

Rotary speaker claims nationwide blackout imminent

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The Harrisburg Rotary Club heard some alarming news concerning proposed Environmental Protection Agency regulations on coal-fired power plants and uses of Illinois coal in America at their monthly meeting on Monday, July 14.

The Harrisburg Rotary Club met at the Harrisburg Ponderosa and heard an address from Leonard Hopkins, vice president for Fuel, Environmental and Safety for the Southern Illinois Power Cooperative. Hopkins had some dire warnings for the use of Illinois coal and the use of coal-fired energy generation in general under newly proposed EPA guidelines.

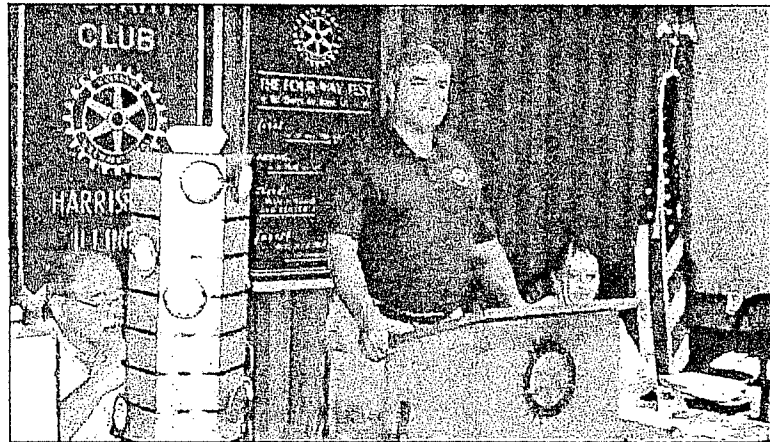
The Obama administration unveiled a plan to cut earth-warming pollution from power plants by 30 percent by 2030,

according to the Associated Press.

The rule, when it becomes final a year from now, will set the first-ever national limits on the gases linked to global warming from the nation's power plants. They are the largest source of greenhouse gases.

Environmental Protection Agency data shows the nation's power plants have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 13 percent since 2005, so they are about halfway to the target in the proposal.

Hopkins began his address Monday with the statement that when he was a young man, Illinois coal provided jobs and income for many families in our state and an economical source of fuel for electrical generation for a significant percentage of our nation. With the advent of increasingly strict regulations from the late 1960's to the current time, the coal industry has continuously been restricted to the point that today, the head of the EPA



Jon Sternberg photo

Leonard Hopkins addresses the Harrisburg Rotary Club concerning changes in regulations for the coal industry.

routinely makes public statements that, "There is a war on coal."

A variety of proposed regulations by

the EPA or other governmental agencies, are gutting the base of jobs and affordable

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electrical costs for America, according to Hopkins. He said coal is still the cheapest source of fuel for electrical generation and the use of advanced "scrubbing" and emission control techniques, can remain a source of economical electrical generation fuel into the foreseeable future.

Speaking from the experience of a professional life spent in the fields of coal production and energy production, Hopkins clearly feels that the use of clean, coal-fired power plants must continue to exist in our society.

"We (our nation) cannot replace the current power generation system with clean, renewable energy sources right now, it can't be done," Hopkins said.

Hopkins stated that there are many new regulations being proposed by the EPA and the one most dangerous to the continued existence of coal-fire power plants is the Greenhouse

Gas Emission Regulations. These regulations, briefly put, aim to reduce the level of the emission of gases that promote the "Greenhouse Effect" in the United States, regardless of the emissions generated by other nations on the planet, he said.

In another instance of leading from the rear, the current administration hopes that it's example in emission reduction will be followed by other and worse polluters such as China and India, Hopkins said.

Hopkins said the majority of coal produced in Illinois is used in Europe and the Netherlands, with China and India obtaining their coal from closer sources such as Australia.

Hopkins told his audience that the EPA spent three years formulating the current proposals on emission reduction and has allowed the energy production industry a little under a month to study and responded to the 1,600 pages of proposed new regulations. Hopkins stated that under the proposed regula-

tions, any or all coal-fired power plants could be forced to close at any time, anywhere in our nation.

Hopkins said the EPA is pushing the increased use of natural gas-fired boilers for power plants, apparently overlooking the problems and dangers inherent in the transport of liquid natural gas, while at the same time attempting to regulate coal-fired plants out of existence.

Natural gas, to be used in a cost effective manner, must be transported in a liquid or super chilled form. This results in any breach of the transporting container venting under pressure an extremely combustible and explosive gas, which can be ignited with devastating consequences by any ignition source.

In answer to questions from the audience as to why the regulations and the proposed "Cap and Trade Law" is being supported by the White House, Hopkins stated that a great deal of tax money could be generat-

ed by the "Cap and Trade Law" and once the funds went into the government system, it could be used to pay for any number of new social programs, initiated by the current administration, such as the Affordable Health Care System. Answering a question from the Daily Register, Hopkins said that it appears that the administration and the EPA regulations would eliminate coal as a source of fuel for electrical generation, devastate the job market in Illinois and other states and cause drastic, if not catastrophic increase in the cost of electricity across the nation.

"If these new laws and regulations go into effect, it will result in the lose of a large number of coal-fired electrical power generation plants. If our nation loses even 30 percent of the current coal-fired power plants, it will, not maybe, but will, result in nationwide power blackouts. The power industry and our nation are not ready for these measures," Hopkins said.