

NATURE'S CORNER

By
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Let's Call it the Way it is

In the following context, I may step on some people's toes, but it is time someone calls the shots the way they are. I will be discussing what I now know to be fact and I can prove everything I will comment about. Too often we have been overlooking the facts so as not to cause any problems or upsetting people in office. Enough is enough; it is time to call a spade a spade.

After much research and data collection, I have come to the conclusion that our water is in very deep trouble. Over the past 100 or more years, the coal industry has been king. The coal industry has provided many jobs over the years. These jobs and good wages have come at a high price. Men lost their lives fighting for unions that provided job security and retirement benefits. The coal industry did not volunteer these higher wages, they were fought for. The acid mine drainage (AMD) from the old mining has been contaminating our waters for years. It is the same with the environment. Too often people who stand up for clean air and water are called "eco-terrorists" or "tree huggers". The industry has influenced the government and yes politicians with money for campaign donations to vote on the side of industry. Countless times I have heard people complain that our politicians are in the pocket of the industry, but we continue to vote the same people in office. In many cases, the people that complain the most don't even vote. Whose fault is it then? Are we so busy that we will continue to let "them" take care of our problems? By the way, when you figure out whom the "them" are, please let me know.

Article 1 section 27 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of PA guarantees us clean air and pure water. Every politician who takes the oath of office pledges to uphold the Commonwealth's Constitution. I wonder how many of them have read this section of the Constitution. A little history of this article shows that the article was first introduced into the state houses in the late 1960's. It was passed by both the senate and the house unanimously. The article had a two year comment period and in the early 1970's the article was placed on the ballot and the article was again passed by the people. In fact the article received 4 times more votes than any candidate running for office at the time. What happened to what the people want?

To go back to coal, did you know that our state does not nor ever had a severance tax on coal. West Virginia does have such a tax. Guess who pays for all the AMD clean ups? PA did not impose a tax on Marcellus gas drilling and now Gov. Wolf is trying to obtain some of the money needed for schools, roads and bridges and to clean the environment. The idea of 100,000 jobs which was originally thought there would be 200,000 jobs is and was grossly over estimated. The latest research that I have shows that there are less than 40,000 in both the coal and gas industry for Pennsylvanians. How much will it cost to clean the environment after they drilling leaves, and they will leave. The "Halliburton Loop-hole" exempts the gas drilling industry from many of the clean air and clean water acts. Who will pay the bill to clean this mess that is if the mess can be cleaned up?

This brings us to our area. I have been writing about the problems in Ten Mile Creek, Whiteley Creek, Smith Creek and the problems that the water authority is having with providing us with pure drinking water. These agencies do not even test for many of the dangerous chemicals being found in our raw water. Where do we go from here? It is time to speak out for your Constitutional rights. Let all the political figures know you are tired of industry polluting our water and getting away with it. Radiation levels 60 times higher than is permitted in drinking water are being found through out Ten Mile Creek. Where were "they" when this was happening? We must demand from every politician that they follow the Constitution and provide us with the guarantees provided in the Constitution. Gov Wolf is on the right track. Hopefully the House and Senate will follow along. I do not want to hear that the drilling companies will leave. We are the only state without a severance tax. For the 10 years or so these companies have been pocketing the profits with little or no regard to the people or the environment. If they want to leave--so be it. The polluting of our water with bromides and radiation will end, but it will be thousands if not billions of years before the water is rid of the radiation. These companies will leave and guess who will get the clean up bill if it can be cleaned?

What can you do? Call your state Reps and demand that your Constitutional rights be followed. Join sensible organizations that identify the problems and are willing to work with all parties to find solutions. Don't be afraid to speak up it your health and your children's health and their children's health that is most important. The Harry Enstrom Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America is such an organization. Their meetings are open to the public and you can go to www.iwlaharryenstrom.com if you wish to learn more about water problems and what is going on in our area.

If we protect was the Lord has given, us our children will reap the rewards.