



Justice Party Washington

In Support of Social, Economic and Environmental Justice

Issue: Coal Exports Through WA State

The Issue: Two U.S. and one Australian company want to build massive coal export terminals in Washington to enable them to ship coal, transported by rail from Montana and Wyoming through Washington's communities and the Columbia Gorge, to China. The coal is being purchased from the citizens of the U.S. for approximately \$1 per ton.

The Question: Is this of benefit to Washington State?

Economic Perspective:

The state's ports and international trade depend on rail to export products of Washington, such as grain and wood products, and to import goods destined for the rest of the country. According to a Washington State Transportation Commission study BNSF was operating at about 70% of capacity in 2007. With coal company plans to add at least ten additional 100-120 car trains each day to transport coal to China, that capacity could be pushed to the limit and beyond. The westbound movement of coal through the Gorge is likely to disrupt the reliability of containerized shipments, which would likely experience a diversion to California and Canadian ports, and could well lead to limiting the ability of existing WA businesses to get their products to market.

Social Justice: Who Pays? Who Benefits?

There are many areas along the railroad routes which will require major upgrading and expansion of existing tracks and related infrastructure, which could well cost millions of dollars. Hundreds of miles of railroad lines will likely require expansion from single to double track.

State and local government will likely



Coal Terminal Vancouver, BC

bear the burden of mitigation and associated debt service to accommodate export coal traffic. The expected revenue could easily be consumed in this infrastructure spending, with the net benefit concentrated in favor of the coal companies and the countries of the Far East

Environmental Justice:

It is well recognized that coal is the dirtiest fossil fuel in use, and that carbon pollution is the main contributor to global climate disruption. According to the World Bank, *"Humans must implement a series of radical measures to halt carbon emissions or prepare for the collapse of entire ecosystems and the displacement, suffering and death of hundreds of millions of the globe's inhabitants. The continued failure to respond aggressively to climate*

change will mean that the planet will inevitably warm by at least 4 degrees Celsius (7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, ushering in an apocalypse."

In the near term pollution from coal use constitutes a serious health threat. The U.S. is gradually phasing out coal usage, as Americans turn to cleaner energy that also produces healthier, good paying jobs.

Shipping 150 million tons of coal a year through West Coast communities would release toxic dust along the entire route. BNSF estimates that each uncovered car loses between 500 and 2000 pounds of coal dust en route. It is unknown how much coal dust will be released into the air, onto the land and into the water in transit, from terminals, and through derailments. There are no proven methods of containing fine coal dust. Nor are there any methods to protect the marine environment, a food source for the world, from the acidification that CO2 produces.

Conclusion:

Exporting massive amounts of additional coal would not result in a net benefit to Washington, its people, or its environment.