RE “**A CHRISTMAS PRESENT FROM THE U.S. EPA”**

Madam Editor

Your editorial is misleading and self delusionary even though, contained in it, are the pertinent scientific facts behind the new EPA rules. Evidentially you don’t care that the rules are estimated by scientists to save 11,000 lives, and 4700 heart attacks by 2016. You don’t care or comment on those reasons…even though you and your family might be among those whose health is spared by the rule. Do you not have any compassion for your family and your fellow citizens’ health?

Starting with mining of coal, study after study shows how the State is being poisoned by coal to preserve their profits. As reported in Science Daily, here is yet another report, this time from Duke University scientists:

***“Changes in water quality due to the increased salinity in the Upper Mud from mine runoff also were found to be "exceptionally persistent," Lindberg said."Mines reclaimed almost two decades ago are continuing to release effluents with salinity similar to active mines in the region.***

***The Duke team's study appears this week in the peer-reviewed online Early Edition of the* Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.*"***

West Virginia has the highest incidence of asthma among children in the Nation…and scientists and medical authorities here will privately tell you they now that coal dust and pollution are major factors…but are afraid to go public due to the powerful coal lobby

Thanks to Duke, M.I.T., WVU and several other independent medical research organizations, there is more than ample scientific evidence that the financial and social impact on health care, including premature death, loss of productivity and inability to work due to diseases like heart and lung diseases, cancers, and asthma are caused by pollution from coal fired power plants and are significant.

And of course we always hear how jobs are threatened by tighter rules, so it is more important to preserve those jobs than save lives. But that mantra is also false. In those jurisdictions around the world where the aggressive transition to renewable clean energy is underway, more jobs have been created than are lost…in fact what worker would not want to be retrained to enjoy outdoor well paying safe clean energy jobs rather than be subjected to black lung as the UBB miners were.

The truth is the economic threat is to Coal Company profits…workers can be retrained and given healthier productive well paid lives in shaping the future without life threatening pollution of the air and water we all need for life.

Such editorials as yours and others never take into consideration these "legacy" costs when evaluating the economic comparatives of coal to renewable energy.

Then there is always the “cheap electricity” argument…also a false argument…because the environmental cost and health care cost that comes from coal pollution and mining are costs that the tax payers and healthcare industries are absorbing.

The Province of Ontario in Canada, my birthplace, determined that several years ago.

Ontario, and all of Canada, (in fact, all the Western Democracies except the USA), have this crazy idea that everyone has a right to universal health care. In spite of the misleading distortions that are pushed here by the likes of your Surber and friends, the Universal Health Care system in Canada works, not perfectly, but quite well….and statistically better medically than ours, and even better, at an overhead rate of 5 to 6 % as opposed to 36% in the US. I speak from personal experience with family and friends who live in Ontario. But I digress.

The Province of Ontario has in their annual Provincial Budget BOTH the generation/distribution of electric power from several generating methods, (14% coal, 49% nuclear and 35% hydro), and a Province wide Universal Health care plan known as OHIP.

Several years ago, the Provincial Government commissioned and completed a detailed study to determine the true cost of coal fired power and included the cost of health care directly attributed to pollution from their coal fired power plants. Their 2 year study led them to conclude that renewable energy is less costly when the true total cost of coal fired power is honestly added up. So Ontario is on track to shut down ALL of their coal fired power plants by 2012. By the way, they bought most of their coal in West Virginia!

While the economics of BOTH power generation/distribution and health care are undoubtedly different between Ontario and West Virginia, you must, in all honesty to your readers, report the true cost of coal as it is understood today...and not by living in the past where health care and environmental costs have been ignored and transferred to taxpayers..

And instead of just asking the Coal Association for input data, what about asking renewable energy industry sources, like WV Wind Working Group, environmental organizations like, ***but not limited to,*** the WV Chapter and National Sierra Club, OPEC, WV Environmental Council, and health care professionals who deal with these health impacts on a daily basis. Solar Energy, both photovoltaic and concentrated solar power technologies in particular, have been coming down in total costs significantly. Some industry literature is reporting 50% drop in the last year for some systems while the cost of thermal coal is rising. Qualified industry sources should be consulted and asked to supply the current economics of these rapidly growing energy technologies.

And finally, climatology scientists around the world have observed the impacts of climate change, and have determined that their original models for predicting the rise of temperature and impacts of climate change were too conservative. They clearly are warning that we are moving much more rapidly to a crisis level of GHG emissions. As the Durban South Africa meeting has just concluded and illustrates, the world IS coming together to address climate change and we must too. We are not just poisoning the rivers and air of West Virginia, we are poisoning the planet and do not need to…in fact must stop doing so, as the risks to the lives of the elderly, our children and grandchildren is unacceptable.

But the opportunities in West Virginia for job creation are the plus side of solving this crisis; hence our State’s Energy Planning must be more aggressive in cutting GHG emissions and will create jobs in doing so. There are numerous examples supporting this statement, and we are foolish to ignore the global trends...as we do so at our economic peril.

Allan Tweddle

Charleston