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## Coal-fueled electric plant pits workers against environmentalists

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Rowdy union workers yesterday upstaged a campaign kick-off by New Jersey environmental groups opposing a unique, coal-fueled electric plant proposed for the city of Linden that will capture its own carbon dioxide output and pipe it under the Atlantic Ocean.

"We need jobs," chanted two dozen union workers who support the "**PurGen**" project, as leaders of the New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club, the New Jersey Environmental Federation, the New Jersey Environmental Lobby, Environment New Jersey and the Edison Wetlands Association held a news conference near Linden's city hall to lambaste the \$5 billion plant as a "dangerous experiment."

"This is unknown technology -- experimental at best. It poses risks to this community as well as to the environment. More jobs, better jobs would be created if they focused instead of furthering solar and wind generated energy and improving fuel efficiency," said Jeff Tittel of the Sierra Club.

But as the activists tried to make speeches from under a city promenade, sheltered from a steady, cold rain, the union workers stood in the down-pour, waving signs and shouting down the speakers' every word.

"These are environmental extremists. These are the voices of ignorance," said Michael Mulvaney, business manager for the Steamfitters Local 475. "This plant is not experimental. It's been done in the North Sea and other places, and it's being done to help the environment. It also will create 250 permanent jobs here, along with 2,000 construction jobs for five years while this is built."

SCS Engineers of Massachusetts, which proposed the project, must still go through a maze of local, state and federal approvals, including some action by city officials next week that would clear the proposed plant site -- the former DuPont property on the banks of the Arthur Kill -- of some legal entanglements.

They contend the plant will be the "first of its kind in the world" to link carbon capture technology with another "clean energy" process known as coal gasification. Other coal-fueled electrical plants, such as the five already generating electricity in New Jersey, burn coal, creating a toxic by-product known as fly ash and sending carbon dioxide up a smoke-stack.

Fly ash will not be generated by **PurGen** and the carbon dioxide will be pushed through a 100-mile, underground pipeline leading out to the Raritan Bay to a point about 2,200 yards beneath the Atlantic Ocean for storage.

Known as carbon sequestration, the process has been used for decades to push crude oil from nearly-spent, aging oil fields. But many environmental groups fear a disaster could unfold if the carbon dioxide leaks, and they oppose the perpetuation of coal as a fuel source because harvesting it involves sheering off mountain tops in places like West Virginia, which has suffered decades of environmental damage.

"If we were talking about using this carbon sequestration technology at an existing, coal-burning plant that won't be shut down for another 30 years, then maybe we could try that. But coal is dirty. We have to get away from relying on coal and we can't do it fast enough," said Dave

Pringle of the environmental federation.

"These environmental groups don't have the facts," said Linden Mayor Richard Gerbounka.

"They are doing a disservice to the taxpayers and those in need of jobs."

But Linden Council President Robert Bunk joined the opposition yesterday, saying, "There are too many unanswered questions about this experimental technology. I cannot in good faith support the **PurGen** coal de-gasfiation project."

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