

NEWS

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LETTER

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Energy To Burn: The Great Coal Rush Is On

After years of being overlooked in favor of more fashionable fuels, coal has once again become the apple of energy-covetous eyes. How it should be mined and who should benefit from its new popularity are hot topics in Appalachia today. What follows is a series of varied opinions (those of the writers or newspapers mentioned) on these most important questions.

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We are all slowly learning that the oil industry is more than that now. It has wide-ranging interests: coal, natural gas, uranium. It is an energy industry, though that is too polite a name . . .

The idea of an unrestrained oil-coal-gas-uranium cartel is terrifying to (coal miners). We already know what it is to work for people who think of themselves as above the law. The coal industry has always been that way. If you don't believe it, look at what is left of the company towns they built--and then sold to us when they no longer needed them. Look at the schools in Eastern Kentucky. Look at the roads all over Appalachia. Look at the men who were battered and broken in the mines, and then forgotten. Look at the stripped hills and the rivers running red with acid. Look at all that, and look at the coal companies' tax returns, and then tell me the coal industry isn't above the law . . .

We owe it to ourselves and our children to develop a National Energy Policy that means something more than give-away.--*Arnold Miller, president of the United Mine Workers of America* (from *The Center Magazine*, ©1973).

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If we are to become self-sufficient in energy, we must rely upon coal--the fuel that accounts for 88 per cent of our proven energy reserves . . .

It takes three to five years to open a new deep mine and two years to open a new surface mine. So time will pass before the coal needed to meet the fuel shortages now upon us will be available. That means if we are to do our part, we must begin to build the new capacity we need now. We cannot afford delays.

Even then, we will be hard pressed. One false move, one bad break and we will fail. The problem is that the path of our production goal is littered with traps and snares, such as surface-mining legislation now before Congress. I cannot promise you that the coal industry can meet the heavy demand for coal projected through 1985. There are too many imponderables over which we have no control. But I can assure you if the surface-min-

ing bills now before Congress are signed into law, there's no way . . .

Surface mined land should be reclaimed. If it cannot be reclaimed, it should not be mined . . .

But some people prefer not man but trees. They contend in their private moments that the energy crisis is a positive thing that will shape American life along the lines they prefer. They really don't want to regulate strip mining. They want to stop it. And these people had undue influence in shaping the legislation now before Congress.

In times of energy abundance, perhaps we could afford to indulge them. We cannot today . . .--*Carl E. Bagge, president of the National Coal Association* (from the *Courier-Journal*, Louisville).

■ ■ ■

Thomas Harris, (Kentucky) state commissioner of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, made a startling statement yesterday . . . that should seriously concern every Kentuckian.

As one answer to the current energy crisis, Mr. Harris declared that Kentucky strip miners could almost double their yearly production of coal "in a year's time" if they received enough diesel fuel and necessary supplies . . .

Asked about whether reclamation requirements should

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"Not a matter of good versus evil"



In Virginia and Tennessee, Appalachian Museums Pres

Commentators and social philosophers have been quick to look for—and to proclaim—positive aspects of the great energy shortage. Opulence really hadn't worked very well anyway, they say, and besides, the kids didn't like it. The less fuel there is, they suggest, the less materialism there may be—and the closer together we all may find ourselves.

Certainly we'll be closer together in the literal sense, as gasoline for vacation trips and holiday travel becomes harder and harder to come by. Inasmuch as one man's cloud cover is indeed another's silver lining, what may be bad news for faraway resort operators may not turn out so badly for persons operating closer-to-home attractions. The business they lose in long-distance travelers can be made up from the people in nearby counties.

And, at least in the cases of the attractions shown on these pages, it *should* be made up—for these two museums are living documents of the art and technology of the land and people whose names they bear: the Museum of Appalachia (Norris, Tenn.) and the Cumberland Museum (Clintwood, Va.). They are interesting, too, because each bears an individual stamp. They are not the creations of corporate consensus but the work of private enthusiasts—John Rice Irwin of Tennessee and Fred J. Carter of Virginia.

Irwin, a professional educator by trade, has put together what amounts to a mountain village, with actual (not recreated) cabins. In more than twenty years of scouring the hollows of East Tennessee and nearby North Carolina and Virginia, he has come up with an

Museum of Appalachia is a treasurehouse of folk technology. Below: Riving red-oak shingles. Right: Some of the thousands of tools and devices



erve Art and Ingenuity

Two lovers of the mountain past independently create collections of remarkable diversity



Cumberland Museum features arts and crafts

absolutely incredible variety of frontier tools and appliances, farming implements and ancient machines—from standard items like looms and forges to winnowing trays and fly shoes.

Although the museum vividly depicts all sides of life in pioneer Appalachia, it is perhaps most notable as a treasurehouse of technology and techniques—a monument to the ingenuity of people creating a way of life and an economy from closer to absolute scratch than anybody today can imagine.

Fred Carter's story is similar. He began as a collector of "old things" and extended his searching along the entire range of the Appalachians from Maine to Alabama. Ultimately his collection overflowed his home and storage facilities and—inevitably, one senses—became the Cumberland Museum, preserving "primitive things of toil and love." This museum, too, has tools and survival items, and it also includes an art gallery and a fossil department having such exotica as concretions (also called "earth's gallstones").

Associated with the museum is the Cumberland Arts and Crafts Guild, founded by Carter with the aim of freshening interest in mountain crafts and promoting high standards of craftsmanship.

The museum compound includes an item that should be of interest to students of Appalachian literature, a cabin said to have been used as a workroom by John Fox, Jr., during the period when he was writing *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* and other novels. Today, of course, Fox is in considerable disrepute among zealous ethnicists, and realists of every school, but he was



Sorghum-making at Clintwood

literally a household name at the turn of the century.

The Museum of Appalachia is on the edge of Norris, Tenn., one mile east of I-75 (Norris exit). The Cumberland Museum is in the town of Clintwood, Va. A certain institutional loyalty moves us to remind you of Berea College's Appalachian Museum (previously reported on in the CENTER NEWSLETTER). It's a fine collection of displays and artifacts.

"The Hammons Family" on LP

"The time is past when it is enough just to dish up a song or story without delineating its context," says Carl Fleischhauer, coproducer of an unusual study of a West Virginia family since its arrival on the frontier 175 years ago. The study, called "The Hammons Family; A Study of a West Virginia Family's Traditions," consists of an album containing two LPs together with a lengthy illustrated booklet. It is released by the Library of Congress.

One aim of this documentary project, according to Fleischhauer, was to "show that a record album can be a vehicle for cultural and historical reflections as well as music and lore."

The Hammonses, migratory since their arrival on the frontier, finally settled in east central West Virginia. Their moves, one or more each generation, are traced in a family history that meshes documentary sources, such as census records, with the family's oral traditions.

In the recordings, traditional music alternates with tales, family stories, riddling sessions and just plain conversation.

The album can be obtained from the Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (\$10.45).

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be relaxed, Mr. Harris said he had no intention "unless someone bigger and tougher than us says we have to do it." That statement sounds fine but rings hollow.

The simple truth is state regulation clearly has not done the job in the past. The coal lobby is simply too powerful for the loosely organized, poorly financed conservation and environmental groups that try to oppose them.

Then, what of the future? Will the ravaging of Kentucky be stepped up in order to satisfy the cheap energy needs of the nation? Is heavy emphasis on strip mining really best in the long run?

The government has reported that some 356 billion tons of coal can be acquired by conventional deep mining, and only 45 billion tons by stripping. But because the latter is especially profitable, it is the smaller part of the pie that is being devoured first.

We believe that despite the current energy needs, the nation's long-term dependence on coal will be best satisfied by underground mining, not strip mining. In the interim, nothing short of the strictest regulation of stripping should be allowed. And it would help if the foot-dragging Congress would go ahead and enact a tough strip-mine law. Or, shall we let the bulldozer rule our future?--Lexington (Ky.) *Herald*.

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In Kentucky, a state-sponsored group has recently been formed to promote policies that will reconcile the needs of the environment and the goals of economic developers. The group has been given the assignment of creating "enviro-economic" standards, to which, it is hoped, conservationists and growth advocates can all subscribe. "This is not a matter of good versus evil, but of reconciling two necessary things," said one of the state representatives sponsoring the enabling resolution.

Said another, "What better time is there to start this?"

" . . . Can Make a Tree"

Once again, as in the case of stream pollution, a long-forgotten act of Congress has proved a potent weapon in the hands of conservationists. This time the issue concerned the timbering practice called clear-cutting, and the law that came to the aid of environmentalists was the Organic Act of 1897.

There are, it seems, two techniques of timber-cutting. Clear-cutting, also called even-age management, is the newer and currently popular (with the U.S. Forest Service and the lumber companies) method. It is something like one's morning shave: you simply cut everything in a given area, regardless of how big it is. The other method, the uneven-age system, is the standard way of harvesting anything. You cut the trees you actually want, i.e., those that are old enough and big enough. This method leaves you with a forest in what the physicists call dynamic equilibrium--some trees are being cut, others continue to grow toward maturity, still others are just starting out.

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Adherents of clear-cutting say that this is inefficient. It is much easier for cutting machines to sweep through a section of national forest if the process of choosing some trees and rejecting others is simply by-passed. Besides, the trees in the successor growth will all be of the same age. But the drawback, as conservationists observe, is that in the meantime there is no forest at all in the area. It is not perfectly bare, however. What results is a kind of instant five-o'clock shadow of stumps and debris--not the sort of thing that tourists come to the mountains to see.

The tourist dollar vs. the lumber dollar is, to be sure, a complex question. Environmentalists raise such points partly, of course, in order to show that they cannot be dismissed out of hand as mere tree freaks. But the judge in this case--which involved clear-cutting in West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest--was not concerned with such issues anyway. His injunction against clear-cutting was based directly on the 1897 law, which in his view called unmistakably for selective rather than total cutting (i.e., for limiting cutting to mature trees).

Ultimately, it appears, the Supreme Court will have to settle the matter. When you consider how many square miles of national forest there are, it could turn out to be a momentous decision.

New Chicago Center

The Southern Cultural Exchange Center has just opened in the Uptown area of Chicago. The aim of the center, say the founders, is to "provide an opportunity for Chicago mountain migrants to learn more about their rich cultural heritage."

EYE on Publications

Winespring Mountain, by Charlton Ogburn (Morrow).

A frequent-and eloquent-writer on conservation, the author here turns his novelistic attention to strip miners vs. unspoiled Winespring Mountain. Perhaps you can guess whose side he is on.

Magazines

The second issue of *Appalachian Notes*, a scholarly quarterly, has recently appeared. It's almost wholly given over to a notable piece of Appalachian scholarship, a bibliography of early travel accounts of Appalachia by Lawrence S. Thompson. Thompson, associate editor of *Appalachian Notes*, is professor of classics at the University of Kentucky. The publication may be ordered from Erasmus Press, 225 Culpepper, Lexington, Ky. 40502.

The Southern Regional Council has announced the merger of its two publications, *New South* and *South Today*, into a "new, innovative, general-interest magazine." It will continue the kind of keen, candid reporting for which the two publications are noted, and in addition will include fiction and poetry, cultural features and even humor. Address of the S.R.C. is 52 Fairlie St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30303.

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