

Letters on the Gulf oil disaster

17 June 2010

On “Gulf oil disaster: a trillion-dollar corporate crime”

This article is another in a series of brilliant articles on this topic.

As an engineer in the oil industry, this is a topic that is of great concern to me, and it has been very hard to find good coverage of it. In the UK, the coverage seems to be more and more to do with the impact on the relationship between the UK and USA. By trying to highlight that BP is a “British” corporation, Obama is hiding the fact that this could have happened with any major oil company. It is also hiding the fact that BP is definitely an international corporation. By pushing this angle it is distorting anger away from the true source of the cause, which is an industry in private hands to create private profits and being very fragmented as a result.

On another point, I can't help but laugh at the repeated insistence that only BP has the resources to solve this. Correct me if I am wrong, but wasn't the rig owned and operated by Transocean?

The truth is that due to outsourcing oil companies have relatively few resources apart from money. Go on any production rig and the majority of the crew will work for other companies than the operating oil company (which itself normally only has a share in the oil field and rig, the rest being split between other oil companies). All drilling rigs are leased by oil companies for particular contracts or periods of time.

The fact is that all the work being performed to try and stop the leak will mostly be performed by contractors. Either companies that BP is hiring or people who work on casual contracts for BP. I would be amazed if any of the boats, robots and so on involved are owned by BP.

So what does BP bring in terms of resources? A wallet, a list of who to call and perhaps some talented engineers, most of whom are probably contractors. Why couldn't the Obama administration hire companies directly to do the work and send the bill back to BP?

Due to the economic downturn there are thousands of engineers and rig crews who have been laid off. Who knows how many drilling rigs are sitting waiting for contracts, but it will be a lot. When oil prices go down the first thing to be cut is normally drilling programs.

There really is no rational reason for BP to be left in charge if the true interest was to stop the leak as soon as possible.

David F
15 June 2010

On “Government scientists confirm massive oil plumes”

Absolutely heartbreaking. “The seabirds cannot make a living” like many people now. But in the case of the helpless suffering animals, looking as though they were asking who is responsible for their awful plight, the sight of them tears at the heart in a unique way. This is what the evil system we live with is doing to every living thing on earth.

KV
British Columbia, Canada
11 June 2010

On “The BP oil spill and the tyranny of private ownership”

Turning the oil into a public utility would be a wonderful idea. Sadly, Congress and all the U.S. presidents are so firmly “in the pocket” of Big Oil that that will never happen.

Bush and Cheney were both connected to that industry. Condoleezza Rice once had an oil tanker named after her (a name that was quickly changed when it appeared she would go to work “for the government”—or was it for Big

Oil? The U.S. has invaded Iraq and made an agreement to receive the profit of 70 percent of the oil wells in that nation. Oil and money are the “heroin” that Congress, Big Business and stockholders crave.

The only possible solution is to have government own the oil industry but this will only happen if an unprecedented and major catastrophe takes place. Such a catastrophe may be very well upon us. The next few months will determine whether the Gulf of Mexico survives or is turned into an oily ocean, devoid of aquatic life.

What type of government allows a company like B.P. to drill in over a mile-deep water without even having a secondary well drilled just in case a problem takes place? Whatever happens, this absolutely must be the case, as it is in Canada now. Also, the U.S. strongly needs to consider banning such drilling in water a mile deep. The dangers outweigh the benefits. A space-program type push to create alternative forms of energy could lessen our dependence on this 21st century heroin we call petro-fuels.

Stephen S
Missouri, USA
11 June 2010

This article overlooks the fact that nearly all underground oil belongs to governments. I recall there is something like 80 percent of known oil reserves that are in government ownership. In the instant case, BP is the agent of the US government in extracting the oil. A variety of other BP companies will be downstream to transport, refine, distribute and retail the stuff.

Roger H
Hong Kong
14 June 2010



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