

# RAHALL

## Weekly Report

### NATIONAL COAL IMPORT POLICY

HON. NICK JOE RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 1982

● Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a concurrent resolution which expresses the sense of Congress that a national coal export policy is necessary to coordinate Federal activities with respect to increasing coal exports and to provide for a statement of intent regarding legislation seeking to stimulate coal port improvements.

I cannot stress enough the importance of U.S. coal exports toward alleviating unemployment in the Appalachian mining industry, improving our balance of trade, and toward strengthening our ties with the European Economic Community by providing its member nations with a measure of energy security.

In 1981, the United States exported 110 million tons of coal, 28 percent of which was steam coal used for electrical generation. Approximately 50 percent of this tonnage was exported to Europe. Overall, the coal exported by this Nation last year was valued at \$5.5 billion and was our 10th ranking export commodity. My own State of West Virginia contributed half this tonnage, worth some \$2.2 billion and creating 20,000 jobs in the mining industry.

Yet, while these figures paint a rosy picture on the surface, there are some underlying problems which must be addressed before this Nation realizes its full coal export potential. Of primary consideration is the condition of our ports, which cannot accommodate the large coal-trading vessels which are coming into increased use. These "super-colliers" of over 100,000 deadweight tons provide an economy of scale which competitors to the U.S. coal trade are beginning to offer European customers. In order for this Nation to remain a viable force on the world coal market, our ports must be dredged to depths of at least 55 feet. In this way, the United States would not only retain its present market share, but continue to increase its export levels.

Legislation to accomplish this task must be expeditiously reported by the Congress. There is a national interest to increased coal exports and as such, I would urge the administration to refrain from any actions which would jeopardize this potential, including requiring 100 percent recovery of Federal expenditures for port improvements and operation and maintenance.

Mr. Speaker, in May, a coal export mission under the direction of the Department of Commerce will embark on a 9-day tour of Spain, Italy, France, and Belgium. The purpose of this mission is to demonstrate the U.S. commitment to European buyers of coal. I commend this action, along with other coal export promotional activities of the Department of Commerce. Hopefully, this mission will stimulate additional interest within the European community for U.S. coal, something I find of the utmost importance in light of recent layoffs in southern West Virginia of 1,250 mine workers. Because of a leveling off in domestic coal demand, increased exports are our best bet to get these miners back on the job.

While this mission is a good first step, I believe we should follow up with bilateral conferences with our coal trading parties and that the President should further formulate a national coal export policy which would assure the Europeans of our commitment and resolve in this matter.