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## **Mining not comparable to segregation**

By Roger L. Nicholson

Environmental activist Dave Cooper's commentary, disingenuously equated International Coal Group and friends of coal with the civil rights oppressors of the early 1960s.

Cooper even went so far as to compare us to "Bull" Connor, the police commissioner who unleashed dogs and water cannons on peaceful civil rights marchers in Alabama.

Of course, the comparison is patently absurd and implies that the thousands of workers who earn their living in the Kentucky coal industry are immoral, evil, greedy and insensitive. That sort of characterization is as ridiculous as Cooper's self-aggrandizing portrayal of his own anti-mining extremist friends.

The anti-mining extremists criticize the coal industry without offering realistic solutions to the replacement of valuable jobs and industry; to the development of alternative sources of energy that are affordable and accessible; or to the replacement of an economic and tax base that would be required if their efforts are successful.

International Coal Group uses the mountaintop-removal coal mining method to obtain energy resources in areas where alternative methods are impossible or impractical. The coal industry, which provides more than 50 percent of our country's electricity needs, is one of the most regulated industries in our nation.

To vilify the hard-working people that help drive our nation's economy is frankly beyond the pale.

Cooper fantasizes about what a documentary film about the effects of mountaintop removal as viewed 20 years from now would reflect. I can provide a clear and realistic picture for his future documentary about previously mined lands:

Filmgoers would witness a land that supports hospitals, shopping centers, airports, new residential areas outside of the flood plain, community centers, recreational areas, thriving new forests and vegetation, and abundant wildlife, such as elk, black bears and wild turkeys.

In fact, this is not a futuristic vision; it can be easily witnessed in Eastern Kentucky today.

Even now, I see a land that continues to provide good-paying jobs for hard-working people -- people who mine our natural resources to provide energy to us all and who care about the environment and hunt and fish on this land.

These are the people who will make history and be the heroes of Cooper's proposed documentary.

Indeed, miners should be remembered and honored, not compared to vile segregationists and terrorists. Those like the anti-mining extremists, who have to rely on anger and deceit, rather than facts, should be remembered as a historic afterthought: negative obstructionists who seek to bring down rather than build up.

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