



Coal Wars: The Future of Energy and the Fate of the Planet

Richard Martin

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Since the late 18th century, when it emerged as a source of heating and, later, steam power, coal has brought untold benefits to mankind. Even today, coal generates almost 45 percent of the world's power. Our modern technological society would be inconceivable without coal and the energy it provides. Unfortunately, that society will not survive unless we wean ourselves off coal. The largest single source of greenhouse gases, coal is responsible for 43 percent of the world's carbon emissions. Richard Martin, author of *SuperFuel*, argues that to limit catastrophic climate change, we must find a way to power our world with less polluting energy sources, and we must do it in the next couple of decades—or else it is "game over." It won't be easy: as coal plants shut down across the United States, and much of Europe turns to natural gas, coal use is growing in the booming economies of Asia—particularly China and India. Even in Germany, where nuclear power stations are being phased out in the wake of the Fukushima accident, coal use is growing. Led by the Sierra Club and its ambitious "Beyond Coal" campaign, environmentalists hope to drastically reduce our dependence on coal in the next decade. But doing so will require an unprecedented contraction of an established, lucrative, and politically influential worldwide industry. Big Coal will not go gently. And its decline will dramatically change lives everywhere—from Appalachian coal miners and coal company executives to activists in China's nascent environmental movement.

Based on a series of journeys into the heart of coal land, from Wyoming to West Virginia to China's remote Shanxi Province, hundreds of interviews with people involved in, or affected by, the effort to shrink the industry, and deep research into the science, technology, and economics of the coal industry, *Coal Wars* chronicles the dramatic stories behind coal's big shutdown—and the industry's desperate attempts to remain a global behemoth. A tour de force of literary journalism, *Coal Wars* will be a milestone in the climate change battle.

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