Braxton Harrup

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Dr. Guler

Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical Analysis of SELC and the Atlantic Coast Pipeline

           SELC, Southern Environmental Law Center, wrote an article titled “Risky and Unnecessary Natural Gas Pipeline Threaten Our Region”, which focuses on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline that will be approximately 550 miles long and run through many counties from West Virginia to the East coast of Virginia. From law attorneys to concerned citizens of the community, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline threatens the region. “Risky and Unnecessary Natural Gas Pipelines Threaten Our Region” displays a magnitude of credibility and persuasive points to try and inform communities of the dangers that are certain to follow the pipeline, and the community’s need for action to try and repeal the pipeline from running through the town. This article begins with evidence of the pipeline disrupting the environment and where it will be disruptive the most, then it goes into the current objectives and affiliations the SELC, Southern Environmental Law Center, are currently undertaking to challenge the pipeline. While the credibility and emotional side are strong, the logos of why the pipeline is “risky and unnecessary” is the dominant resource. In this essay, I will analyze the uses of ethos, logos, pathos, and the use of logical fallacies.

**Methods**

In this paper, I will be analyzing the use of ethos, logos, pathos, and some common fallacies that were used in the article. Ethos is an appeal to the audience to try and convince them that the author is credible in the subject (The Arguments Best Friend). Examples of ethos would include being an expert in a certain area or mentioning that the author has many years of experience as well as writing style (The Arguments Best Friend). Logos is an appeal that uses the audience’s knowledge and the author's evidence to support an argument (The Arguments Best Friend). Examples of logos can include facts, examples, authority, historical or personal examples (The Arguments Best Friend). Pathos is the appeal of emotion, which is best used while using logos or ethos (The Arguments Best Friend).

           The fallacies I found for this article include: poisoning the well, appeal to pity, and hypothesis contrary to fact. Poisoning the well is to give the audience adverse information about the opposing author, or opponent, from the beginning (logicalfallacies). Appeal to pity is the use of information to try to use the audience’s emotions to distract them from something else (logicalfallacies). Hypothesis contrary to fact is when someone offers an unsupported claim about what might have happened or what could happen if circumstances were different (logicalfallacies). It is useful to analyze articles or anything, though these concepts to help thoroughly understand the author's purpose of writing the article.

**Analysis**

           On the homepage of Southern Environmental Law Center, it states that “SELC is the largest environmental organization in the Southwest, with 80 attorneys working”. By doing this, SELC is pulling from the credibility of their attorneys and mentioning that they are the largest environmental organization in the Southeast. They also include pictures of their offices, which prove that they are a big company that is very successful in what they do.

           At the beginning of the article, it starts with an image of the pipeline being constructed, with heavy environmental destruction through an agriculture field or pasture. The picture, to newcomers to this topic, is applied to try and grab the attention and show them that this is very destructive to the environment. The very next thing in the article is updated news, which is updated fairly recent with court cases, or laws that have been passed dealing with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

           SELC shows how the pipeline will destroy the environment and that it is not necessary or needed to run this natural gas pipeline. “the bottom line is that it is not necessary to meet the region’s demand for natural gas”. The article then goes on to discuss how Dominion Energy and Duke Energy are pushing the pipeline so hard, even though it does not have support from the market to support it. Also, SELC explains how the ACP will be passed down to their customers to pay for it, Here, they missed a very strong supporting detail of how this plays into the customers having to pay for the pipeline. Areas that it will run through will have to pay to tap into the line to access the natural gas and make an economic saving (Gee 2019).

           SELC includes how the pipeline will disrupt everyday life for the communities and homeowners that are relatively close to the construction. The effects of the pipeline will be felt directly from homeowners and landowners for the first few years, however, there is an after plan to manage and restore the destruction to regular standards that will leave the pipeline in a natural standard (Dominion 2014). However, there is an argument that in recent years the need for natural gas has declined and that there is no need for the pipeline just due to necessity being low.

**Ethos**

           In this article, Ethos is established and used very strongly. “SELC and its partners have sued five of those agencies in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit: The Federal Energy Regulatory Commis­sion, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the Virginia Department of Envi­ronmental Quality”. This statement shows that they have tackled large environmental problems before at the federal level. They also mention that “At the federal level SELC is challenging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on its decision to permit this project”. All of these statements emphasize that they are very experienced with the law and have experts on their side.

           Also, SELC mentions how big their business is by stating that they are a Member of the Allegheny-Blue-Ridge Alliance and that they have a coalition of 43 organizations across Virginia and West Virginia. This just so happens to be where the pipeline will be running through, and so by doing this, it allows the audience to know that this is happening right around some of SELC’s offices.

**Pathos**

The author starts by saying “Not only would the project harm our region’s environment and communities”, this is good detail of pathos because just reading that line, but it also makes the audience feel emotion towards the environment and the community. “This unnecessary pipeline will not only harm the mountains, forests, and waterways in its path – it will also disrupt the lives of the people living and working along its 600-mile-long route”. This entire quote from the article contains emotion grabbing information that is meant to make the reader feel bad about the environment being destroyed.

**Logos**

The author uses logos to try to use logical claims to turn the reader against the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Some of the statements like; “Dominion Energy and Duke Energy are rushing forward with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline even though it lacks strong market support” and “In the three years since the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was proposed its justification as a fuel source for gas-fired power plants has continued to erode”, try to prove that the need for the pipeline is useless and not necessary. Another quote he uses is “New analysis shows that demand for gas-fired electricity generation is not growing in our region and is not expect to grow significantly for the foreseeable future”, which is trying to show that even the amount of energy these community’s need is not enough to justify the reason for the pipeline.

**Logical Fallacies**

The author makes a statement about how our region's streams, rivers, and forests are in the crosshair of a massive, pipeline. The meaning of them being in a crosshair is that the pipeline is aiming to destroy the environment when it is not. The author says that the property the pipeline is own will ultimately be paid for by the landowner, or the customer. However, the ACP and Dominion will pay for the property taxes. This is an example of poisoning the well, by making the reader think negatively about the costs and who will have to pay. The last two fallacies appeal to pity and hypothesis contrary to fact, are form the same statement. That statement is that the pipeline will harm mountain forests, and waterways, as well as the lives of people living and working around the pipeline. The appeal to pity is the way he makes it seem the pipeline will destroy the environment in ways unimaginable. The hypothesis contrary to fact is the last part of the statement where he talks about the livability of the surrounding people. However, after the pipeline is installed and everything is back to normal, it will be just like it was with vegetation growing over it.

**Conclusion**

           While this article does a good job of explaining the pipeline and how it will affect the environment are weak and one-sided. However, if the audience is not very well known about the pipeline and comes across this article by chance of research, they will have some knowledge of the pipeline and a few sound arguments. The author does a good job of appealing to the audience’s emotions to try and persuade them to feel a certain way about the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

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