

Esther's Trumpet
September 27, 2010

Turning Perry County Into Coal Ash Junkies

I read in the paper that Perry County is now strapped financially because there's no coal ash money in the budget.

Albert Turner, Jr. is no dummy. The way the original coal ash money was distributed is manipulation. Turner and his cronies knew that if that money was doled out in big chunks that it would hurt when the money stopped. And that hurt would cause the county leaders to encourage more coal ash to get the money. The county commission could have put the money in the budget and spent it slowly so there wouldn't be a big shock when it temporarily stopped.

And therein, as they say, lies the rub.

More coal ash is coming. And Turner knows that. So the temporary stop in coal ash funds is just what Perry County needs to push more dependence and more acquiescence to those who would destroy our communities.

It's really no different than the process a drug dealer uses to get customers. That first thrill of feeling good turns into a habit. Perry County loved that first flush of money, and now they need a fix. Perry County is about to be dependent on a substance that will eventually destroy a community and its people. Perry County is about to become junkies on the coal ash habit.

Every single black belt county is strapped financially. Poor financial decisions have been the rule and not the exception. The secrecy and plotting to keep power has cost all of our citizens. Mostly, we have to take the blame ourselves.

We did not learn how government is supposed to work. We did not hold our elected officials accountable. We did not take part in local government; we just let boss man do his thing while we fight each other for crumbs. This has been going on for at least a century. Nothing has changed except big boss man.

It's not fair just to blame Albert Turner, Jr., even if he is the King of Perry County. He only does what he is allowed to do. His quest for notoriety makes it easy for folks to proclaim him the villain, but in reality other elected officials and leaders are going along with him. And like it or not, the voters are going along as well.

The coal ash and the dump have received national attention. No clean industry will want to locate in Perry County. Even though the coal ash dump is located near Uniontown, the whole county gets the bad rap for the coal ash. It sends a message that Perry County is willing to sacrifice their people for money.

But the coal ash has an up side, and it's not money. The issue has educated some folk to understand that it is the process at fault. While some vilify Turner, others see that the process of secrecy and deceit is the real problem. Voters who vote for family and friends rather than vote on the issues....that's a huge problem. Folks who are disinterested in the workings of local government and who refuse to speak up, whether it is out of fear or misplaced southern civility are problems as well. Public elected officials without courage and the integrity to stand up publicly in the face of wrongdoing....that's a problem. The upside is that some people are actually seeing this. There is hope.

Meanwhile, Perry County waits for the next coal ash fix.