DISASTER ON BUFFALO CREEK
A Citizens’ Report on Criminal Negligence in a West Virginia Mining Community
THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER

Introduction

One hundred thirty million gallons of water swept through the narrow, crowded valley of Buffalo Creek shortly after 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 26, 1972. The worst flood in West Virginia history, this man-made disaster left 124 people dead, 7 people missing, 4,000 homeless. $50 million in property damage included 546 homes destroyed and 538 homes damaged.

Survivors' accounts, journalists' unanswered questions, and the disappearance of the mining company official most directly involved—together with the remembrance of past disasters—brought a stunned citizenry to its feet. The public was jolted from the depths of sorrow and guilt to a sense of outrage and anger that continues to burn.

For the Buffalo Creek disaster, like the recent coal mine fire tragedies at Farmington, West Virginia, and at Hyden, Kentucky, could have been prevented—its need not have happened. Clearly and simply, people living downstream from the Buffalo Mining Company's coal refuse dam at Saunders were the victims of gross negligence.

In Appalachia—sometimes known as "the last white colony of western civilization"—absentee owners of the region's vast energy resources and their subservient homedred and imported politicians time and again are to blame for mass death and destruction. Time and again, those most at fault throw up smoke screens to obscure the commission of execrable acts.

Following the fire and explosion at Consol #9 Mine in 1968 which killed 78 men, Governor Hulett Smith shrugged apologetically declaring, "This is one of the hazards of mining." Smith did not add that the Consolidation Coal Company was guilty of numerous violations of the mine safety laws in this mine. Another governor, Cecil Underwood, performed so well for the Island Creek Coal Company following its Holden # 22 mine disaster in 1960 that he was elevated to the position of executive vice president of the company immediately upon leaving the governorship.

Aside from the attempted whitewashing of the more spectacular mass murders, our governors never decry the terrible fact that more than 120,000 coal miners have been killed in the coal mining industry since its beginning, that one out of every ten coal miners is injured each year and that an estimated one-half of the coal mining work force becomes crippled or incapacitated by the insidious black lung disease.

In this deadly drama the coal operators' script—placing profits before people—has been followed line-by-line by some of our political leaders. In the case at hand, the center stage characters are behaving true to form. Thus, officials of the company called the disaster an "act of God" because God put all that water behind a dam that wasn't designed to hold it.

Thus, Assistant Secretary Hollis Dole of the Interior Department, testifying before a sub-committee of Congress, doubted whether the refuse dam was "hazardous" and subject to regulation by the Bureau of Mines.

Thus, Governor Arch Moore, taking charge of relief operations, said the lethal dam had a "logical and constructive" purpose. According to the image-conscious Governor, "The only real sad part is that the state of West Virginia has taken a terrible beating that is worse than the disaster."

Given the enormity of the avoidable destruction of human lives and values wrought by the man-made Buffalo Creek flood, and the public outcry for justice it aroused, such performances by officials of the state and its government will no longer be tolerated. They are recognized for what they are—smoke screen tactics. They have served, at least in this one case, to reinforce the citizens' determination that such an event shall not ever happen again—anywhere.

WHY A CITIZENS' COMMISSION?

How does one follow-through on such a determination? What is needed to protect the lives and property of innocent citizens, and to insure adequate safeguards against negligence, irresponsibility and disrespect of human values? Better laws? New regulations? Strict enforcement of existing laws? Pinpointing the blame with punishment that fits the crime? Perhaps all of these and more, but none can be achieved without knowledge of what really happened and why. Clearly, the disaster must be investigated and the facts surrounding it brought to light.

Within a week of the event, Governor Moore appointed a nine-man ad hoc commission "to study" the Buffalo Creek flood disaster. But the composition and mandate of this commission served only to compound the public's sense of outrage with one of despair. Since the Governor's comments indicated a reluctance to place any blame upon the Buffalo Mining Company or upon its owner, the Pittston Company, many West Virginians suspected another whitewash was in the making. Any hope for objectivity and public disclosure of the truth vanished as membership of this commission was revealed:

Thus, the heads of three state agencies with jurisdiction in the area of mining impoundments (all of whom would be concerned to prove their respective departments blameless).

Thus, a newspaper editor and a university official (both of whom are avid supporters of the coal industry).

Thus, representatives of the U.S. Bureau of Mines and the U.S. Geological Survey (federal agencies which had not taken action on the basis of a study conducted...
five years ago indicating the weak and hazardous nature of Saunders Dam on Buffalo Creek, among others, and as a “citizen” representative, a retired executive of FMC (a corporation that is heavily dependent on coal).

Alarmed by the obvious bias among the Governor’s appointees, approximately 40 people called on the Governor requesting expansion of his commission to include representatives of people such as Buffalo Creek survivors, environmentalists, coal miners, public interest advocates and the like.

Governor Moore refused to comply. However, he encouraged the group to begin its own investigation. In addition, the Governor solemnly promised to see that all impediments behind coal refuse dams throughout the state would be pumped out, so people in the coal camps and hollows need not live in fear of sudden death.

Twelve members of the group subsequently formed the Citizens’ Commission to Investigate the Buffalo Creek Disaster, in the belief that human rights and values, justice and morality would not otherwise be served.

WHO DOES THE CITIZENS’ COMMISSION REPRESENT?

All members of the Citizens’ Commission are self-appointed. The initial group of twelve was soon expanded as others with like concerns indicated interest and a willingness to participate. Membership remains open.

Although the individuals on the Citizens’ Commission are all leaders or members of various organizations or groups—environmental, disabled miners, welfare, religious, labor, public interest, and medical—the Commission itself does not claim to represent any group of people or special sector. Its members speak for themselves. If they represent anything, it is the frustrations and fears of a citizenry that has been exploited too callously and too often.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CITIZENS’ COMMISSION?

The early morning terror which engulfed twelve communities of Buffalo Creek—the black slate muck and the piles of burning wreckage—gave rise to painful questions. At the Commission’s first meeting, a number of such questions were voiced. West Virginians who are concerned about the future of their state will want to participate in seeking straightforward answers.

• Why did the refuse dam at Saunders fail?
• Who was responsible for its failure?
• How can other disasters be prevented from happening?
• How can the memory of Buffalo Creek be kept alive and not “swept under the rug” as happened at Farmington and Hyden?
• How can government be made truly responsive to the welfare of people in the hollows and coal camps?
• How can the people living in Buffalo Creek Hollow and other coal mine communities receive justice from the huge out-of-state corporations controlling the mineral wealth of West Virginia?
• How can coal mining communities be made safe, healthful and environmentally attractive places in which to work and live?

No amount of whitewashing or smoke screening will silence these queries. Only facts will suffice, because Buffalo Creek compels the most serious consideration.

Answers must be found and changes made if the coal-producing regions of West Virginia are to be fit for human habitation.

In recognition of its manpower and money limitations, the Citizens’ Commission adopted the questions of what happened and who is responsible as targets for initial focus, with the broader questions held in abeyance pending the results of the investigation.

WHAT DID THE CITIZENS’ COMMISSION DO?

The first step in researching causes of the disaster was taken when members of the Citizens’ Commission attempted a tour of Buffalo Creek Hollow and the site of the Buffalo Mining-Pittston dam where the flood originated. Despite the Governor’s assurances that he would welcome a citizens’ investigation, state troopers twice refused to allow passage beyond the checkpoint at Amherstdale. The hollow was under a “quarantine” imposed by the Governor ostensibly for reasons of public health. In fact, the blockade kept out unofficial investigators who might have raised awkward questions about what they saw.

In the meantime, the first of a series of public hearings was held by the Citizens’ Commission in Accoville, where more than 200 flood survivors crowded into the Buffalo Grade School to hear eyewitness accounts of the disaster and to plead that those responsible be brought to justice.

At subsequent hearings certain survivors of the disaster, company personnel, and state and federal officials were invited to testify. Many witnesses failed to appear. Among those who declined or ignored invitations were Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, Pittston Coal Group Vice President I.C. Spotte, Governor Moore, members of his commission, State Water Resources Chief Ed Henry, and Buffalo Mining Company Vice President Steve Dascovich. Dascovich, probably the only man who had most of the answers, was not available. Whether he disappeared for medical reasons, or whether from prudence, could not be determined.

After meeting with an aide of the Governor, the Citizens’ Commission was granted formal permission to visit the dam site. Arrangements were made for a tour by helicopter and on foot; it was conducted by E.J. Wood, Vice President, Elkay Mining Company. Regrettably, Wood was unable or unwilling to answer many questions about engineering and construction of the refuse dam. He was equally vague about the events leading up to its collapse.

Gaining access to the file of the Buffalo Mining Company posed another barrier.

By law, the State Water Resources Division must inspect the refuse dam because the company used it to clarify liquid wastes from the coal treatment plant. Ever since 1964, when the State Water Pollution Control Act went into effect, reports on the dam and adjacent structures had been gathered in this file.

On March 23, two commissioners approached Natural Resources Director Ira S. Latimer, Jr., with a request to see the file. Although agreeing it was public information, Latimer refused to allow access to the file. He insisted the Governor’s commission should have first crack at the records. Almost two months later, a second request was turned down by the chairman of that commission, who announced that the file had been “im-pounded.” Congressional committees reportedly had an opportunity to see it but ordinary citizens have not.

The Governor’s original words of encouragement began to sound hollow as Commission members found their way repeatedly blocked by official intransigence. Nor has there been any detailed public report following the Governor’s pledge to empty other dangerous refuse dams. In fact, Commissioner Howard Dotson, an ardent coon hunter, reports that a dam above the coal tipple in Prenter Hollow which he personally checked the latter part of May still had the same level of water as when he took a New York Times reporter to see it shortly after the disaster.

“It’s a mile and a half up the hollow and 275 yards across and believed to be 75 feet deep at the center,” says Dotson. “I talked to Governor Moore. He said he was going to drain it but it hasn’t been drained yet.”

Obviously, the powers-that-be were doing little to help uncover the facts of the case or to prevent a recurrence of mis-directed tragedy. Nevertheless, the Citizens Commission has undertaken its own search for answers, conscious of the difficulties but also aware of what is at stake. Despite the obstacles, its members have persevered in this mission:

• they acquired familiarity with the relevant regulations, rules, and legal requirements of state and federal laws, with the actual conditions at the dam site prior to the flood, and with operating procedures of the Buffalo Mining Company and various government agencies;
• they accumulated sufficient knowledge to chart company and certain government agencies with outright negligence and violation of the law;
• they obtained information revealing the company’s indifference, callousness and insensitivity to human life and other values—moral, environmental, aesthetic, and community;
• they uncovered evidence raising a number of serious questions that warrant further investigation by official bodies regarding the causes of the disaster, as well as activities of both company and government officials before and after the event.

An inter-agency task force is conducting a survey of all mine refuse dams in West Virginia.
Accoville Grade School Hearings

... Disaster victims testify ...

... Citizen Commissioners listen ...

... Phil Laxiter

... Earl Stafford

... Arnold Miller

... Lucien Conn
As a framework for its more specific findings, the Commission calls attention to two general observations:

**First,** the flood was not an act of God. This terrible tragedy was caused by men, acting through corporations and governments.

Reverend Charles Cramm, a disabled miner who testified before the Commission, offered the case against divine intervention: "I went to work for the Lorado Coal Mining Company in 1930, 18 years old, and I knew this slate pile was there. I knew they kept dumping it and I knew they said it was an act of God. But I told the people out of those 20 years from my youth up, that I never saw God drive the first slate truck in the holler." The argument that excessive rainfall or snowmelt caused the flood is not borne out by the facts. According to the preliminary analysis issued by the Department of the Interior Task Force on March 12th, "Residents of the Buffalo Creek valley discount the importance of the new melt... Flow of Buffalo Creek above Middle Fork (location of the dam) was also insignificant. The estimated peak flow of 200 cfs at this location corresponded to Middle Fork (location of the dam) was also insignificant. The estimated peak flow of 200 cfs at this location corresponded to an estimated 40,000 cfs." 

**Secondly,** West Virginia bureaucracies are interested in maintaining coal production first and protecting the safety of miners and their families last. The fourth largest coal producer in the nation, Pittston Company owns these companies in West Virginia—where it is also fourth largest coal producer (5.7 million tons in 1970): Amigo-Senakeekus, Badger Coal, Clinchfield Coal, Buffalo Mining, Elkay Mining, Ranger Fuel, Sewell Coal, and Snap Creek Coal. The company employs 10,800, with assets in 1970 of $470 million. The board of directors includes Thruston B. Morton, brother of Interior Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton. Standard and Poor's Industry Survey, in recommending Pittston for long-term investment, states, "The company's unique position as a possessor of large reserves of relatively scarce low volatile coking coal—essential for blending purposes in metallurgical coal—has afforded Pittston a premium price position and has enabled the company to enter into very favorable long-term contracts with foreign mills. Strong demand in Japan and Europe for high quality metallurgical coal in addition to the steady domestic needs of utilities for steam coal promises to provide a solid base for expansion in coming years."

Every ton of coal coming out of the eight mines operated by Buffalo Mining Company brings dollars to the state treasury, the UMW welfare fund, and Pittston's stockholders. Compared to the urgency of moving coal to the fantastically profitable Japanese and European markets, the human needs of the Buffalo Creek mining communities have dwindled into insignificance. Bureaucracies, whether of union, state, or corporate origin, adhere to a basic laissez-faire policy where profits are concerned. Overlapping interests make a mockery of the law. Tough-sounding rules and regulations turn out to be an illusion. The people of Buffalo Creek assumed that their governors and regulatory agencies were dedicated to protecting their welfare. They were woefully misled. Many have paid with their lives for this misplaced faith. The survivors are struggling to find their way back through a morass of quarantines, red tape, image-makers, and self-seeking politicians.

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE CITIZENS' COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER**

On the basis of the facts and information derived from hearings, documents, studies, on-site interviews and observations, and other relevant sources, the Citizens' Commission herewith presents its initial findings and conclusions relating to what happened, why it happened and who is responsible for the Buffalo Creek Disaster. Supportive evidence for these findings and conclusions is presented beginning page 15.

1. Officials of the Buffalo Mining-Pittston Company are guilty of murdering at least 124 men, women and children living in Buffalo Creek Hollow.
2. The Buffalo Mining-Pittston Company is guilty of gross negligence, willful violation of the law, and incomprensible callousness to human needs and values.
   a. The Company was grossly negligent in constructing and operating the refuse dam on its property.
   b. The Company's first concern has been to increase its profits by using the same refuse dam to (1) dispose of refuse, (2) clarify waste water, and (3) store water.
   c. The Company should have been aware the dam would fail, because the dam had a partial failure in 1971, and a smaller dam had completely collapsed in 1967.
   d. The Company discharged waste water behind the dam even after the danger became apparent—when the level of water approached the top of the dam.
   e. The Company had installed no effective device for maintaining the water at a safe level. Last minute efforts to relieve pressure on the dam may have triggered its collapse.
   f. The Company violated state and federal law since the dam was never approved for proper design and maintenance.
3. State agencies involved are guilty of nonfeasance.
4. State government is charged with negligence, buck-passing, and deleriction of its duty. Many laws and regulations that it is sworn to administer were given only token enforcement or completely ignored.
   a. The Water Resources Division did not insure adequate decanting of the dam by means of spillways, pipes, syphons or pumps.
   b. The Water Resources Division never penalized the company for polluting Buffalo Creek in 1967.
   c. The Public Service Commission did not inspect the dam as required by state law.
   d. The Public Service Commission took no action against the company to enforce compliance with the law.
   e. The Reclamation Division did not exercise its legal jurisdiction over the area even though the reclamation chief and natural resources director were in the immediate vicinity the day before the disaster.
   f. A letter from a resident of Buffalo Creek to former Governor Hulett Smith warning of the impending disaster brought about no preventive activity.
   g. Governor Moore and former Governor Hulett Smith were warned in 1967, when the Department of the Interior sent each a copy of its study completed after a coal refuse disaster in Wales. No effective action was taken by either administration.
5. Strip mining above the dam probably contributed to its over-filling and failure, since runoff from benches drained into the area.
6. Federal government is charged with negligence and poor judgement in interpreting its own studies and data. The U.S. Bureau of Mines neglected to enforce its regulations requiring inspection of hazardous mine structures above ground.
Citizen Commissioners Consider the Issues

THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER

CITIZENS' COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITIZENS' COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER

ON THE BASIS OF ITS FINDINGS and other accumulated information and data, the Citizens' Commission puts forth the following recommendations and welcomes their endorsement, support and active promotion from all quarters:

1. That the Prosecuting Attorney of Logan County make a presentment to the first available grand jury and subpoena witnesses to testify before the said grand jury in order to determine the appropriateness of bringing suit against officials of the Buffalo Mining-Pittston Company for the heinous crimes committed against the people of Buffalo Creek, and that all pertinent testimony from witnesses be returned against the party or parties responsible for those homicidal acts. Further, that the United States Attorney impanel a special grand jury to consider, or alternatively present to the next regular grand jury, witnesses' evidence concerning the abridgement of the civil rights of the victims of the Buffalo Creek disaster, and that he pursue these matters to the fullest.

2. That Buffalo Mining-Pittston be penalized by the U.S. Bureau of Mines to the full extent of the law for violation of the Federal Mine Health and Safety Act Regulations, Sec. 77.200, and 77.1713. That Buffalo Mining-Pittston be penalized by the State Water Resources Division to the full extent of the law for polluting Buffalo Creek. Under Chapter 20, Article 5A of the West Virginia Code.

3. That Buffalo Mining-Pittston be prosecuted by the Logan County Prosecuting Attorney for violating state law requiring approval of dams by the Public Service Commission. (Chapter 61, Article 3, Section 47, Code of West Virginia)

4. That Buffalo Mining-Pittston be sued by the state for damages to roads and bridges in Buffalo Creek Hollow.

5. That Buffalo Mining-Pittston reclaim the entire mine refuse dump at Saunders and develop it as the community sees fit.

6. That the State Reclamation Division initiate an effective reclamation program on Middle Fork as soon as possible, and take jurisdiction over other such areas having impoundments.

7. That the State Soil Conservation Committee, which issued a highly questionable proposal for moving Buffalo Creek residents onto strip mined areas, get on with implementing the watershed project (submitted in 1970 to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for funding under The Watershed Improvement and Flood Prevention Act) as a practical and humane way of helping the survivors.

8. That the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assist the Natural Resources Director to evaluate, make safe and if necessary eliminate all dangerous refuse dams under the new Mined Hollows Protection Act.

9. That the West Virginia Legislature enact a law requiring all coal mine refuse to be disposed of underground in coal mine voids.

10. That the West Virginia Legislature enact a law prohibiting the use of coal refuse for filtration banks, settling ponds or water storage impoundments.

11. That the West Virginia Legislature reorganize, consolidate and strengthen all state authority over environmental quality and safety in and around coal mines and mining communities.

12. That all coal companies reconstruct existing dams on their property according to sound engineering principles and eliminate impoundments which pose a danger to areas downstream.


14. That the conditions presented to the

Pittston Company by the Citizens' Action Committee be expeditiously carried out. (See page 30.)

15. That Governor Moore hold local public meetings in compliance with the Federal Highway Administration Practices and Procedures Manual 20-8 whereby Buffalo Creek survivors may have a voice in planning reconstruction of the state highway.

16. That Governor Moore hold local public meetings in compliance with the Federal Highway Administration Practices and Procedures Manual 20-8 whereby Buffalo Creek survivors may have a voice in planning reconstruction of the state highway.

17. That the individuals' right to possess their property be fully respected in state and federal planning for redevelopment of the Buffalo Creek communities.

18. That citizens diligently search out presently existing dangers to their lives and property resulting from industry's use of resources, and that they take such action as may be necessary to remove the dangers.

19. That citizens throughout West Virginia, individually and through organizations, provide back-up, strength and support to every government official at any level when he is known to be diligent in his public responsibilities and in trying to serve the interests of the citizenry.

20. That all citizens give serious thought to the facts, findings and recommendations and broad questions contained in this Report, and that each in his respective way undertake to promote dissemination and discussion in local neighborhoods, communities, clubs and organizations.

21. That all individuals and organizations who are concerned with preventing the recurrence of mine-related disasters and who are seeking ways and means of improving the safety and living quality of the coal-mine areas of West Virginia convene together in order to develop a program of action based on pertinent findings and recommendations including those contained in this report.
SUPPORTIVE EVIDENCE FOR FINDINGS OF THE CITIZENS' COMMISSION

THE CASE AGAINST THE BUFFALO MINING-PITTSSTON COMPANY:

1. Its officials are guilty of murdering at least 124 men, women and children living in Buffalo Creek Hollow.

2. The Company is guilty of gross negligence, willful violation of law, and incomprehensible callousness to human needs and values.

a) Buffalo Mining-Pittston was grossly negligent.

The failure of dam #3 at Saunders above the refuse dump on Middle Fork caused the disaster. (See pages 16-17.) This dam impounded 130 million gallons of water. It is described as being 45 to 60 feet high, 2500 feet across and 450 feet wide, composed entirely of waste material removed from five company mines operating in the vicinity. Waste was dumped on top of fine material which had accumulated behind dam #2.

The Preliminary Analysis of the Department of the Interior Task Force concludes in part as follows:

"From an engineering point-of-view, the dam was not designed and constructed such that it would be considered safe for the retention of large volumes of water over any lengthy period of time. The Foundation was inadequate and failed prior to and during the total dam failure... The volume of water stored behind #3 dam seems far in excess of that needed to clear sediments and otherwise for treatment to conform with state standards before discharging the water into Buffalo Creek..."

"The very nature of the natural waste (refuse sludge) in the West Virginia and possibly all of the Appalachian coal fields dictates that a change in embankment physical properties will occur with time and consequently a change in the factor of safety... Typical design parameters which change with time include: shear strength, density, permeability, and void ratio, all of which determine the structural stability of the embankment." (pp. 19-21)

JAMES TALLERICO, from the town of Man, was a bulldozer operator who testified he had constructed dams #1 and #2. He had no previous knowledge or experience in building dams, nor did he receive any engineering or other supervision while on the job. The dams were built on the existing ground slopes and drain pipes were put in place to carry off excess water from both dams. Apparently dam #3 received virtually no engineering. It had no discernible drain-pipes. Refuse had been superimposed upon a layer of sludge which had accumulated behind dam #2.

In short, there was no possible engineering justification for putting that much water behind that kind of dam.

b) Buffalo Mining-Pittston's first concern apparently was to increase its profits.

In Europe, coal producers are not permitted to dump their wastes wherever it is most convenient or most economic. Mine wastes are returned underground to fill the voids left by the mining operations. Not so in West Virginia and Appalachia. Here thousands of "gob piles" or slate dumps pollute the mountains with acid drainage, noxious fumes and huge ugly scars.

Prior to the disaster, Buffalo Mining-Pittston was producing 4,000 tons of clean coal and 1,000 tons of refuse per day. Refuse was hauled to the dump on Middle Fork in 30-ton trucks. About 600 ties arc subsidizing coal company profits than in West Virginia or Appalachia.

Question: How many other communities are subsidizing coal company profits in this way?

c) Buffalo Mining-Pittston should have been aware the dam would fail.

KENNETH OSBOURNE is a miner for the Buffalo Mining Company who lived for 36 years just below the main slate dump at the coal camp of Saunders. Osbourne said the dam failure had happened before on a smaller scale. Water topped dam
In 1967 and the burning refuse in the main dump exploded with a sound like the detonation which occurred on February 26 when dam # 3 collapsed. "From the first waterhole back," Osbourne insisted, "that's how far it blew that time. It covered up the railroad, the highway and the recreation hall they had up there (at Saunders)."

On the orders of the State Water Resources Division, Buffalo Mining then proceeded to build a much higher and larger dam above dam # 2. In February, 1971, just one year before the fatal collapse, "a small failure occurred on the northeast or right side of the dam (# 3) which required new material to be placed. Undoubtedly this resulted in a poor coupling to the rest of the dam and, because of construction procedures, resulted in a "weak spot."" (Task Force, page 14)

It is reasonable to assume, then, that officials of Buffalo Mining-Pittston must have known that on at least two occasions their dam's had given way. However, ignoring the obvious risk involved, they went ahead and stored 130,000,000 gallons of water behind dam # 3.

Buffalo Mining-Pittston discharged waste and debris behind the dam when the danger became apparent.

At 6: 00 a.m., Buffalo Mining-Pittston temporary manager, admitted that the company did not stop pumping sludge from its treatment plant into the area above dam # 3 until the eve of the disaster, even though for at least two days previously the dam was too waterlogged for the dump trucks to traverse safely. Undoubtedly the company's reluctance to slow down production dictated this policy. To stop pumping would have meant closing down the preparation plant, which would have backed up coal into the mines, bringing operations to a halt, and reducing the company's income.

In a newspaper story (Charleston Daily Mail—February 28) Ben Tudor, a company official, claimed the Department of Natural Resources would not allow decanting of water behind dam # 3 because pollution discharged into the stream would kill the trout. "Either had to be the people or the trout," Tudor was quoted as saying, "and now both are gone."

Most likely, the company wanted to reduce the black sludge from the tipple directly into Buffalo Creek, which under law the agency could not permit. So the company chose instead to continue pumping into the hollow behind dam # 3, thus increasing the probability that the dam would fail.

Buffalo Mining-Pittston had installed no effective devices for maintaining the water at a safe level.

Since the dam was not capable of holding a large quantity of water, some dangers of keeping impounding water at a safe level should have been installed. On this point, witnesses disagree with the finding of the Task Force, which states, "The only provision for the outflow of excess water was the 24-inch pipe situated about 7 to 10 feet below the topmost compacted layer near the right center of the dam." (Task Force, page 10)

Two sections of pipe were visible in the debris left just below the dam site. The question is: Where and when were they installed? Witnesses testifying before the Commission were unanimous in reciting there was no pipe of any kind in the dam until shortly before the disaster...

Kenneth Osbourne, who lived just below the dump, feared the dam because of the "blow-out" in 1967. He kept a sharp eye on it. At 4: 30 on the morning of the disaster, he visited the dam and found Jack Kent, Buffalo Mining strip miner, standing by the water depth. At that time it was 12-14 feet below the top of the dam, according to his testimony. Kent's truck passed Osbourne's house several times during the night. At 6:30 a.m. when Osbourne returned to the dam, Kent was not on hand and the water was running into two 3" pipes which were situated only two yards above the top of the dam. The pipes extended only 30-40 feet into the dam, so water entering must have seeped into the center of the dam.

The pipes. when lifted, were loaded. Osbourne would not risk stepping on it, and he noticed a huge crack some 18 feet long and 40 feet across near the central area of the dam. Water was passing through the dam.

Wendy, Osbourne did not wait to see what would happen. He left to spread the alarm in Saunders, thus saving many of his neighbors' lives.

James S. Morris, maintenance repair man for Buffalo Mining, and Harold C. Lundeal, passed the dam on Friday before the disaster and saw no pipes in it. On the Saturday morning, Morris called to the company office by Daniel "Steve" Dasovich, Buffalo Mining Vice President, who ordered him to go to the dam and weld two forty-foot sections of pipe to "make a bleeding valve." He was told two bulldozers were on their way to the dam to assist.

Morris was worried about the dam because he had seen it nearly topped several times. He remembered the 1967 "bleow-out" and knew the explosive potential of the extremely hot interior of the refuse dump. On Friday the 25th, he had seen Natural Resources Director Ira S. Latimer, Jr., Reclamation Chief Ben Greene and other state employees with L.C. Spote (Vice President of the Pittston Company) in the company office. He understood they were visiting the dam site (although Latimer later insisted the purpose of their tour was only to inspect prospective strip mine areas).

Morris and other men on his crew had been notified there would be no work Saturday because of water in the "strip pits," and because of the dangerous condition of the dam, which Jack Kent was checking on his own initiative. "If there was a drain pipe in that dam," Morris testified, "I'd put it in there between dark Friday night and prior to the time the dam broke loose."

On Sunday morning Morris never reached the dam: "When I got to the old farmhouse I met my supervisor coming down the road that the dam had broke, turned me around and sent me out of the house. And when I got to Lorado I had to hitch the mountain with the rest of the people."

Another mine, Johnny Wells, was evidently off the "hoot-owil shift at # 5 portal above the dam on Saturday morning, arriving just in time to see the massive movement of the broken dam, taking out the two smaller dams, a garage and two dump trucks. His car, some 150 feet from the surface of the dam, was covered with sludge thrown high in the air, presumably by backwash caused by the water coming up against the main slate dump. Since the road was washed out, Wells returned to the mine office in a futile attempt to call his family.

Wells testified that he had travelled past the dam on his way to work daily since January, 1969. He had never seen any pipe in # 3 dam, nor any slippings, nor any pumps, nor any spillway.

Herbert Prutte, also a miner on the "hoot-owl shift, verified Wells' testimony. He arrived at the scene just as a huge cloud of smoke rose from the main dump. Steam generated by the mass of water penetrating into its red-hot depths caused it to explode with volcanic force. Slate and cinders showered down on his car.

Prautte had never seen drainpipes in dam # 3, but he had been told that pipes were put in place sometime Friday. Two bulldozers, one returning from the dam area, and the other on his own work, were seen on the haul roads immediately after the dam collapsed. Presumably these were the dozers Kent had dispatched to help Morris install the remainder of the pipes. They had arrived too late.

There being no way to relieve pressure on the dam, it would appear that as a last desperate measure drainpipes should have been placed late Friday. Because the pipes extended only part way into the dam they undoubtedly did more harm than good, for water penetrating into the center of the dam would weaken the old break on the right-hand side. The entire structure, superheated with water and practically afloat, needed very little to set off the catastrophe. Placing these pipes may have been the last straw.

Ramors persist that an attempt was made to blast out a spillway. Although a large hole in the haulroad below the dam site may have been dynamitd (in the judgment of the Federal Power Commis- sion) this theory cannot be substantiated.

Buffalo Mining-Pittston violated federal and state law.

As far as the Commission has been able to determine, the only inspections of dam # 3 were carried out by the State Water Resources Division. Under provisions of Chapter 20, Article 5A of the West Virginia Code, the company was legally obligated to treat its waste to meet standards established by Buffalo Creek. The three dams or "stilling ponds" were used as a method of treatment...

Chapter 61, Article 3, Section 47 of the Code requires inspection and approval by the Public Service Commission of all dams or obstructions across streams higher than 15 feet or impounding more than 10 acres of water. PSC never inspected dam # 3, having neither the staff nor the inclination to enforce this statute where refuse dams are concerned. Buffalo Mining-Pittston knew this.

Under the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act, Section 77.1713 of the regulations states: "At least once during each working shift and if necessary for safety for each active working area and each active surface installation shall be examined by a certified person designated by the operator to conduct such examination for hazardous conditions and any hazardous conditions noted during such examination shall be reported and shall be corrected by the operator."

Both as to the construction and as to the maintenance of dam # 3, Buffalo Mining ignored provisions of the law designed to protect miners and community downstream from the hazards of dam failure.

No system existed for warning people downstream.

Witnesses could recall no method ever having been developed by Buffalo Mining-Pittston for alerting people if the dam were in a dangerous condition. The Task Force implies that false alarms had occurred so often ("at least four other occasions") that Buffalo Creek residents in many cases refused to take the final warning seriously. Those testifying were uniformly bitter in denouncing the company's failure to give any kind of adequate notice.

Brad Hatfield, who lost his wife, daughter, granddaughter, and everything except the ring he put on her finger, said that the people of Stowe Bottom received no warning of any kind. A neighbor, Robert Bowens, agreed. "I've heard them say that they knew. Friday night early that the dam was going to break, that they wouldn't
WHERE THE DISASTER BEGAN

Citizen Commissioners inspect . . .

Floodwaters from Dam #3 triggered explosion of superheated refuse banks, leaving a gorge 150’ deep which released 130 million gallons of water on the defenseless communities downstream.
be able to hold it, and they should have gotten the people out and warned them.”

Bowens also reported that Steve Dasovich let it be known that the Man Smokeshouse at 6:00 Saturday morning, some two hours before the disaster, that “they were working on it (the dam) and the safest place... would be in the mines.”

According to Morris, Dasovich insisted that the group of mine bosses and others affected by these slate dumps, Buffalo Mining-Pittston showed callousness toward human suffering by failing to help with relief or recovery efforts.

Locally owned until 1970, Buffalo Mining Company was acquired by the Pittston Company, whose offices are in Richmond, Virginia, and in New York. Pittston showed a profit of $44.5 million in 1971.

As Governor Moore indicated soon after the disaster, the refuse dams at Saunders were not unusual. Slate dumps, many of them perpetually on fire, many impounding water, are scattered through the coalfields. They have long since been accepted as part of the scenery.

Although the coal industry is typically in concern for the communities affected by these slate dumps, Buffalo Mining-Pittston is guilty of remarkable insensitivity because its officials must have been aware of the destructive possibilities in 130 million gallons of water being held behind a dam completely devoid of any engineering. The threat hanging over the 4,000 people who lived and worked in the congested downstream area must have been quite obvious, because the company knew there had been dam failures twice—before—1967 and again in 1971.

That other coal companies are harboring such environmental monsters on their property, with the connivance of government officials, in no way lessens the moral or legal accountability of Buffalo Mining-Pittston.

No witness could recall ever seeing any equipment of the Buffalo Mining Company assisting in the recovery of bodies or helping to clean up after the disaster, a fact confirmed by a spokesman for the Army Corps of Engineers, who directed the demolition of damaged structures.

Not one company official offered condolences to the victims. Company officials were conspicuously absent in the Buffalo Creek hollow, although repair of the railroad line was pushed ahead to get the coal moving again. The company did establish a claims office, and is attempting to settle individual claims out of court. 

THE CASE AGAINST STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. State agencies involved are guilty of nonfeasance.

2. State government is charged with negligence, back-passing, and dereliction of its duty. Many laws and regulations that it is sworn to administer were given only token enforcement or completely ignored.

3. The Water Resources Division did not ensure adequate decanting of the dam. Joe Holly, a state inspector whose territory includes all of southern West Virginia, had recommended the company build a larger dam after the 1967 “blow-out.” An increased capacity for settling the fine sludge was indicated. Holly and Ed Henry, Water Resources Chief, were concerned with the manner in which the dam was built. They thought there was a pipe in it but they couldn’t be sure. Holly’s repeated complaints about lack of a spillway were ignored by the company.

Henry claims the company was ordered to keep the impoundment (or settling pond) pumped out to a depth of 12 feet. There is no way for the Commission to verify this assertion. Although E.J. Wood, pro tem manager of the Buffalo Mining Company, pointedly referred to the dam as a “filtration bank,” Henry insists water should not have been allowed to percolate through because of the coal refuse’s acidic production. In Henry’s view, dam #3 was simply a device to hold waste water long enough to settle out the fine solids.

4. The Water Resources Division never penalized the company.

The state Water Pollution Control Act (Chapter 20, Article 5A of the West Virginia Code) prohibits the release of sewage or industrial wastes into the waters of the state without a permit from the Water Resources Division. Sub-section 6 of Section 5 of the law, enacted in 1969, specifically applies this prohibition to mine wastes such as material which Buffalo Mining-Pittston dumped into and behind its three dams at Saunders.

This law states that it is illegal to “dispose of any refuse or industrial wastes or other wastes from such mine or quarry or preparation plant: Provided, that the (division) permit shall only be required whenever the aforementioned activities cause, may cause, or might reasonably be expected to cause a discharge into or pollution of waters of the state...” The record shows that Buffalo Mining-Pittston violated this law repeatedly and with impunity.

For example, in 1967 when dam #1 “blew out” releasing tons of refuse into Buffalo Creek the state agency made no attempt to penalize the company. The partial collapse of dam #3 in 1971 is not even noted in the Division’s files. State inspectors’ orders to stop putting black water into the stream, to control coal dust or to install spillways were sometimes carried out half-heartedly, sometimes completely ignored by the company.

Since dam #1 had failed previously due to inadequate spillways, the question arises as to why the Division ordered the company to build a much larger dam which, because it also lacked adequate spillways, “might reasonably be expected to cause pollution” by its eventual failure. Why did the state agency not revoke Buffalo Mining-Pittston’s permit and impose penalties until dam #3 was brought under adequate control and maintenance?

In West Virginia when an ordinary citizen pollutes, it is a crime. But when big industry pollutes, it is either an “act of God” or an “accidental spill.” Both excuses offer convenient escape hatches from law enforcement. The ease of Buffalo Mining-Pittston is a classic example of how the state in understanding the problems of industry neglects to protect the public interest.

Understaffed, poorly equipped, and confused as to its role, the Water Resources Division was in no position to regulate a segment of industry which has dominated the political and economic scene for generations.

C. The Public Service Commission did not inspect the dam.

In 1968, an engineer of the Public Service Commission inspected dams #1 and #2 at the request of the Department of Natural Resources following a complaint by Mrs. W.H. Woodrum of Lorado. He saw no serious problem. However, dam #3 was not built until 1969-70.

At no time did the Public Service Commission inspect dam #3, because the company never applied to it for approval of its dam construction as required by law. Since the company apparently considered its activity at Saunders was either (1) disposing of mine wastes or (2) building a “filtration bank” rather than a dam, it seemingly felt free to proceed at will. More than likely, the legal action in relation to PSC was given little if any thought.
This letter, "bucked on" to the Department of Natural Resources, resulted in a joint investigation by an inspector of the Water Resources Division and an engineer of the Public Service Commission. PSC Chairman Boyee Griffith, in a letter to the Department, said no approval had been sought for the two dams and it would be "helpful" if in future such "stilling basins" were less than 15 feet high so they would not require approval. He also suggested "it would be well for the mining company to employ an engineer versed in hydrology and the mining company to employ an engineer versed in hydrology and hydraulics to give it advice as to how to provide proper drainage to reduce the flood hazard."

Dam #3 was not in place at the time, but dam #1 had already failed. The PSC engineer, reporting on his inspection, stated "there could be a possibility of saturating the lower slate dump and causing slippage." The Water Resources Division brought the complaint to the attention of Oval D. Damron, Logan County Prosecuting Attorney, implying there was cause for legal action against the company to abate the public hazard. There is no evidence that Damron took any action.

Mrs. Woodrum received a reassuring letter from then director T.R. Samsell, explaining the Department's limited jurisdiction—and there the matter rested. The administrative machinery cranked out letters and reports, none of which improved the situation one particle. The only substantial response was that by March the Water Resources Division was

5 Strip mining above the dam probably contributed to its over-filling.

Aerial photos of the Middle Fork area (available from the Huntington District Office of the Army Corps of Engineers) show extensive strip mining of several coal seams on both sides of the slate dump. Auger mining has also taken place. Although the disturbance is not of recent origin, surface run-off during heavy precipitation must have been accelerated due to the decrease in water-absorbing forest undergrowth. The possibility of water trapped in abandoned underground areas breaking through auger holes into the impoundment behind dam #3 should not be discounted. Other parts of West Virginia experienced such floods about the time of the disaster. Allegedly, attempts had been made in past years to dispose of sludge from the tipple in abandoned underground voids of mine #5, but the sludge broke through onto the surface.

THE CASE AGAINST FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

On March 15, Hollis M. Dole, Assistant Secretary—Mineral Resources, Department of the Interior, appeared in Washington before the Subcommittee on Mines and Mining of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, to explain the role of the Bureau of Mines. Under sharp questioning, Dole admitted the Bureau hadn't gotten around to enforcing regulations which became effective July 1, 1971:

Sec. 77.200—"All mine structures, enclosures, or other facilities (including custom coal preparation) shall be maintained in good repair to prevent accidents and injuries to employees."

Sec. 77.216—"If failure of a water or silt retaining dam will create a hazard, it shall be of substantial construction and shall be inspected at least once each week."

Judging from Dole's testimony, the Bureau is unconcerned about the safety of miners going to and from mine portals, and, apparently, is totally oblivious of the well-being of miners' families. 

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THOSE RESPONSIBLE

**Nicholas T. Camacia**, president, Pittston Company... native of Welch, W. Va., was president of Buffalo Creek, which was working in the coal mining area of East Pike County, Ohio, in 1970. Camacia, the former head of General Dynamics, and the head of other mining companies, was picked to be president of Pittston in 1969. After he was fired in 1976, Camacia claims that he was a victim of a conspiracy to squeeze him out of the coal mining industry.

Camacia, a native of West Virginia, was a graduate of West Virginia University. He later worked for the United States Steel Corporation and was a partner in a coal mining company in Ohio. Camacia was executive vice president of Pittston Company at the time of the disaster.

Camacia was a member of the Board of Directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC) and was a member of the board of directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

**Daniel "Steve" Dasovich**, Vice President, Buffalo Mining Company... was a vice president of Buffalo Creek, a subsidiary of Pittston. Dasovich was working in the local coal mining company in 1970. He was hired by Alfred D. "Buster" Skaggs, who was president of Pittston at the time of the disaster.

Dasovich was fired in 1976, after he refused to acknowledge responsibility for the disaster and was charged with negligence at a trial in 1977.

**Arch A. Moore, Jr.**, Republican governor of West Virginia, was a member of the board of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

Moore was a former coal mining operator and was a member of the board of directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

**Hulet Smith**, an deceased coal mining executive, was a member of the board of directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

Smith was a former coal mining executive and was a member of the board of directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

**Elizabeth Hallanan**, a Democrat, was a member of the board of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

Hallanan was a former coal mining executive and was a member of the board of directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

**Oval D. Damron**, a Republican, was a member of the board of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

Damron was a former coal mining executive and was a member of the board of directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

**L. C. Spotel**, President, Pittston Company... a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, Spotel was a member of the board of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

Spotel was a former coal mining executive and was a member of the board of directors of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

**Jack C. Latimer**, Director, East Virginia Department of Natural Resources... is a member of the board of the American Mining Congress (AMC)....

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THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1945 Mine #5, opened by the Lorado Coal Mining Company on Middle Fork of Buffalo Creek, Logan County, West Virginia, begins producing coal.

Coal refuse ("gob" or slate) is dumped at the mouth of Middle Fork, above the community of Saunders.

1947 A preparation plant for cleaning coal produced from mines in the area is completed on Buffalo Creek. It uses 500,000 gallons of water per day. Black sludge from the plant is discharged directly into Buffalo Creek.

1964 Buffalo Mining Company acquires the Lorado Coal Mining Company. Sludge from the preparation plant is pumped through a mine tunnel into a refuse dam on Middle Fork, in compliance with the new state water pollution control law.

1967 Dam #1 fails, causing a steam explosion in the burning refuse dump and doing local damage at Saunders.

Dam #2 is constructed from coal refuse dumped upstream of dam #1. Clarified water is decanted by pipes through the new dam into the area behind dam #1, and thence along a ditch into Buffalo Creek, where it is pumped back to the plant.

1968 February—Governor Hulet Smith receives an appeal from a Buffalo Creek housewife: "Our lives are in danger." Inspectors from Public Service Commission and Water Resources Division look at the 2 dams but no further action is taken.

1970 June—Pittston Company acquires Buffalo Mining Company.

Dam #3 is operational. Made from coal wastes dumped onto silt accumulated behind dam #2, this so-called "filtration bank" blocks a 700-acre water-shed area impounding 130 million gallons of water at a maximum depth of 44 feet.

1971 February—Dam #3 collapses. One-half of its downstream face slumps. There is no flood, but black water bubbles up into the impoundments behind dam #2. The company dumps in more coal refuse to fill up the break.

1971 April 16—the State Water Resources Division cites the company for lack of emergency spillway or overflow system in dam #3.

1971 June 24—A 24" spillway pipe reportedly has been installed by the company in dam #3.

1971 October 8—In a letter to the state agency, the company acknowledges the need for an additional emergency spillway. None is installed.

1972 February 22—A Federal coal mine inspector and the company safety engineer observe the dams and find conditions satisfactory.

1972 February 24—Company strip mine superintendent Jack Kent places a measuring stick at the lowest portion of dam #3. Water stands five feet below the dam's crest.

1972 February 25—Fed by heavy rains, the water level rises one or two inches per hour.

1972 February 26—at 4:30 a.m., Kent finds his measuring stick almost covered. Water is approaching twelve inches from dam's crest. The surface of the dam is oozing water like a sponge.

At 5:30 a.m., spontaneous warnings go out to automobile travelers along Buffalo Creek. The Logan Sheriff's Office sends two deputies to notify families. Some move to safe ground, others ignore the warnings.

At 6:00 a.m., Kent and Company Vice President Daniel "Steve" Dasovich confer. They call in equipment to clear a slide blocking the haul road below dam #3. Water diverted by the slide is over-flowing dam #2. They decide to cut a diversion ditch and install a pipe to relieve pressure on dam #3.

At 6:30 a.m., Kenneth Osborne of Saunders sees two lengths of 24" pipe joined together on top of the dam. Water is flowing through the pipes.

At 8:05 a.m., dam #3 fails. Dams #1 and 2 are carried away. The wall of water and gob causes an explosion in the burning refuse dump before cascading through the valley of Buffalo Creek toward the town of Man.

As indicated earlier in this Report, the Citizens' Commission is committed to keeping the Buffalo Creek disaster alive as a public issue until all of the painful questions raised at its first meeting are answered. Clearly, its work has only begun.

Now that its basic investigatory effort is concluded and the results reported, the Commission has decided to concentrate its energies in two areas of major concern:

1. To assist the residents of Buffalo Creek at their request with problems of disaster relief, survivor reparations, and community rebuilding; and

2. To encourage broad-based citizen participation in discussion of the basic questions related to the Buffalo Creek disaster, and in the search for answers and ways to implement them. Nationwide publicity generating sizeable sums for disaster relief, arrangements for temporary housing, breath-taking plans for rebuilding and the like, may have contributed to public complacency and led to the belief that everything that can be done is being done. Unfortunately, this is not the case—the people of Buffalo Creek still suffer:

• they seek damages from those responsible for the disaster;

• they seek assurance that disaster relief activities and funds will benefit the residents of the area;

• they seek assurance that their communities are rebuilt in accordance with the desires of the residents;

• they seek permission to move back to their former communities in order to reconstruct their lives.

The Commission has already indicated to the citizens of the Buffalo Creek area its intent to support and assist them in any way possible to achieve their goals. To this end, in early May, members of the Commission assisted the Buffalo Creek Action Committee, headed by Mr. Lucien Conn,* with arrangements for a bus load of citizens to attend the Pittston Company stockholders' annual meeting in Richmond, Virginia, where their demands were presented.

* Not to be confused with the Buffalo Creek Citizens Disaster Committee, Inc., headed by Mr. Charles Cowan.
In view of this experience and on the basis of its own findings and conclusions, the Citizens' Commission supports the continuing activities of the Buffalo Creek Action Committee and it urges the following actions to be taken on behalf of all disaster victims:

1. That the Pittston Company promptly and fully compensate all survivors of the disaster by complying with the following conditions laid down by the Buffalo Creek Action Committee:
   - Payment to be made on the basis of actual replacement value of property lost.
   - Affidavits sworn to by survivors to be accepted as accurate statements of loss.
   - Releases signed by survivors not to preclude future claims for loss of loved ones or psychological or other damage.
   - Pittston Board Chairman Rauth and President Camicia to supervise negotiations or authorize personal representatives to do so.

2. That Governor Moore immediately lift the so-called quarantine and allow survivors to move their mobile homes onto their own property. While lack of sewage treatment and water supply are very real problems in the flood-ravaged hollow, these can be dealt with after people repass their lands. They should not be forced to live in congested refugee camps one day longer than absolutely necessary.

3. That Governor Moore hold local public meetings in compliance with the Federal Highway Administration Practices and Procedure 20-8 whereby Buffalo Creek survivors may have a voice in planning reconstruction of the state highway.

There is a basic question raised anew by Buffalo Creek, the latest assault by the coal operators in their long slaughter-house in death, injury and disease: Whether the people of Appalachia and West Virginia can any longer afford this senseless destruction of their lives, their land, and their democratic institutions; or whether the ownership and operation of the coal mines should be brought under democratic control to benefit all the people. All too clearly the tragedy of Buffalo Creek has torn away the mask, revealing the ugly truth that powerful coal interests dominate the government, the environment, and the West Virginia way of life to the detriment of all its citizens. Discussion and action are needed now to transform King Coal, the tyrant, into Citizen Coal, the servant of all—before and not after another Buffalo Creek disaster.

The publication of this Report is the Commission's first step in connection with the second area of future focus—stimulation of widespread citizen discussion and action regarding the broader implications of the Buffalo Creek tragedy. Although all specific activities have not yet been determined, future plans of the Citizens' Commission include:

- broadening and strengthening the Commission with additional members representing new groups;
- holding public meetings elsewhere in West Virginia in order to disseminate the results of the investigation;
- soliciting support for Buffalo Creek survivors;
- stimulating citizen interest regarding the broader issues; and
- calling a conference of individuals and organizations concerned with the safety and living quality of West Virginia's coal mining areas.

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**CITIZENS' COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER**

(Organizations listed for purposes of identification only.)

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**Proceeds from sales of this Report will defray costs of the Commission, which is incorporated not for profit in the State of West Virginia.**

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