

BLACK MESA RIP-OFF!

'Black Mountain People Never Surrendered'

By Verna L. Harvey
"We the Navajos of the Black Mesa area never surrendered to Kit Carson and never even left our land to walk to Fort Sumner", said a 73 year old Navajo man. He was expressing his resentment at the Black Mesa mining operation to a meeting of Navajo people assembled to protest the mining.

Approximately 175 people had gathered at the community warehouse on Black Mesa, Saturday, Mar. 20, to discuss the possibilities of saving Black Mesa from the strip mining by Peabody Coal Company.

The people came from distant areas to attend the meeting and the only convenient place to meet was in a small warehouse which was partially filled with hay. The place was kept warm throughout the meeting by wood fire, while outside some local Navajo ladies prepared a lunch of mutton stew, fried bread and coffee.

The people were very much concerned about the issues and the majority of the Navajos, mainly those living on the actual mining area, expressed their opposition to the whole coal mining operation. They felt that the contract between the Navajo Tribe and the Peabody Coal Company had been made without the true and full representation of the Navajo people, particularly those living in the mining area. They were not informed from the beginning and were even forced to sign "a piece of paper" without much knowledge about what it meant. Also, it was their understanding that the people had the power to stop the contract at anytime if their land was being damaged.

One man got up and recalled what happened; "Peabody made all kinds of promises and even had a local Navajo, who was at that time councilman, going around to convince people to consent to the coal mining. I was one of the few people that put their marks on that 'piece of paper' and we were told only the good side of the story but were never warned about the bad side. We were told that there would be jobs and that we wouldn't have to go far to work. They said that the roads to every home would be improved for us and that water wells would be built. Are these promises fulfilled? No! Now we are asking where are the people who promised us these services. I was even told that the guy we talked with at that time has already died."

Another speaker was a young man who said he was speaking for the young people. "The young people strongly support what their elders have said in their efforts to save Black Mesa. I am a local citizen of Black Mesa. I was born and raised here and this is our land which Peabody Coal Company is in the process of destroying. We are being hurt in

many ways and we can't just sit back and watch our water wasted, our grazing land destroyed and our air polluted. We have got to unite and fight for ourselves. I work and temporarily live in Tuba City, but on weekends, I always come home to Black Mesa and spend two enjoyable days here doing whatever I want to.

My family has livestock, which I partially own, so I am much concerned about the water, grazing land and the future of our people. Peabody came in and promised us many jobs and some of us applied and tried to get a job with the company all summer long but were never hired.

Two young men that I'm closely associated with, have even gone off the reservation to seek employment. Some of us know about the bad pollution problems in large cities and surely we don't want that to happen on our Navajoland. We, the local people, are in a desperate need of help so please give us your support to get Peabody off our land, Black Mesa."

The Coal Company was also represented. Some pamphlets from Peabody called "Operation Green Earth" were brought in for distribution by one of its employees.

A young woman stood up in protest and called everyone's attention to the pamphlet saying; "We're not going to have anything like those you see in the pictures, like the lakes for fishing, nor the acres and acres of grassland with plenty of trees. Where will the water come from to fill up the reservoirs, when we hardly ever get rain.

What is the future going to be like for our children, our children's children?

Many of the Navajo women acknowledged her comments and another elderly woman said; "The whiteman has no respect for our Navajo religion. Peabody's monsters are digging up the heart of our mother earth, our sacred mountain, and we also feel the pains." She continued; "You can see old gray remains of hogans and sheep corrals in this area, they're all mine. I have lived here for years and I'm not about to move. I have strong objection to the coal mine and so do many of my people living in this area. Because of that, I have organized this meeting with the help of other concerned people."

"We, the Navajos of Black Mesa area, never surrendered to Kit Carson and never even left our land to walk to Fort Sumner", said an old man. "So this is our land and we were never really consulted to have our say in the contract with Peabody. It was done behind closed doors." He expressed strong positive feelings about canceling the contract and the coal mine altogether. "We Navajos have every right to appeal this, it can be done and we can do it," he said.

The Navajo vs. the Bulldozer

By STAN STEINER

THE NEW YORK TIMES

SANTA FE, New Mex. — On the hogans of the old sheep herders of the Navajo people, in northern Arizona, the snow is heavy. It buries not only the sheep pastures but also the strip mining machinery. The bulldozers that have been gutting the sacred Black Mountain, the "Female Mountain" of the Navajo's religious belief, are momentarily silenced.

The old shepherders smile, perhaps it is an ecological omen to them. In the wilderness of the high mesas there are hundreds of millions of tons of cheap coal that are being strip mined to satisfy the need of Los Angeles and Phoenix for more electricity and smog. The magnificent red buttes and virgin forests of the Navajo nation may soon become as grayed and scarred as the coal pits of Appalachia. Soon the canyon country will be a vast slag heap.

Last winter the Navajos of Black Mountain gathered in their windy Chapter House to talk of the coming of the bulldozers. Old Ted Yazzie told now he topped the machines at his doorstep, by running out, at dawn, and waving his arms at the oncoming bulldozers. Not everyone was as successful. "I know of a gravesite that was disturbed," a Navajo woman angrily said; the land was being destroyed "without regard to what we residents say." Even a sweatshop, used for purification ceremonies, "was leveled," said a man. Later, an elderly Navajo lamented, "I do not agree with this mining. See that hill? My father and grandfather said that is a holy place. Now, what will happen to that holy place?"

Six huge power plants are projected for the area, which will generate an ultimate capacity of 14,015,000 kilowatts of electricity. The power requirements of "Arizona, Southern Nevada (Las Vegas) and a significant part of Southern California" will be supplied by these plants, says L. M. Alexander, an official of the major contractor, the Salt River Project.



Dan Bud

Into the once clear desert sky two of these power plants alone will spew 465, 125 tons of pollutants yearly, according to a group of Los Alamos scientists—if they are operated at the "allowable pollution control efficiency." Fly ash emissions may equal those of New York. Sulphur dioxide emissions may be three times those of Los Angeles.

The water needed to run the power plants and sluice the coal may well "result in a dangerous and possibly disastrous depletion of water supplies throughout the Navajo and Hopi reservations," declares a local report on "Black Mesa Hydrology." In the ancient Hopi villages, clustered on the dry desert plateaus at the foot of the sacred mountain, traditionalist leaders have warned, "lowering the water table a few feet will destroy [our] civilization." They fear "the extinction of Hopi life."

Yet, the building of the power plants has begun, the strip mining has started without Congressional hearings or

open scientific inquiry on their effect upon the Indian tribes, whose land, whose water, whose coal is being used.

A Navajo tribal councilman, Keith Smith, has said of the coal contract: "The Council never had good discussion on it. We were asked, in effect, to say yes or no."

It is this that the newly elected Navajo tribal chairman, Peter MacDonald, refers to when he urges renegotiation of the coal mining contract. His call for "Navajo control of Navajo resources" goes further. Like many new Indian leaders, MacDonald envisions the day when industry on Indian reservations will be run by the Indians themselves. "We need self-existent industry," he says, that "will preserve our culture."

A medicine man tells me: Beauty and harmony are the heart of the Navajo way of life. This harmony comes from the eternal and natural balance of the Female Mountain (Black Mountain) and the Male Mountain (Lukachukai). If these mountains, the sources of harmony, are damaged, he says, the beauty of the Navajo Way may be destroyed.

In the last two hundred years the European immigrants to these shores have tried, by every means possible, to destroy the American Indian. Wars were fought and won; yet the original inhabitants survived. The religious and educational missionaries then descended on the tribes to de-Indianize the survivors. Yet the stubborn "nature worshipers"—that was not too long ago an accusation of "primitiveness"—ignored the best that "civilization" had to offer and went on believing in the beauty and power of the earth, the Mother Earth.

Now, the descendants of the "civilizers" have decided that the earth is sacred after all. So the American Indians are to be given the debris of the desecrated land, the smog and the pollution. That is the final irony.

Stan Steiner is the author of "The New Indians" and "La Raza."

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\$200,000,000 For Navajos From Peabody Coal Mining

By WILLIAM H. KESTER
Post-Dispatch Financial Editor

Peabody Coal Co. of St. Louis isn't going to make the Arizona desert exactly bloom, but the \$200,000,000 it will pay the Navajo and Hopi Indians will go a long way.

That is the amount of royalties and wages Peabody expects to pay the two tribes to mine coal on their land for the next 35 years.

The leases with Peabody re-

quire it to operate in a safe and workmanlike manner and avoid waste of the land.

Damage Ruled Out

They state that Peabody must return Black Mesa to the tribes "in as good condition as received, except for ordinary wear, tear and depletion incident to mining operations." The company's plans have been approved by the Navajo and Hopi

councils, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Geological Survey

Whenever feasible, Peabody plans to divert surface run-off water so the final mining cuts can be used to create lakes, which will serve as reservoirs for cattle and other animals in that arid country.

Peabody continues to explore the reservation for additional coal deposits.

"I only wish they could take into their hearts and souls what we see in the evening of our Hopi land, the mountains and valleys of the Great Spirit, the sky, the setting sun, the stars, the moon, and all of our brothers and sisters who inhabit this beautiful world with us, the animals, the birds, the plants, the trees, the stones."

For latest information

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