**REMARKS OF SENATOR JOHN F. KENNEDY, FAIRMONT, WEST VIRGINIA, APRIL 18, 1960**

One industry ranks at the top of every West Virginia agenda - the coal industry. Without doubt, this nation's vast coal reserves are among our most important assets. And without doubt, no resource has been subjected to more government indifference, short-sightedness and even hostility than these same coal reserves.

It was coal - much of which came from West Virginia, the nation's largest coal producer - which supplied the energy and the power to transform America into the most powerful industrial nation in the history of the world. It was coal which built the factories, drove the railroads, and powered the machinery of a growing, expanding America. It was coal and the miners of coal which provided the motive power of America's rise to greatness. And it is our limitless coal reserves of today - almost one trillion tons, 1000 years supply - which holds out the brightest promise of an everlasting and economical fuel supply for America's expanding future.

And yet - at a time when America is engaged in a critical world-wide struggle for industrial supremacy - when the Soviet Union has already surpassed American coal production and is pressing on to even greater heights - when America desperately needs all the power and all the production it can obtain - our vital, promising coal industry is being allowed to suffer and decline by an Administration whose lack of vision and lack of leadership is slowly undermining this great source of American strength.

Mr. Nixon has said that "Americans are living better today than ever before and they are going to vote that way."

But he hasn't been to West Virginia. He hasn't seen the thousands of miners who want to work and can't find work - he hasn't seen the thousands of undernourished women and children forced to subsist on a starvation diet of "mollygrub" - he hasn't watched the steady decline in coal employment from 125,000 in 1948 to less than 50,000 today.

This is the voice of an Administration which hasn't seen what has happened in West Virginia - hasn't wanted to see - and hasn't cared. This is the voice of an Administration to which human suffering and deprivation are simply cold statistics in an employment table - an Administration which has blinded itself to America's present needs, and which has little faith in America's future.

The coal industry is not a defeated industry. It does not come before the government - hat in hand - begging for favors or asking for charity. For coal is a live, vibrant, dynamic industry. Out of the chaos of lost markets and declining production has emerged the most modern and progressive industry in the world - an industry which has increased productivity - an industry which contributes more than two billion dollars to the American economy each and every year - and an industry which can compete effectively in world markets.

No - coal does not want charity, and coal does not need charity. It only seeks an equal opportunity in our free enterprise system - a chance to reach its full potential of growth and strength - and an end to the discrimination and indifference which is destroying it. With these things - with equality of treatment - coal will prosper - men will go back to work - dignity and a decent living will be restored to thousands - and America itself will grow stronger.

But to achieve this we need more than words - we need more than promises - and more than theories. For, as Franklin Roosevelt said of the depression, "we are faced with a condition, not a theory." And we must do what Roosevelt himself did in those earlier times of darkness - we must have action - immediate, forceful, creative action. And under the next Administration - a Democratic Administration - we will get action. For we intend to see that the mines re-open, that men go back to work - and that prosperity returns to West Virginia and the entire coal industry - not as a favor to the mines or the miners, but as a vital need to America.

First, we must immediately establish a National Fuels Policy - a policy which will take the vast, intricate, and often contradictory network of laws and regulations which govern the nation's fuel industry and weld them into a sound and logical whole - into a policy which does not discriminate against coal - which does not treat coal unfairly in the matters of freight rates, taxes or regulation - but which gives it that equal chance to compete which is the precondition to coal prosperity.

Secondly, we must embark on a broad program of coal research and development to establish new uses for coal - develop new markets - expand existing uses - and reduce the cost of coal production and distribution. Such a program was passed by Congress and vetoed by the President. And with it were vetoed the hopes of the coal industry - and the opportunity to summon the resources of modern science and technology to the aid of coal. But this was the last such veto. For our next Administration will not only support - it will demand - a new expanded program of research for coal's future.

Third, we must engage in a great dramatic effort to stimulate a program that holds greater promise for the future of the coal industry than any other plan or policy yet developed - and that is the building of new steam plants. For coal does not need to leave here only by rail - it can go "by wire" as well. "Coal by wire" - great steam plants - here in West Virginia, close to your rich coal deposits - can exhaust untold tons of coal every day in manufacturing power to heat the homes and run the appliances of the many vast population areas within easy reach of your state. A program of development loans and tax incentives can encourage the construction of this modern method of producing electricity which will greatly increase the use of coal. The resources are there - the men are there - the courage and the determination are there. All that is needed is a little help and a little understanding from Washington.

Fourth, we must encourage - through a program of federal loans and assistance, on a sound economic basis - the long-term industrial development which is the key to West Virginia's future. New industry - here in West Virginia and in surrounding states - will provide the surest and most important market for today's coal production - and it will be a stimulus to increased coal production in the future. Surely a government which can afford to rebuild the economies of Western Europe can afford to help its own people.

And while we carry out this great, vital program to build coal's future, we must not forget the hungry and poor of today. Increased unemployment benefits, a broader program of food distribution, better social security - all these are essential to alleviate present hardship. But what unemployed miners want more than anything else, in my opinion, is to go back to digging coal. The real guide to future prosperity - to an end of relief and assistance - will only come if we can restore a sound, productive prosperity to the coal industry.

When Winston Churchill called at the start of World War II for our arms and destroyers, he pleaded: "Send us the tools - and we will finish the job."

I promise you that voice will be heard.

*Source*: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers. Senate Files, Box 908, ["'A New Program for Coal,' Fairmont, Vest Virginia, 18 April 1960."](https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKSEN/0908/JFKSEN-0908-016) John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.