

TO CONF FOR ME YH

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My name is Roger Imes, I live here in Spokane, and I have a speech impediment. I ask for your patience and your indulgence so I can express my concern about the issues before us today.

Let me begin by telling you that several years ago I moved to Los Angeles to care for my uncle, who was terminally ill. Soon after arriving there I had breathing difficulties and sometimes feared that I was suffocating. There were certain days and nights that no matter how deeply I tried to breathe, I could not seem to get enough air into my lungs. After my uncle passed away I moved here to Spokane where my condition eased except for occasional days when there was an air inversion and I breathed air polluted by industrial activity and the particulate emissions from vehicles.

Frightened once again I made an appointment to see a doctor in Spokane. She suggested that my heart was at an early stage of failure, which was the reason I felt so vulnerable.

I am retired now, and I spend my days helping my wife to run our small Mom and Pop health food and herbal store in Spokane.

I was lucky that my wife, a wise herbalist, was able to help strengthen my heart and guide me toward feeling better.

But for a bad day I now feel a little stronger than I did a few years ago, and my heart condition seems to be improving.

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Every day we see people in our shop trying to make the best of their health and of their lives, just as we are ourselves.

We all wish to do as much as we are able in order to prolong the quality of the time we have left, and to enjoy family life together. That is why I have great fear about this idea of seeing so many additional, and very long, coal trains coming through Spokane.

That American coal will be shipped across this country to China and then burned creates a lot of very serious, and troubling environmental concerns in my mind.

I can only envision a landslide of negative aspects for our Spokane community.

One favorite activity of mine is to spend some quiet time at Fish Lake located along the back road to Cheney, and not very far from our home. The train tracks run directly across the top of Fish Lake and I wonder what will be the effect of coal dust blowing into the water there?

What will happen to the Trout that I like to catch, and if lucky to catch a few, would they be fit to eat?

I wonder how much added cost the taxpayers of Spokane will incur for upgrading the roads and train crossings to accommodate the additional trains. Will we be able to stay in our home when Spokane's property taxes increase to pay for these improvements that will only be of benefit to the railroads?

Will I be able to sleep when many more trains are blasting their horns throughout my resting hours?

I wonder about the quality of life for children here in Spokane.

They cannot vote but so many additional coal trains moving through our community, will have a negative affect on their lives too.

The additional pollution to our air and the added physical danger, needs to be well considered?

The enormous amount of domestic energy that will be needed to fuel these trains and ships is mind-boggling to contemplate? Three to four engines will be needed to pull trains longer than a mile in length across thousands of miles of track.

We may still be near to nature but Spokane will be far from perfect, if we accept this burden of moving so much coal through our communities.

I will not address here, or talk about the invisible elephant in this room today.

It is the more obvious and pressing issues of global warming and the way our climate is drastically changing now.

For decades climate changes have caused millions of people to starve in African countries where once arable lands have been turned into vast and lifeless desserts.

Now warmer seawater and rising ocean levels are combining with increasingly powerful storms to wreck our own, once safe,

communities. These storms, like Sandy that has devastated the eastern seaboard, kill people while they are still sleeping.

We absorb the monetary costs of global warming through higher insurance premiums; we share the economic burdens equally across the country.

We now know that burning fossil fuels creates many problems and those higher levels of CO2 fuels these destructive events.

I looked in the mirror one day, and so five years ago we acted by reducing our own creation of CO2 emissions. We began by halving the energy we were using at our shop. Then my wife and I stopped burning gasoline by utilizing a very small, non-polluting, and minimal earth-impact, neighborhood electric car for 98% of our transportation needs.

In doing these things we felt like we were doing something personal and positive to help to preserve this precious planet.

This effort is made meaningless against the prospect of burning millions of tons of American coal in China.

It is a crazy idea.

There will be vastly more coal dust and diesel fumes in the air we breathe, if it is raining, the coal dust will be washed into our streams and rivers. There will be many coal and diesel fuel spills, and many fires will be started accidentally alongside the tracks during the summer months.

This idea will create many more jobs, but sadly most of them will be in the medical professions treating an increasing number of people with their illnesses.

When the coal is burned more CO₂ will be released and prevailing winds will bring the worst aspects of our coal back to America in the form of highly toxic mercury.

Most all of the mercury found in our environment has come from burning coal, and it eventually settles into our soil and waters. It is then found in the animals, birds, and in the fish, and in the foods we harvest here in America.

The American people, being increasingly economically squeezed, are turning to consuming larger amounts of cheaper, farm-raised fish and shrimp, from China, and other Asian countries.

They are finding such products to be a much lower priced protein for their family's meals.

One way or another the mercury from burning our coal in China will find its way back to America. Mercury in the minutest amounts is recognized to be one of the most toxic of all elements. In humans and animals, it causes chromosome damage, deformities, and brain damage in the form of retardation.

Such pollution, and increasing the amount of CO₂ in the air are global problems; there is nothing positive to come out of burning this much coal, anywhere on earth.

It will not be better for my own health, it will be much worse, and if that is so, whom in our communities is it going to be a good thing for?

Pray that these ancient fossil fuels stay where they are, where nature intended them to be, and where they are safer for our health. What profit does the millionaire make to become a billionaire, at what cost, and why? In Spokane we have a chance to say NO to the continuing mindless exploitation of this precious planet by faceless, and irresponsible multi-national corporations. As ordinary people we must stand up now to reclaim our God given rights to be free of this burdensome and heavy yoke of economic repression and the mindless exploitation of this American land and its people.

Let us say no more to the extreme selfishness of those that do not care about our welfare, or of our health, or that of our precious planet.

We all know that their God is money, but when will they ever have enough of it?

Thank you, Roger Imes.