternatives that can be developed through research and development."

Not only is this a valuable summary of a dangerous situation, but it happens that the very day after Mr. O'Leary made these remarks, the chairman of the Senate, in a statement, referred to the effect that these were O'Leary's personal views and had nothing to do with those of the Senate. This is the same sort of thing that has been on the phone to all the right places the moment he finished testifying. They rarely have to listen to the truth from anyone within the government these days.

I like Mr. O'Leary's last advice, because he says something, very close to the truth. Words like that still tend to put people off. Instead, he describes in matter-of-fact language a situation that is freezing to those who can neither afford the energy nor be in a position to afford the energy. He knows the men who are going to have the sun's energy harnessed. My feeling is, we are going to have to tell the right people the truth from anyone within the government these days.

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serious about sulphur problems until the mid-nineteen-sixties. Even then, its involve­ment was rather limited.

Further, the industry does not pay its own way in research. It stipulates money, through the Atomic Energy Commission, for Coal Research, which is a part of the Department of the Interior. Electric utilities have been among the bigger customers of that effort because a fourth of one per cent of revenues on research. That puts them one-fourth of the amount spent ahead of the Department of Defense. The coal industry waits for Department of Interior to do it. Unfortunately, Interior does not do it.

The Office of Coal Research, which was lobbied into existence in 1960, is a storefront operation which hands out contracts but does little or no basic research itself. Compare it with the Atomic Energy Commission, which is pushing coal's principal competition after gas and oil reserves run out, and you can see the difference.

During the current fiscal year, A.E.C. is operating on a budget of $2.52 billion dollars. O.C.R. has a budget of $37 million dollars. A.E.C. employs 5,800 people; O.C.R. thirty-seven.

About fifteen years ago, the utilities companies began steps to move away from coal. Gas was the ideal fuel—clean and cheap, and nobody said anything about it. It was almost as clean as the fuel you buy with your gasoline. I mean, especially since removing sulphur from oil is easier than removing it from coal. But the utilities didn’t do much. You bought natural fuel. To coal, you do not have to deal with the sulphur problem at all. The coal industry responded to the move significantly. Is there a meeting of the minds of the people with the table with their feet up telling each other, “Next week we’ve got to get organized.”

The industry wanted the government to do more research but it would rather dis­appearance than exercise any control over the results. For the past fifteen years, people have been pro­posing a national fuel policy to replace the mess we have now. The coal industry said that would be fine, as long as the people administering such a policy had no actual influence. The coal industry’s thinking on free enterprise is stubborn and basic—and, as far as I am concerned, about as enlight­ened as the robber barons who got the whole thing started a hundred years ago.

While I am off on socialism (or for what I thought would become socialist, given half a chance), I was losing its mind. West Coast utilities switched—particularly to gas and residual fuel oil. The trend moved inland as well as Ocean, and the utilities of the country, we haven’t begun to identify, because they buy up coal under assumed names and we do not have the manpower to track through all the records.

So the West sits there, waiting to be de­veloped. There are huge mines in operation there now, of course. But they do not represent a fraction of what is coming if the energy cartel is allowed to pursue its own timetable. The ranchers and environmental­ists who are fighting against strip mining in the Northern Plains have not even begun the fight yet. Look at the tonnages I’ve just mentioned, and compare them against Montana’s total annual production last year, which was eight million tons. There are more than thirty billion tons of coal under Montana, and eight billion tons is only one percent of that. We have a long way to go, and we need the level playing field of a ranch­land left in Montana when Ed Phelps is finished. I am not surprised.

I am not surprised in what they promise to do. They are not co-opted, I think, or even interested in the reclamation. “Land as good as it ever was,” I know about the “reclamation” in Appalachian that is supposed to go with it. The recla­mation in Appalachia—there is a saying that from a former officer of our union—is the same thing nothing, shaved down to a point.
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This kind of talk usually gets me into trouble. Several thousand members of our union don’t like to hear their president talking like an environmentalist. What is more, the U.M.W.A. has an organizing drive in the West, on the theory that wherever there are miners, there are people who are not miners, the former being members of the United Mine Workers. Whenever I say anything critical of the industry I find that it is distributed widely, includ­ing among the men we are trying to organize. Strategically it would be much better to stay silent. But there is a tradition of speaking out in my union, and the west­ward trend of coal mining creates an issue we have to confront. In West Virginia and Ken­tucky, all over Appalachia, we found out, as our fathers found out before us, that when the companies no longer need you or want you, all you have left are your scars and the dust in your lungs. And in our lips, what we have left are the scars and the mud slides and the streams choked up with silt where we used to fish.

Sometimes it is much worse than that. Sometimes gas explodes underground and we lose somebody—sometimes eight men at a time, as we did in West Virginia in 1968 at one of Consolidation Coal’s mines. Or a dam breaks and it’s flooded in the early morning, and 135 people are carried away and a lot of them are located under millions of tons of mud. That was Buffalo Creek in Febru­ary, 1972. That was the Pittston Company’s own coal mine. It had to shut down. And we must re­solve this year by electing the president of Pittston to the presidency of the National Coal Association.

The moral is simple: beware of industrialists bearing gifts. Fifty years ago they promised us a golden future of prosperity and power, and they left it in wreckage. Now they promise to develop the Northern Plains. They will leave it in ruins. A dragnile operator working seven days a week can make more than twenty-five thousand dollars a year. I can understand his enthusiasm for the industry he serves, but somewhere we have to find the common ground between miners and “eagle freaks.”

“Eagle freaks” are what coal miners call the ranchers who liked Montana and Wyoming the way they were before the dragniles moved in. Recently I read a magazine report about the Northern Plains problem, and about a rancher named Boyd Charter, who decided he didn’t want to go to Consolidation Coal. “Some people can’t understand that money is not everything,” Boyd Charter said, “as a man that I knew represented one of the biggest coal companies and that he was being paid $500 a month more than he could make working there.” He went on to say, “I don’t believe that industry and government are much closer together and much less distinguishable now than they were then. And I believe that when we talk about developing an intelligent energy policy in this country—a policy designed not just to build a half­corporate few—we’d better know that the odds are bad, and the size of the job is almost overwhelming.

As far as coal is concerned, I define the job this way: we must greatly expand total production, on a crash basis, and aim at a goal of domestic energy self-sufficiency as quickly as possible.

We must not rush into development of the West at the expense of the East. A headlong rush into Western mining means that over the next five years between twenty-five thousand and forty thousand mining jobs will be lost in the East. Of course, that concerns us as a union of miners. It concerns us also because we have lived for 20 years in Appalachia and we simply cannot sit silently and watch another one come rolling in on us. Finally it concerns us because you cannot turn underground-coal production on and off like a light switch. If we arrive at a rational fuel mix, we must keep it. We cannot afford seven years from now, and decide to strengthen our em­phasis on coal mining. We will not be there, and neither will the miners.

Mike Mansfield Papers, Series 21, Box 49, Folder 37, Mansfield Library, University of Montana
The coal industry's demands for a more lenient policy on mine safety and the continuation of mine entrance fees in Washington, officials of the United Mine Workers foresee a run of bad luck for the miners—more fatal cave-ins, more underground explosions, more black-lung cases.

"We can't get the capital to expand our mines unless we can bank on long-term extensions (from air-pollution regulations)," I told them. Yet, Nixon has asked Congress to empower the Environmental Protection Agency to exempt power plants and other big fuel consumers from state and federal pollution restrictions. These exemptions will be sought, said Vice President of Peabody Coal Co., the nation's largest, if they last only one year. President is talking about a minimum of 15 years—more like 25 years, said Peabody's William G. Stockton. "We cannot amortize our investment (in new mines) over any shorter period."

In the haste to replace lost Mideast oil supplies with coal, many conservationists expect the Clean Air Act to be so gutted that air pollution will become as bad as ever before.

But kind of money won't be raised, he said, if the strip mine regulations, lifted by the U.S. Senate becomes law. Bagge claimed it would "prohibit strip mining," as would another bill passed. But the Senate's version, said Peter Flanagan, top federal energy policymaker, shares his concern. "We think the Senate bill would inhibit the coal industry unduly."

[From the Missoulian, Nov. 27, 1973]

COAL RAIL BAN TO COST?  
(Tothe People)

Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton has been calling the 1 trillion, 581 billion tons of coal beneath the U.S. surface "our ace in the hole" for the energy-light years to come. He has reiterated that much of the antipollution progress made in the last five years is in jeopardy as a result of a Senate rail ban. The Sierra Club's Brock Evans, for one, is bracing for an all-out "assault on the Clean Air Act."

And should the coal industry's demands for a more lenient policy on mine safety and the continuation of mine entrance fees in Washington, officials of the United Mine Workers foresee a run of bad luck for the miners—more fatal cave-ins, more underground explosions, more black-lung cases.

Cari Bagge, president of the National Coal Association, explained the pessimism at a recent White House meeting with the President and his energy aides.

"I pledged the industry's support for Mr. Nixon's Federal Power Protection Agency proposed bill to re-  

"But I also said, 'You fellows have got to understand the nature of the coal industry. We will not enter into long-term contracts with the mines and the utilities."

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Can Coal Rail Ban Out?  
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contours and for making underground mines safer and healthier for the miners.

Bagge, however, contends that even the existing strip mine controls are too stringent and that "overzealous" mine inspectors are interfering with productivity.

For these assertions, Thomas Bethell, research director for the United Mines Workers, has a sharp retort. "The mining industry has never had any problem in finding someone to blame for its problems. Outsiders are always to blame. This is an industry which has always deeply resented anybody telling it how to conduct its operations."

Coal executives claim productivity has fallen anywhere from 12 to 30 per cent since the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 went into effect. The requirements for dust-discharge ducts hamper mining "significantly," said a spokesman for Freeman Coal Mining Corp., a subsidiary of General Dynamics.

"I won't argue with that," Bethell said. "But do you want to bring coal worker's pneumoconiosis under control or do you want another 45,000 miners to get black lung?"

The Freeman Coal spokesman also complained about having to scoop loose coal from mine floors in order to keep dust levels down. "It's like having your wife on a non-stop vacuuming marathon right in the middle of a dinner party."

"That's ridiculous," Bethell said. "You stir up dust when you walk on loose coal. If there's methane around, the combination of the two can cause an explosion. "You can get the equivalent on a Hiroshima underground. Eighty thousand men have been killed in these kinds of disasters. That's enough."

Going soft on mine-safety enforcement, he said, would mean sacrificing a work force in the name of more energy.