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This is a hearing about the rules and regulations for mining in Maine, but my testimony is about more than that. I say there should be NO rules and regulations because the law that allows open pit mining should be rescinded entirely and no open pit mining allowed in Maine at all.

In the spring of 2012, I went to West Virginia with seven students from The New School and a science teacher. We went there to see open pit mining, or mountain top removal, for ourselves. It was horrifying beyond our wildest imagination. Imagine a mountain, once covered with trees, birds, water, deer, now a vast wasteland of rocks and dust, with it's former height thrown into a valley that was once a brook. The hardest thing to see is the feeble attempts at restoration. All the top soil is gone, so they put a thin layer of soil on the rocks and plant some hardy grass that doesn't last long as there is no soil to grow in, only the bedrock of the mountain. Worst of all was the utter silence of a mountain taken down, like the moon – no life, no sound.

When we drove down the road near an open pit site, we were shocked by the brilliant orange brook running beside the road. When you dig into a mountain for ores, there is no real way to prevent acid mine runoff. The brooks were now acid, eating into the iron of the rocks, making them bright orange.

We talked to people who had brown, or orange, or yellow water that came from the mine runoff and the slurry ponds where the poisonous water was stored after washing the ores. The slurry ponds are a huge pool of contaminated water, millions of gallons. We talked to people who were ill from the contamination. We spent three weeks there and saw enough to know we never wanted this to happen in Maine, or anywhere else.

I cannot believe that ~~the people who want to mine Bald Mountain have~~ there is some magic formula for not creating acid mine runoff, or slurry ponds, or contaminated water, or dead mountains with no life. There are simply no rules or regulations you can make that prevent the devastation taking down a mountain causes.

There is no copper, zinc or any other metal precious enough to do to Maine what mining companies have done to West Virginia. If you ever went and saw it for yourselves you would never allow ANY open pit mining in Maine, ever! Believe me, the shock of that kind of devastation never leaves your mind. The images are permanent, the damage is permanent. The forest, and mountains and habitat lost, the water contaminated is not worth any amount of jobs or metals to be mined. The mountains harbor our lives as we cannot do without the water that starts there and flows into our brooks and rivers and lakes and wells. West Virginia needs to be a real lesson for us as those people have sacrificed so much in taking down their mountains for us to have their ore. One look and you would know, it is not worth it.

What is Mountain Top Removal?

Mountain Top Removal is a process used to extract coal from mountains. It began in the 1970's as a different form of strip mining and is commonly used in the Appalachian Mountain range. The coal that is extracted from the mountains is sent to large power plants where it is converted into energy which eventually is what powers our lights, refrigerators and other appliances in our homes.

Energy Programs By New School Students

The information in this brochure came from a group of New School students who traveled to West Virginia to learn about mountain top removal issues. Some of the pictures inside were taken while we were on our trip. If you would like to talk to us some more we would be more than happy to come to your organization. We also have presentations about Fracking, water quality, and human waste disposal.

For more information please

contact The New School

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Visit our website at www.tnsk.org

Mountain Top Removal

"Mountaintop removal is the biggest environmental battle of our hemisphere. You know, you can restore the Hudson River in perhaps a hundred years. But you will never, never, get these mountains back. This is truly a crime against every human being in the world."
- Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

By: Autumn Sherman

How Mountain Top Removal Works

In Maine, only 2.3% of our energy comes from coal, compared to 13% last year. This is due to Maine's effort to develop energy from renewable resources. In West Virginia 96% of their energy is produced by coal.

There are 4 major steps you have to go through before you can access the coal inside of a mountain.

1. **Deforestation-** To begin the process, all life and vegetation must be removed., leaving a mountain with only dirt covering the surface. When this is done a large amount of the top soil is also removed , which can cause major flooding and erosion.

2. **Blasting–** After deforestation, thousands of explosives are sent deep down into the mountain to loosen up any rubble, making it easier to dispose of.

3. **Mountain Removal-**After all of the rubble is removed, giant machines called draglines are moved in. Draglines are extremely large with a weight of 8 million pounds and are the same height as a 20 story building. These giant machines dig down into the mountain and scoop out thousands of pounds of coal.

4. **Dumping Waste-** The final process of Mountain Top Removal is disposing of the rock and rubble. All of the leftover waste is dumped into a valley like the one below, completely covering up any natural streams running through it. This is called a valley fill.

Environmental Concerns

Not many people are aware of what Mountain Top Removal is and those that are, don't know about the major impact it has on the environment. Not only is it destroying habitats for animals, but it is also polluting water which causes many deaths and illnesses. Acid runoff is one of the big contributors to the pollution. After the valley has been filled with the extra rubble, all of the heavy metals leach out of the rock and into the streams running through. Once the water runs down the valley fill, it is collected into something called a sediment pond. As you can see in the picture below, the left side is cloudy and full of toxins and heavy metals. The barrier you see is a cloth filter which reduces the particles in the water, increasing water quality. This still leaves heavy metal in the water which is then released into the environment.