

## Terry Murphy, Testimony on House Bill #492, 1973, and Dolph Harris, Testimony on House Bill #534, 1971

I am Terry Murphy of Cardwell, Montana, appearing today to speak for myself and as a member of the board of directors to speak for the Montana Farmers Union. . . . We strongly support . . . a moratorium on further coal strip-mining and the attendant facilities. . . . The present and future growth of coal mining and related activities might well herald the most profound changes—economically, sociologically and politically—that Montana has ever seen. Land will be involved. Water will be involved. Air will be involved. And, most importantly, people will be involved. . . .

Any development in our state which disturbs the land surface or changes the use of that land should be evaluated ahead of time as to its possible effect on agriculture. . . . Consider carefully the role of agriculture in Montana. We produce about \$750,000,000 worth of food, feed and fiber every year. This is new wealth and the production will recur next year, and the next, on and on. All from the same land.

Agriculture is by far the largest dollar-producing business in Montana and the fact we deal exclusively in renewable resources must be emphasized. Agriculture has been, is and will continue for the foreseeable future to be the economic and social foundation for Montana—regardless of other developments.

Exploitive industries might appear extremely attractive on the short-term economic scene, but they do come and go—and they can go just as quickly as they come. Agriculture will be here always, producing the things we all need. That is, it will be here always if it isn't dug, blown, dried or polluted out of business.

Just as vital as agriculture is to the Montana economy, so is water vital to agriculture. . . . Already we know that in some of the strip

mines water is draining into the pits and being pumped out into streams which eventually enter the Yellowstone River. . . . The waters of the Yellowstone and its tributaries are used on 23 per cent of Montana's total irrigated acreage of cash crops. With sufficient water, the Yellowstone basin will bloom and produce abundantly—from now on, if need be. Without sufficient water, the economy of the area will suffer sharp reverses. . . .

An acre of crop or range land produces its wealth every year. An acre mined of its coal will never produce coal again. The agricultural land needs only care—which the farmer and rancher provides, and good, clean water which we have. Coal mining and power generating use up and dirty that water. . . .

It is not just agriculture, either. Another clean, renewable, growing industry in Montana is tourism. Why do tourists come here, spend money, leave and hope to return again? Do they come to see barren pits, dry or dirty streams, a sky brown or gray from power generating facilities? I think it's more probable they come for the abundant clean water we have presently—for the fish which thrive therein—for the clear sky through which they can see for distances unheard of where most of them come from—for the air they can breathe without the stench burning their nostrils or the grit of ashes settling in their lungs. Those alternatives they get now in the industrialized "advanced" areas from which they come. . . .

We need time to see the results of research, studies and some experimentation already under way. . . . There will be no second chance. We must do this right the first time. Failure could mean a desert Appalachia in that vast, pastoral, tranquil area of eastern Montana. . . .

A moratorium is a must. If we act now in haste, we shall continue our long history of colonial subservience to exploiters. In a few short years, we will have more than land to reclaim; we will have a state economy and rural society to rebuild. . . . The coal has been there thousands of years. Its potential has been known many years. It will not spoil—it will still be there, safe in the ground, while we take the time to make the right decision. . . .

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*February 5, 1971*

I am Dolph Harris, president of the Economic Development Association of Eastern Montana. Our organization came into being in 1970 and encompasses 18 counties and 2 Indian reservations. . . . We . . . like to think that we represent the economic interests of some 93,000 people in eastern Montana. We are concerned that in the last ten years we are experiencing an exodus of people to the tune of 13% or some 14,000 people. Our economy is agriculturally orientated and we have lost in the last ten year period a larger percentage of farms. Our employment rate dropped off some 14.2%. . . .

To encourage the economic and social development of this state, it is the purpose of the Eastern Montana Development Association to promote the location of industry and businesses in the state, especially electric power

production facilities on Montana coal fields as a better alternative for the state than the shipping of this coal to other states. . . . It is our conviction that mine mouth generation plants will create far more jobs for Montanans, [and] will provide additional revenue to state and local governments. . . .

In the face of the serious and continuing shortages of electric power in many parts of the country, we believe that the upper great plains will increasingly become a major energy center of the nation, providing low cost abundant electric power to utilities of all kinds and to power critical industries. . . .

Finally, we believe that . . . power production agencies can [meet] . . . the highest standards with respect to environment. . . .

We are endorsing the concept of developing our coal resources in Montana. We do favor the idea of locating generation facilities in Montana. We do feel we can reap real economic benefits from related industries that depend upon an adequate and efficient source of power. . . . Utilization of our coal resources in Montana for the profit of Montanans is all we ask. . . .

Source: February 1, 1973, *Montana Legislature (43rd: 1973–1974) Records, 1973–1974. Legislative Records 43*, February 5, 1971, *Montana Legislative Assembly (42nd: 1971) Records, 1971. Legislative Records 42* [box 1 folder 9]. Montana Historical Society Research Center. Archives. Excerpted in *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 276–77.