

News  
From \_\_\_\_\_

CONGRESSMAN

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

May 7, 1979

## OPENING STATEMENT OF COAL HEARING

The Congressional Coal Group was formed to be a watch-dog for coal. Each member realizes the potential energy source that exists, and I am sure each member had to answer the same question during the District Work period over and over from their constituents, "Why Not Coal?"

We are here today working for an energy program, in the hopes that the American will no longer have to ask that question.

The Congressional Coal Group, an organization of over 60 members of Congress representing coal producing and coal using Districts all over the nation have called this hearing today---to lay the ground work for a unified effort, with the Administration to bring about a solution to our energy problem.

Some may call the present situation a "crisis", if so, I would like to refer to that word as the Chinese do -- made up of two characters, one meaning danger, the other meaning opportunity.

Today we have an opportunity to bring about a strong commitment which can solve America's energy crisis. A commitment to what we call in West Virginia, "Black Gold," better known as coal.

Through the efforts of Coal Group members, we have been able to assemble twenty of the most knowledgeable people in the country to discuss every aspect of the coal industry. They will make presentations that can serve as a source of direction to our efforts.

The problems of coal usage will be addressed by utility and steel company spokesmen; the labor aspect will be discussed by representatives of the United Mine Workers; the production of coal by surface and deep mining will be discussed by those who deal with the business on a day-to-day basis; the transporting of coal will be discussed by those who transport it; and a presentation will be made on the equipment used in the mining of coal by the suppliers and designers of that equipment.

President Carter said in his April 5, Energy Address to the nation, that, "The three Federal agencies which regulate the coal industry will report to me within 60 days on ways to encourage greater use of coal---our most abundant fuel resource."

In keeping with this call for national cooperation, the Congressional Coal Group invited, the Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger, Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency Douglas Costle, to sit with the Group this morning to hear the presentations and to question the witnesses.

We regret that for one reason or another, these gentlemen are not able to be with us this morning. However, we thank; Asst. Secretary for Policy and Evaluation Al Alm of D.O.E.; Director of Coal Leasing, Planning and Operation Steven P. Quarles of the Interior Department; and Asst. Administrator Dave Hawkins of E.P.A., for attending and hope that they will apprise Mr. Schlesinger, Mr. Andrus and Mr. Costle of the information that is presented here today.

The Coal Group believes that the participation of these Administration representatives, working with the Congress, will serve to further our unified efforts.

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It is no secret that we are here this morning because the coal industry is in trouble, and ironically the problems have come at a time when coal's potential has never been greater. With dwindling supplies of oil and gas, growing dependence on unstable sources of foreign oil and the realization that nuclear and solar power are not yet ready to meet our needs, it is obvious that coal holds the key. However, due to the growing list of complicated problems, some of which I am sure will be discussed today, it is obvious that coal will not play a significant role in our energy future unless drastic action is taken.

On April 5, President Carter said, "Our nation's energy problem is serious -- and it's getting worse....we recognize the urgency of this challenge--and we must work together to meet it."

We are here today, to do just that.

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