

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

March 20, 2013

The Rape of Wisconsin

Assembly Republicans pass the mining bill on a party line vote

The controversy over GogebicTaconite Mining Corp. wanting to dig an open pit mine in Wisconsin's Pokeno mountain range has been going on since Scott Walker was elected governor. The problem, as I see it, is not that Gogebic wants to mine iron ore in Wisconsin. It is that Scott Walker and his cronies are driven to impose their ideology on Wisconsin regardless of the consequences.

Walker and his ilk are True Believers, extremists who believe amassing wealth is the only criterion by which everything should be judged. They are no different than the robber barons of the 19th century where Rockefeller and a few others controlled virtually all the resources in the U.S. Walker cares about jobs as much as Rockefeller cared about workers in the Comstock Mine when he unleashed his Pinkerton gunmen to fire on miners' families. Anybody who does not know what Walker is really like by now is not paying attention.

Here are some highlights from the recently-passed mining bill:

The bill creates a presumption that damage to wetlands is necessary. Application fees are capped at \$2 million (for a mine projected to cost over a billion dollars). Gogebic is exempt from the \$7/ton recycling fee on waste materials which will cost the state \$171 million in lost fees annually. Unlike the Minnesota mining laws, there is no per-ton fee on how much ore is mined. Finally, the Bad River Indian Reservation is downstream from the proposed mine. They will bear the brunt of the pollution, including destruction of their wild rice beds and other environmental damage.

The bill does nothing but transfer billions of dollars worth of Wisconsin's natural resources to a few wealthy individuals at the expense of the rest of us.