

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR RELEASE
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WASHINGTON D.C. --- WEST VIRGINIA'S FOURTH DISTRICT CONGRESSMAN NICK J. RAHALL, WILL ATTEND THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON COAL AND ENERGY POLICY THIS FRIDAY, MARCH 14.

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONGRESSIONAL COAL GROUP, WILL JOIN TOP GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, COAL COMMISSION MEMBERS, UNITED MINE WORKERS REPRESENTATIVES, AND COAL INDUSTRY OFFICIALS FOR THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES, WHICH BEGIN AT 10:30AM.

PRESIDENT CARTER WILL ADDRESS THE GROUP AT NOON.

"I BELIEVE THIS CONFERENCE FURTHER SOLIDIFIES THE ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO COAL." RAHALL OBSERVED.

"THE PRESSURE BROUGHT UPON THE WHITE HOUSE, BY THE CONGRESSIONAL COAL GROUP, THE SENATE COAL CAUCUS, THE U.M.W.A., AND THE INDUSTRY ITSELF, I BELIEVE HAS FINALLY PAID OFF." CONGRESSMAN RAHALL SAID.

REFERRING TO A WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL (shown below, Rahall response on reverse side), CONGRESSMAN RAHALL STATED, "THERE IS STILL A LONG ROAD AHEAD. THE COAL CONVERSION BILL WILL NOT BECOME LAW TOMORROW. MANY MINERS WILL NOT RETURN TO WORK TOMORROW. BUT WE ARE AT A POINT NOW, WHERE WE CAN SEE A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. COAL IS INDEED MOVING FORWARD."

NOTE*****The below editorial appeared in the March 10 issue of the POST. A reply sent by Congressman Rahall, and other members of the Coal Group appears on the reverse side.*****

Money for Coal—and Dirty Air

PRESIDENT CARTER'S coal program promises to spend far too much money with far too little regard for air pollution and its threat to public health. The president wants to speed up the electric utilities' shift from fuel oil and gas to coal. The lever is to be \$10 billion in coal conversion subsidies to the utilities over the next 10 years.

For \$10 billion, the public is entitled to much more careful protection of the environment. The administration's goal—to reduce oil imports—is an important one. But, unhappily, the administration has allowed the coal and utility industries to persuade it to do nothing about the health hazards implicit in this rising volume of coal smoke.

This proposal follows, by eight months, Mr. Carter's energy speech in which he said he would seek legislation to cut utilities' use of oil. Just under half of this country's electricity is already generated by coal. The other four sources—oil, gas, nuclear power and water power—supply the rest in roughly equal proportions. The utilities currently use about one of every 12 barrels of oil consumed in this country. It's a substantial amount, and Mr. Carter says his plan can reduce oil imports by a million barrels a day by 1990. That's worth doing. But it is not necessary to degrade the air quality throughout the northeastern United States to accomplish it.

The administration says, plaintively, that it does not intend to relax any of the existing air standards. That's true, but in many parts of the country pollution can increase substantially without exceeding

those standards. In any case, they cover only local pollution. Present law does not address the phenomenon of acid rain—the cycle that begins with the burning of coal and ends with the collection of sulfuric acid in lakes and streams far away. All of these hazards are likely to be aggravated by another Carter bill now in the final stages of passage. It would establish an Energy Mobilization Board with power to waive certain environmental rules for projects like power-plant conversions.

Orderly and prudent regulation would instead declare that a generating plant, after being converted to coal, could emit no more sulfur or particulate pollution than it did when it burned oil. That standard is not unusually difficult as a matter of technology, nor would it be unreasonably expensive. If Mr. Carter is going to put out billions of dollars as bait for conversion, he might usefully make it conditional on decent performance in pollution abatement.

The utilities, after all, already have one powerful incentive to convert: the price of oil is almost three times the price of coal. Why do they not convert immediately? Because many cannot raise the capital, and most can pass the high cost of oil on to their customers. But the subsidies mean that taxpayers are going to pay for utility improvements that will save both the utility companies and consumers a great deal of money. Perhaps it is worth saying once again that the best way to control these costs, as well as air pollution, is to hold down the rate at which Americans use electricity.

NICK J. RAHALL, II
4TH DISTRICT, WEST VIRGINIA

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March 11, 1980

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Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15th Street, N. W.
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Dear Sir:

We would like to take this opportunity to comment on your editorial, "Money for Coal--and Dirty Air," which appeared on Monday, March 10, and address certain aspects of this issue that were not mentioned.

As Representatives from major coal producing and coal consuming regions of the country, and as Members of the Congressional Coal Group, we are dismayed at your portrayal of coal as the filthy fuel source it was over 40 years ago.

Haven't you heard? Good old American know-how is at work.

At the present time, modern technology is advancing new methods to allow for the greater utilization of coal in a clean and efficient manner. Coal washing, wet and dry scrubbers, precipitators, and a fluidized combustion process being developed at Georgetown University, will enable industrial and utility users of coal to reduce sulphur emissions and meet current E. P. A. standards.

In short, the environment can be protected while at the same time we reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

Secondly, your editorial also did not discuss the inadequacies of the Fuel Use Act of 1978. Since this law was enacted, only one utility plant converted to coal. Others used any of the 19 exemptions to avoid conversion. What was thought to be a solution turned out to be a toothless monster.

The time of passive attacks on the energy crisis have long since passed. The Administration's new program is greatly needed. It is needed to reduce our use of oil, it is needed to fight inflation, and it is needed to put many of the almost 20,000 unemployed miners back to work.

The President's plan will provide \$10 billion for incentives to convert. It will also provide \$400 million to reduce emissions at powerplants presently using coal. It is a plan that will have to be refined, but most of all, it is a plan that can achieve its goal.

Since the 1973 Arab oil embargo, this country has been groping for solutions to a crisis that has no simple answers. Conservation has helped. It has enabled us to hold imports at a constant level, but it can only go so far. Coal can serve as the immediate solution to an immediate problem.

Coal is not the same as it was in the 1930's and '40's. It is a modern energy source, with modern technology and modern mining concepts. Coal is the key to our energy future. Let's not misplace the key that can unlock the door to energy independence.