

Governor Mead has endorsed Keystone XL (KXL), the gargantuan pipeline TransCanada wants to stretch across the U.S. TransCanada wants its tar-sands gunk refined in Texas, thence to be shipped to global markets. To approve of this scheme means acting on willful ignorance.

You may say, a GOP governor has no choice but to toe the party line. Mitt Romney wants KXL pushed through, no matter the costs environmentally and economically. Well, two wrongs don't make a right. And Wyomingites may be less ready than their governor thinks to join hands with the likes of the Koch brothers.

Koch Industries is the second-largest private industry in America, with interests in petroleum, chemicals, fertilizer, pipelines, etc. "Naturally" it is heavily invested in the tar-sands fields. It also "owns a big piece of the Republican party," according to Kevin Horrigan's Sept. 19 WTE opinion piece, which observes that "Democrats weren't much better." Still, the Koch brothers are notorious for funding campaign against global-warming mitigation and environmental regulations.

As Horrigan sees it, the GOP mission is "to protect and further enrich America's plutocracy . . . Republicans act as bellhops for corporate America and the superrich behind those corporations." Because the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision decreed that money is speech, those with the most corporate money have the most speech.

To endorse KXL means ignoring that today there exists an environmental crisis of alarming proportions. It means ignoring mountaintop removal in West Virginia, which has blasted to smithereens thousands of acres of forests, rivers, and wildlife to reach the underlying coal seams. In Alberta, Canada, a similar practice has been in process since the 1980s. Vast swaths of boreal forests and the life sustained therein have been obliterated—"removed"—to get at the tar embedded in the sands—which is so viscous, it must be strip-mined. Its acid concentrations are up to 20 times higher than conventional crude; sulphur content is up to 10 times higher. It carries particles that sand-blast the insides of pipes. The tar, bitumen, must be diluted for processing; the result is called "dilbit."

What if anything does Mr. Mead know about Enbridge, the company that builds, maintains, and operates the pipelines that transport dilbit throughout North America? The contested pipeline would run 1,700 miles through Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma on its way to refineries in Texas. It is projected to carry an estimated 800,000 barrels of dilbit per day.

Here are things Mr. Mead and his constituents should know about Enbridge, Inc.:

- 1.) The company is responsible for the biggest inland pipeline spill in American history. In 2010, an Enbridge pipeline spilled over one million gallons of the Canadian product into Michigan's Kalamazoo River. Parts of the river remain closed today. The federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety

Administration has proposed an unprecedented \$3.7 million fine. If only money could render whole a gunk-choked river! Dilbit is much harder to clean up than conventional crude oil: much of it sinks in water rather than float.

- 2.) Enbridge spilled 275,000 gallons in a suburb of Chicago and 126,000 gallons near Neche, North Dakota. And within a few months of beginning operations, TransCanada's recently-completed Keystone I pipeline had leaked three times in South Dakota.
- 3.) Bitumen and is diluted dilbit is exempt from the tax that pays for regular oil cleanup. Enbridge files over \$2 billion in profits annually.

These instances of corporate negligence are far from the company's only black marks. According to Enbridge's own reports, between 1999 and 2010 the company has been responsible for at least 800 spills that have released close to seven million gallons of the heavy crude into the environment.

The World Wildlife Fund's 2012 "Importing Disaster: The Anatomy of Enbridge's Once and Future Oil Spills" describes the tar-sands product as "a very different beast than conventional crude oil" that shouldn't be transported through pipelines designed for the latter.

"Tar sands oil is more corrosive (due to its chemical mixture) and abrasive (due to high-grit minerals), which weakens the pipes to the point that they are more susceptible to leaks and ruptures." Yet no standards are in place to ensure that new pipelines are built, maintained, and operated with this fact in mind.

Our neighbors in Nebraska are doing all they can to keep KXL from crossing their state. With good reason. Recently I welcomed into my home a travel-club couple who stayed with Nebraskans before arriving in Cheyenne. Janet and Gerry were on the way to Seattle thence to journey northward into Canada, where Gerry regularly visits siblings and extended family in Alberta.

"They love Americans up there," he reported. "The Yanks are their best customers." He was talking tar-sands bitumen.

"Alberta used to be one vast primeval forest," he said. "Magnificent old-growth trees. They are gone, all gone. It's a wasteland now, a desert."

The tailing ponds of Alberta are so huge, they are discernible from outer space. Unlike that other gigantic human artifact so visible, the Great Wall of China, the tailing lakes are so contaminated, migratory birds die by the hundreds as they alight there.

Before it can be recovered and poured into pipes, the tar must be heated with huge amounts of water and natural gas. And because the process is expensive and energy-intensive—the energy-equivalent of two barrels of oil is needed to recover three barrels—any means by which profits can be realized has become acceptable.

Canadian bitumen has been piped into the U.S. for decades, but KXL has driven the frenzy to new heights. Now that First Nations have killed TransCanada's alternative, the Northern Gateway pipeline that would carry the gunk to a British Columbia seaport, its proposed American pipeline is in the spotlight again. Enbridge wants federal standards to allow any pipeline leaks of less than 2% of capacity per week. At a potential 5,600,000 barrels weekly—do the math! How would Governor Mead react, should TransCanada demand that its pipeline cut through Wyoming?