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A real eye-opener

By Ken Dufalla Aug 19, 2016

Being involved with trying to keep our water and air clean, I am normally surrounded with people of the same principles and ideals. About a week ago, I got a chance to spend time with an executive from a large oil company. The person had no idea who I was. I guess I was not high enough in the financial circle to be known. That was fine with me. We engaged in a conversation about drilling. In the following, I will give you an overview of our talk. It was eye-opening for me.

We began the conversation by talking about the safety of drilling. As the conversation progressed, the other people stopped what they were doing and began to listen. I asked him if he thought that the drilling was safe. His comment was, "Of course it is safe, and the people that oppose it were ignorant of the value of drilling."

I then asked him several points about drilling. The first question was, "Do you think the casings used are safe?"

He immediately said yes because the casings are cemented to 150 feet and that is well below the aquifer.

My next question was, "If the aquifer is only at 150 feet, then where does the water come from in our mines that range to over 700 feet deep?" He replied, "Well, maybe the wells might be cemented deeper."

Being a former concrete inspector, I asked him, "Do you think the method used is safe?" He mentioned that they pump it in from the bottom up. To which I replied, "Is it vibrated to get out the air spaces?" There was no reply.

There is no current way to vibrate concrete to 700 feet. The University of Pittsburgh is working on a method, presently. We all know that the drilling goes through mined out areas. If that metal casing fails, then the flow back enters the abandoned mine fills. To my shock, he stated, "What will it hurt? It is deep in the ground." I informed him when that mine voids fill, the water from the mine comes out on the surface and enters our raw drinking water supplies.

The next comment from him was that the chemicals in the fracking fluids are so small that he would die of old age before the chemicals in the fluid would affect his health. Then I brought up the point about our children, and how they would be affected long term? The indication I got from him was that he would have passed on by then.

I think that by this time, he had caught on that I was not a company person. He then asked if I was an environmentalist. I said, "No, I am a conservationist." To my surprise, he did not know the difference.

I explained that an environmentalist does not want anything in nature to be damaged while a conservationist believes that when a tree is ready to harvest, you harvest it, but you plant another for future generations.

The next statement he made was that I was against drilling. To that, I replied, "I am against anything that harms the health of the people in the area." Do it safely and I am for it, but as of yet, it has not been proven to me that drilling can be done safely. I then asked him that if the drilling failed, could his company clean the 1.2 to 1.5 trillion gallons of water underground. There was no comment.

By this time, the people around us were getting an education. It seemed that a lot of the people were also getting updated about drilling.

Then I was asked if I opposed the Keystone Pipe Line. I said, "Yes." I was then asked, "Why?" The pipeline is sold to the public as making us oil independent. I replied if it was about the U.S., then why is the oil going to be sent to ports in the Gulf of Mexico?

Those refineries are in hurricane-prone areas. Why not build new refineries in the Midwest? This would enable the servicing in the heart of the country.

In addition, part of my opposition is this: the pipeline would go directly through Native American Indian lands. This land was obtained by treaty, and does not belong to the U.S. What right do we have to eminent domain any others lands?

The conversation continued and at the end, several people came to me and were shocked.

They too said that they had their eyes opened. I even had one listener state that they were pro-fracking but now they were not. I had always felt that the

industry did not understand really what is going on with the drilling. To actually be involved in such a conversation was a real eyeopener. Wow!

As always, trust in God. You will be guided to the right path.