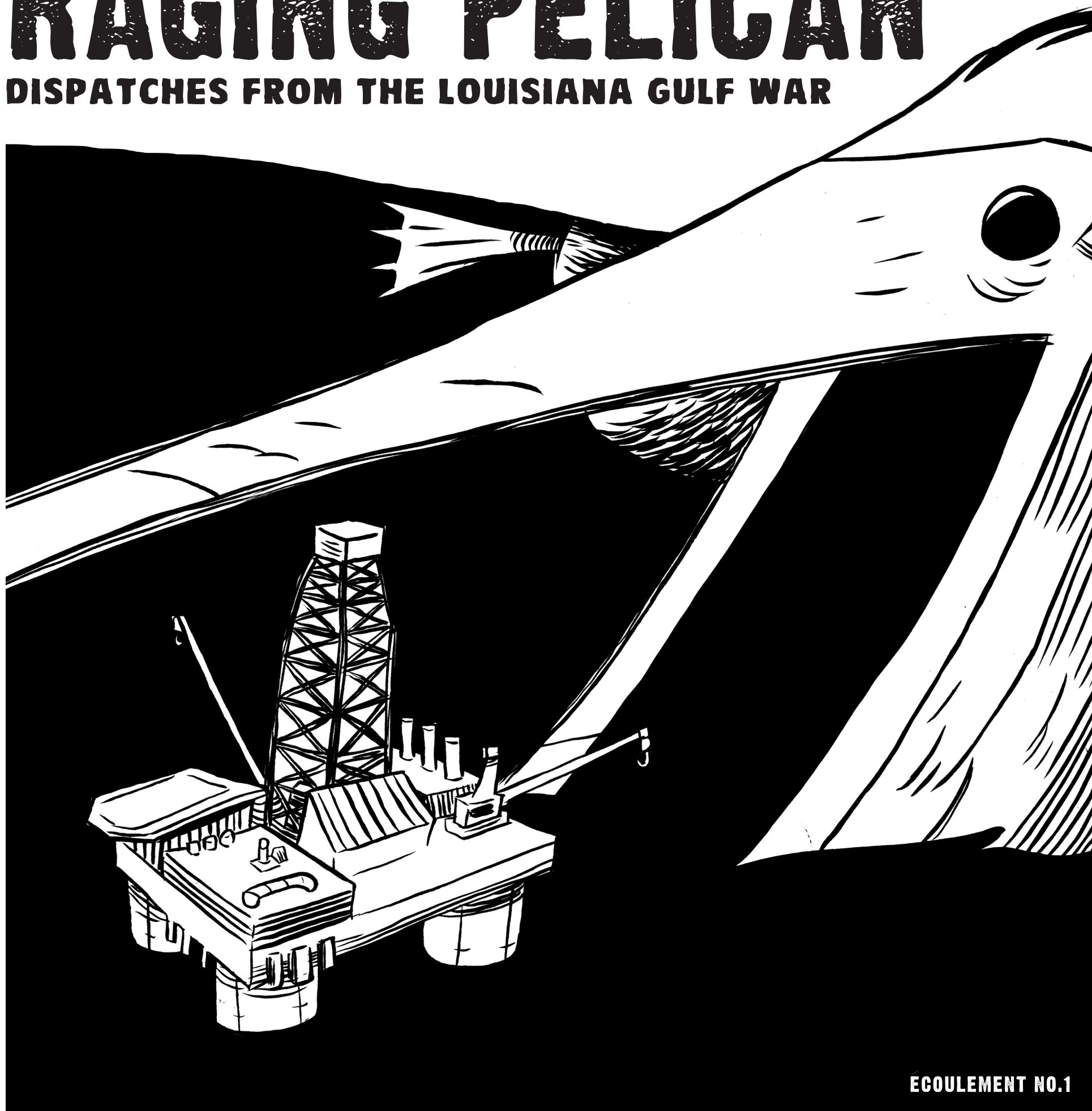


free
take one

THE RAGING PELICAN

DISPATCHES FROM THE LOUISIANA GULF WAR



ÉCOULEMENT NO.1

WINNING THE LOUISIANA GULF WAR

By: M. Long

WHAT IS OUR SITUATION IN THE GULF COAST?

Across the country corporate and state interests have become inseparable. This is inevitable. The politician and the big money-maker get along quite well in the United States. Even millionaires can be quite powerless. Entities with incomprehensible amounts of wealth are the issue.

This vast wealth is generated because private interests are more or less given natural resources by the government. Representational democracy acts as a sham allowing politicians and judges to make it seem as if a majority of the people in a region consented to whatever deal was made. This is what has happened in the Gulf Coast for decades.

As a result, the state favors the interests of wealthy corporations over individual people. This means that the armed forces and police forces are often enlisted in the service of these profit-making giants; this is why BP has command of the U.S. Coast Guard while it is being "investigated" and "regulated."

The South historically has existed in many ways as an economic colony of the more industrialized North. From cotton to sugar to oil, this region has produced a great amount of raw product. This has come at great expense to its people and nature, but this region has not seen much of that wealth return.

The Federal Government sells the Gulf Coast to the highest bidder. This is made possible by the complicity of state officials on both sides of the aisle. Some seek to blame the majority's lifestyles as the root of the problem. This is a smokescreen. We can agree on the necessity of throttling back consumption, but "going green" as the corporations, government, and Hollywood have presented it is based on individual consumer initiatives: "Buy this new light bulb, buy organic, drive a Prius".

Many people would like to take initiatives like this, but most simply can't afford it. The "green" product is a status purchase. This popular vision of "going green" has nothing to do with systemic change. Instead it presents BP as "Green", the Oscars as "Green", and Al Gore as "Green". It has nothing to do with making a more sustainable, healthier future for the middle, working, and poor classes. We need systemic change, where the burden is not on the cash-strapped individual but on the corporations and the state who have institutionalized our problems and created pockets of extreme wealth for themselves in the process.

HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO YET ANOTHER DISASTER HERE?

We of the Gulf Coast must organize for ourselves. This requires connecting with others and becoming informed about their efforts. From there, we can look at what's going on and better see how to help fill in any gaps in the overall effort. The task of a useful grassroots response is to encourage organizing in such a way that all forces make an appeal to one another, through formal or informal channels, and one compliments the efforts of the rest. It's also important to prevent the co-opting of these various efforts by political parties and corporations.



If the people of the Gulf region had not taken the initiative to survive and rebuild after the storms and floods, we would no longer be here. The BP disaster is not the first crisis that the oil companies and the government have brought upon us. The prolonged and rapid deterioration of wetlands that increased the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the still-useless levee system are direct results of the oil companies and their influence on the priorities of government.

Anti-authoritarian organizing can support the participatory nature of grassroots recovery efforts and bring a certain attitude to the struggle against anyone using the Gulf Coast as a venue of convenience for negligent, destructive, or greed-motivated dealings.

We must end the occupation of the Gulf Coast by BP and the federal and state government that legitimizes their presence while keeping funds from our actual needs. We must have access to BP's vast wealth to repair all the damage to our region and secure our future, with no concern for BP's ability to maintain itself as a functional business entity.

WHY THE RAGING PELICAN?

The Raging Pelican seeks to aid expression of outrage, criticism, and positive suggestions about this situation unrestricted by political or professional affiliations. In this way, we hope our paper can provide a platform for the mutterings of the Gulf Coaster who, out of fear and necessity, puts on a polite face at the negotiating table.

We want to further the struggle towards popular empowerment in whatever direction it seems naturally to be developing. We have no predetermined box for daily action to fit into, but to create an outcome where we aren't ignored, walked over, and talked over, we need to interrupt any chain of events that further disenfranchises, exploits, or otherwise destroys the people of the gulf, the wildlife here, and the beauty and health of the natural world.

We promote a diversity of approaches, from the bottom up, to develop an assertive and self-reliant perspective as part of the long-term project of preserving our region and empowering the people here. We cannot support any proceedings that lead us down the same path as the Alaskan oil "recovery". We must work not just to save ourselves but prevent the companies and politicians from creating more disasters like this one in other places.

The story of the oil catastrophe and its effects needs to be wrested from BP and its allies, the state and federal government. This is necessary so that they can not hoodwink, divide, buy off, or manipulate us to stop believing what's in front of our faces. The Raging Pelican is meant to play a part in this effort.

If you live in the deep South, the Gulf Coast, or have ever cared about these places, we are for you and want to hear from you. We all suffer from this. The state and the big capitalists like BP make a game of picking and choosing who has and who has not, who is helped and who is not helped. We cannot pick and choose. No matter who you are, what you look like, how much money you have, or where you are from... If you are in opposition to the current situation, or if you suffer from the current situation, this paper is in sympathy with you.

Stuck in the Mud

By: J Delacroix

New Orleanians are a strong people
We are born into the battle
Been fighting a war that exists not in history books
But in the heads and hearts of its people

We fight quite simply to remain

I have known people to leave
I have heard the outsiders speak of how hard it is to live in a place
Where booze flows so freely
Where happiness and despair ride such a thin line
The difference is difficult to distinguish
And although they often return
For them, in their absence
Something is lost

I have often imagined, envying those who can get up and go when
tragedy strikes
Those who have the sense to make a graceful exit
Before their walls begin to crumble
Before they are forced to bare their souls

I kid my friends who ain't from New Orleans about how native folks
can just tell on sight
That they ain't from here
You see, maybe the reason we all say hello to one another is because
We need to look into one another's eyes
Feel at home in what lies behind them
Something maybe only we can see

May 31st
Sitting in what is now Bacchanal
I am relaying a story to a friend who is leaving town
The oil spill has inspired a need to move on for a moment
A need for a break perhaps
Some might call this reaction common sense
I've known many of the transplants to take this same course of action
I've been known, in desperation, to beg them not to go

The first tears I cried over this spill fell to the floor
Of a building where my father sat as a child
Drinking Coca-Cola and playing pinball while his grandfather sat the
bar drinking 7 and 7
This was a little ritual my father and great-grandfather enjoyed before
they would proceed down near the St. Claude bridge
To a little feed store there that sold live chickens

They would pick one up
Take it home and make chicken stew
My father tells me that grandfather would have eaten chicken stew
every day if my great-grandmother would have allowed him
(the thought of this lovely dark-haired woman leaves a taste of sug-
ared orange slice candies in my mouth, always in her pocket, ready
awaiting the arrival of the great-grandchildren)

Here,

On the corner of Poland and Chartres
Where my father, and my great-grandfather spent so many afternoons
I cried my first tears over this new disaster
Having sat so stoically, so expectantly every single day
Since the first day they announced it
And I wouldn't have been able to do it anywhere else

This day, a man who I have never met placed a hand on my shoulder
He may have whispered that it would be ok with him if I finally just
broke down
That he would be happy to sit here with me
As he sat here so many summer twilights with my father
That I would be safe in the presence of the ghosts of my family
Walking these same floors that he had once walked
Leaning on the same brick walls that had so long ago
Supported his weight

Here,

On the corner of Poland and Chartres
I felt my great-grandfather with me
And the comfort of this
My home
Overwhelmed me

This is why we cannot leave

Our roots reach down so deep
They cling to this layer of silt we call land
They reach down into the water
And somehow
They hold on

This is a lesson we have taken to heart
My people are strong

We will drown here under the flood waters of a hurricane
We will suffocate beneath the oil, the dispersants

We will find a way to live or
We will die here before they will make us leave

And when the next disaster strikes
We will sit beside our children
Our grandchildren
Our great-grandchildren
We will console them here in these same buildings
Shelter them here behind these same walls
We will be sure that they know the familiarity of home

Because this
Is the only home we care to know



GET TO KNOW AN ENEMY

In analysing British Petroleum we see how methods of corruption carry through recent history, be it lobbying or government-backed coups. BP is only one of many global companies that exploit people and contort laws in order to profit. In a world of so many interests, why are only a few given precedent to disregard the many? And can this be remediated? Perhaps both corporations and the governments that maintain them should be dissolved.

1901: False icon of "progress" William Knox D'Arcy makes it big in his shareholding of a gold mine. Then, like all good colonizers of his day, he travels to a foreign country (Iran) to expand upon his wealth.

1901-1908: Like something from a biblical story, D'Arcy is granted permission by the Shah to search most of Iran for oil deposits. This begins a seven year pilgrimage, backed by profits not prophets, until D'Arcy strikes gold, that is, black gold, Texas tea. And just in time too....

1908: Oil becomes a more popular commodity as people trade in their bikes and horses for the Ford Model T, just coming off the assembly line.

1909: D'Arcy and Glasgow backers form the Anglo-Persian Oil Company(APOC) to exploit Iran's natural oil wealth.

1923: APOC heavily lobbies Winston Churchill in order to monopolize all Persian oil resources. And we always wondered where Churchill got those big cigars!

1935: APOC becomes the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company(AIOC)

1951: Iran's pro-Western cop of a Prime Minister, Ali Razmara, is assassinated. The anti-imperialist Mohammed Mossadeq is elected Prime Minister, and Iran's Parliament nationalizes the oil industry, displacing AIOC. AIOC in turn organizes an effective multinational boycott of Iranian oil.

1953: Operation AJAX: Newly elected U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower oversees a coup by CIA and its British equivalent, MI6, ousting and imprisoning Mossadeq on August 19th. Iran's democratic constitution is dismantled and another pro-Western traitor, Fazlollah Zahedi, assumes autocratic power. A few months before this unlawful incident, Eisenhower stated, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed." Ike the hypocrite must have wanted a new wardrobe.

1954: AIOC renames itself British Petroleum. for image's sake...as you don't want to be tied to a war now, do you?

1959: BP goes beyond the Middle East, into Alaska.

1979: During the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, most oil refineries are destroyed. The new regime of Ayatollah Khomeini signs new contracts with BP instituting a 90-10 split of oil profits, where 90% goes to BP and 10% to Khomeini and his followers.

1979: October. BP is corporatized under British PM Maggie Thatcher and her government's strategy of privatization and deregulation, which would be followed by Reagan. Steve Ignorant of Crass declares "Do you really believe in Thatcher? Maggie sucks!"

1984: Standard Oil of California sells off many of its Southeastern US acquisitions, yes including Louisiana, to BP. The beginning of a crime...

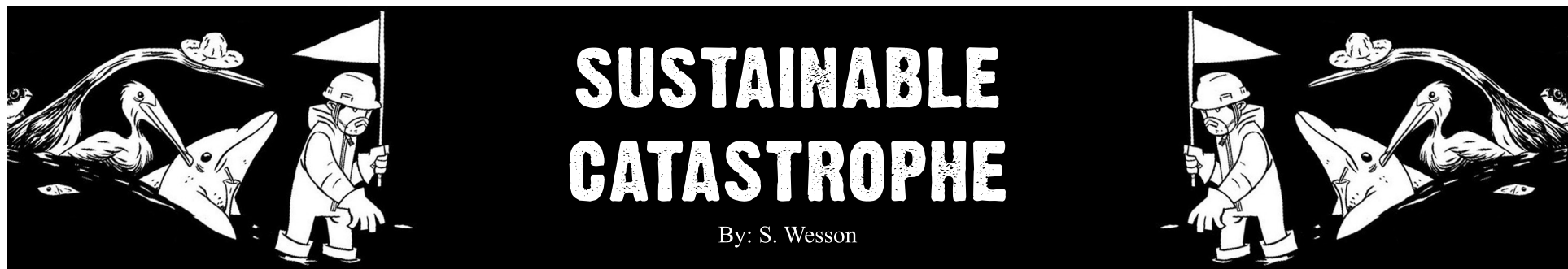
1993-1995: In Endicott Island, Alaska, BP illegally dumps paint thinner, hazardous materials, and waste oil for over a year. In 1999 they'll be required to pay a fine of merely \$500,000.

2005: March. BP Texas Oil Refinery Explosion. Due to cuts on safety and maintenance and a policy of ignoring engineering problems 15 people die, 180 people are injured, and nearby residents are forced to remain in their homes for shelter. Inspectors note 270 safety violations. BP is fined \$50,000,000.

2006-2007: Prudhoe Bay. BP recognizes that it's leaked some one million liters of oil from its Alaskan pipeline onto the frozen Arctic tundra and a few months later spilled 2,000 gallons of methanol around the same site. This is again noted as occurring in conjunction with money-saving budget cuts in safety and maintenance. Sound familiar?

2008: Democratic senator Mary Landrieu (LA) receives \$17,000 from BP oil giant in one of many lobbying payouts. Look back at Winston Churchill 1923.

2010: April 20th. Deepwater Horizon oil rig explodes and kills 11 workers. Workers had previously expressed concerns over the safety of the rig, but management ignored these claims.



SUSTAINABLE CATASTROPHE

By: S. Wesson

It's as if a religious force compels us not to question capitalism as the fundamental problem behind the oil geyser. It can never be the focus of our anger. Our incapacity to set our sights on capitalism persists even though the relationship between capital and the world is so incompatible that the world is rapidly deteriorating, the extraction and consumption of it expanding eternally. There is opposition springing into action against BP's atrocities and the state's complicity in them, but from it we find no assurance that the destruction won't continue. In fact the vanguard of dissent against BP, the leftist environmentalists, only offer capitalism a badly needed makeover, keeping us in calm hypnosis to the idea of its perfectibility.

Examining the premier disputants of BP and the state, we don't get much critique of industrial society, but we do find insight as to where it's heading. Weighing in on the left corner are the usual suspects, the Sierra Club and Greenpeace. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) leads us to believe there's also a federal ally making policy for such environmentalist programs. These dogmatists of a sustainable future are grappling for leadership roles over the defense of the Gulf and its inhabitants. Their tactics, however--contests for the best satirical BP slogan, the federal seizing of BP's assets, more sustainable practices in the near future achieved with peaceful protest and petitioning-- all suggest they'd rather be selling collectible coffee mugs than discussing the wanton destruction of Earth.

To be fair, environmentalist organizations are discussing the coming ecocrisis (as characterized by peak oil, climate change and our planet's 6th mass extinction, to name but a few of the indisputable facts of our time) on some level. They claim to have the answers, maintaining we can get through these trying times if we uphold a society run by an affluent few overseeing a massive exploitable underclass, just as long as that society becomes "sustainable." Perhaps they're right; a lucky minority may get to enjoy cottage homes run by solar energy in carefully protected patches of nature while the rest of us toil amidst the apocalypse, but it serves very few peoples' interests to see these ends furthered.

The green pitch of a serene society harmoniously in step with nature is, in reality, capitalism forever requiring the degradation of the earth, maintained by an ever-growing class divide. Changing to solar would require massive amounts of carbon-emitting fuel to produce the manufacturing infrastructure. To stay profitable, panel

production will also demand a continued source of cheap labor to exploit, probably found in easily polluted and manipulated third-world countries. Other options are no better: converting to biofuel would require mono-cropping all of Africa to provide one third of current oil production. Wind, geothermal, and tidal energy, even if exploited to their maximum via currently non-existent facilities, wouldn't even cover a third of our current consumption.

Such global maxims are becoming harder and harder to downplay. The Chamber of Commerce, the American Petroleum Institute and the rest of the business leaders are quite aware of this, and have long been leading a massive propaganda machine to alleviate the public's concerns. But the Shell-induced environmental catastrophes and attempted annihilation of indigenous peoples in Nigeria are hard to miss. And, as we're learning, the Gulf catastrophe is just one among dozens of other "accidents" occurring all the time. Several more oil spills have occurred in the US alone since the BP debacle began. People are making the connections, and the companies' worst fear is the day when everybody's despair over the state of the world is found rooted in capitalism.

Recognizing our restlessness over its hostilities, capitalism must constantly preempt our revolutionary outrage. Submitting our satirical concept ads to Greenpeace, donating money or buying merchandise from the Sierra Club and then showing our support in front of the cameras at the occasional peaceful protest are some of the limited ways we're allowed to take action. But the more effective dissuasions are the ones played on our self-image and morals. A Greenpeace ad in the New York Times said, "It wasn't the Exxon Valdez captain's driving that caused the Alaskan oil spill. It was yours." Taking our enmity towards the perpetrators of ecocide and turning it inwards, into self-consciousness, green capitalism guilts us into believing change will come only if we micro-manage ourselves.

In reality, lessening our individual waste and carbon output makes next to no difference and only serves to distract us from the upper class as they jet about the globe. Regardless of our consent, industrial agriculture and the war machine will keep utilizing the bulk of earth's resources. It's true that Americans consume at exorbitant rates, but when it comes to commodity culture we have little say in our overall participation. We are forced to go to the market for the items we need, and whether it's from Rouses or Whole Foods hardly matters when

corporations monopolize everything and their production persists.

It's alleged by environmentalists that if we garner enough support for the right politicians, they'll in turn pass the right policies, fund the right organizations and everything will be ok. But it's from politicians specifically that we can expect nothing. Their trustworthiness has most effectively been dispelled by liberalism's victorious election of Obama and the Democratic House majority; instead of fulfilling campaign promises, they continue the mad neoliberal trend of every government lineup since Reagan, deregulating commercial safeguards like those regulating offshore drilling. Why do politicians, along with bankers and executives, all deny the suicidal tendencies of industrial society? As MIT professor Noam Chomsky recently put it, "Their task is to maximize profit and market share... it is their legal obligation. If they don't do it, they'll be replaced by somebody who will." Politicians are as obedient to profit as the oil execs that have them in their back pocket.

Environmentalism apologetically dubs the oil geyser a catastrophic accident stemming from society's need for some adjustments. There's no room left for such excuses; the well blowout, a scenario that's always been a calculated risk, occurred while capitalism worked under optimum performance. It's a reality we have to acknowledge and then fight, not fix. Right now there are people across Louisiana coming to the realization of capitalism's ruthlessness. A few weeks into the spill, fishermen from Jefferson Parish saw the oil creeping inland, and had to break rank from BP and the coast guard just to fight it. It was a losing battle, but when the fishermen saw the oil creeping in to strangle their home and livelihood, there wasn't a single government official, BP rep, or Sierra Club spokesperson alive that they were going to wait for. In New Orleans it might seem like we're removed from that kind of urgency. But what about the existential shock to a place that's always been fed on fish and shellfish now that its seafood source is destroyed and everything is imported? What about the family and friends we have living on the coast who have lost everything, for perhaps the second time in a decade? What about all the beautiful places along the Gulf that we can no longer enjoy or retreat to? What about everyone that will have cancer in 10 years from living next to the world's biggest superfund site? And what are we going to do now that we know, without a shred of doubt that capitalism is going to keep doing this shit?

FIRST STEPS

“ I was born on the prairies where the wind blew free and there was nothing to break the light of the sun. I was born where there were no enclosures. ”
-Geronimo

“ Let us form one body, one heart, and defend to the last warrior our country, our homes, our liberty, and the graves of our fathers. ”
-Tecumseh



- We can begin by NOT volunteering in the clean-up efforts. Make BP pay us to clean up their mess; don't do it for free!

- We can begin by blocking roads, like LA 1, which is a critical link in the offshore oil industry, until the federal government gives us a larger share of royalties, and allows our community to make decisions about what are acceptable risks for oil drilling.

- We can begin by showing the documentary about MEND in every town in South Louisiana, and discussing the parallels of our situation with our friends and neighbors.
<http://www.sweetcrudemovie.com/>

- We can begin by occupying the offices of oil companies and related businesses (such as Dubai-based Halliburton) until they stop buying and corrupting our political system, and

more fairly compensate the people harmed by decades of drilling and the current BP disaster.

- We can begin by occupying the offices of agri-businesses whose pollutants have ruined our river and whose lobbying has caused the enacting of policies upriver that harm our communities, who have never paid a dime in compensation for the risks they thought were acceptable for us.

- We can begin by blockading or occupying refineries, where cancerous flares of chemicals and toxic sludge poison our communities on a daily basis.

- We can begin by blocking shipping channels with our boats, including the Mississippi River, one of the most important locations for raw materials imports (raw materials no doubt obtained at the cost of people somewhere

being able to continue living on their land). The brave people of Bayou La Batre, Alabama have already done this once:
<http://tiny.cc/labatre>

- We can begin by organizing ourselves and protesting, as some have done already:
<http://murderedgulf.wordpress.com/>
<http://www.anarchistnews.org/?q=node/11640>

- We can fill BP trailers full of shit, we can damage their property, and we can make doing business (i.e.- risking our lives) much harder for oil companies.

- We can begin by organizing our communities into popular assemblies (see: Argentina's Financial Crisis of 2001), where WE make the decisions about things that effect our lives, and where we take care of our community as a whole to ensure it survives to see tomorrow.

IT IS UP TO US- DO WE FIGHT, OR DO WE DIE AS BROKEN PEOPLE, UPROOTED AND EXPLOITED, WITHOUT A PLACE TO CALL HOME?

OUR DEATHS ARE YOUR DESTINY

By: Hanx Clawmachine

South Louisiana emerges from history as a place in which the human suffering underwriting American prosperity repeatedly strays into America's gaze. Folksily, South Louisiana's a corner of the first world where capitalism's uglier chickens come home to roost, again and again. Bluntly, we keep getting fucked over horribly.

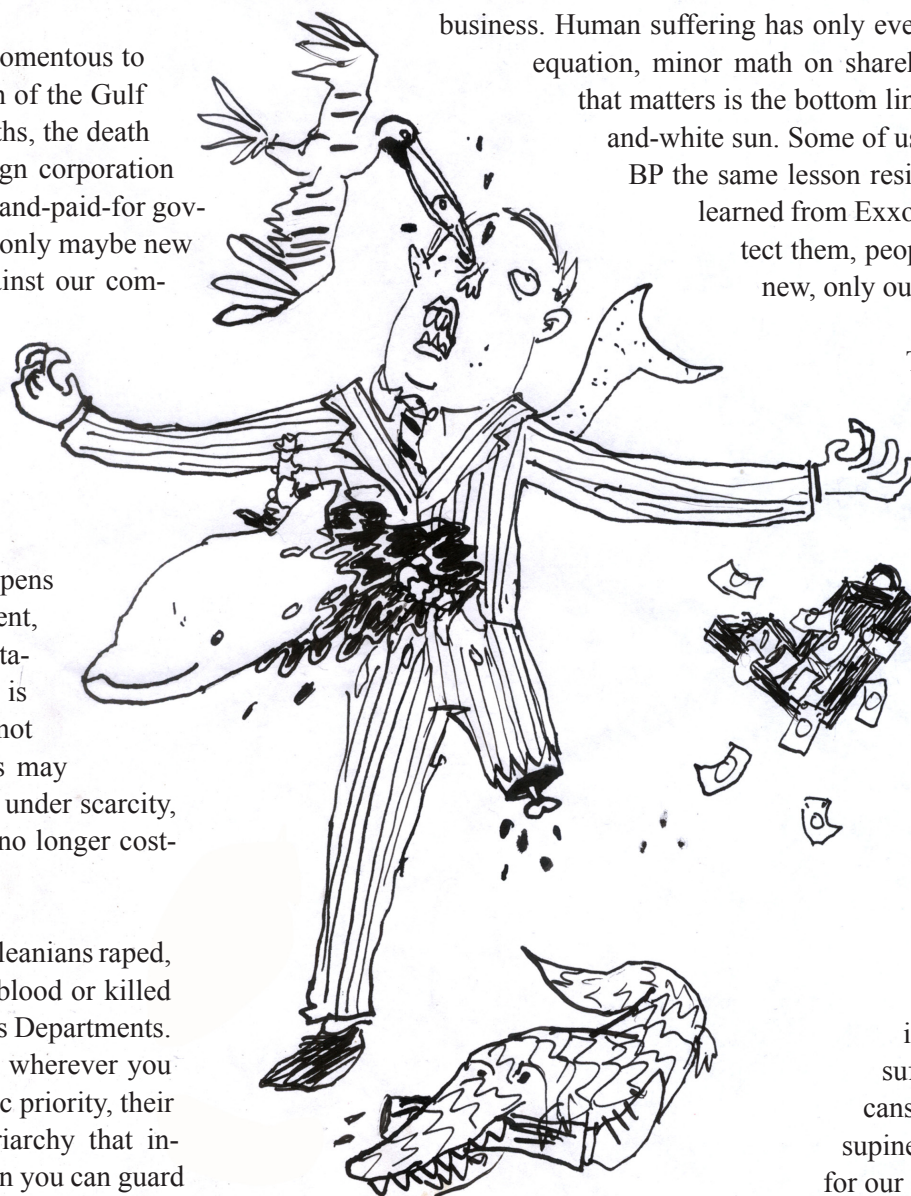
Our agonies and our deaths, while obviously momentous to us, are no more exceptional than the destruction of the Gulf of Mexico is accidental or remarkable. Our deaths, the death of the Gulf, the unfolding toxic horror a foreign corporation inflicts upon us with the complicity of a bought-and-paid-for government-- this is business as usual. It's not new, only maybe new to us. This chemical warfare being waged against our communities and the numberless lives ruined are not merely a consequence or side-effect of the healthy, normal functioning of capitalism; they're intrinsic to it. The BP oil flood is as necessary to capitalism as exhaust is to internal combustion.

"Tragedy," they call every awful thing that happens to South Louisiana, awful event after awful event, but "tragedy" doesn't convey the absolute inevitability that lies at the root of these crimes. This is the conflict between profit and human life. It's not a possibility, it's an actuality. Its consequences may not have reached you yet, but under capitalism, under scarcity, it's not in question. Put simply, our survival is no longer cost-effective. We're living America's future.

Look-- if you can find the bodies-- at the New Orleanians raped, pimped, tazed, beaten, set on fire, shot in cold blood or killed in custody by the New Orleans Police & Sheriff's Departments. What our pigs do openly down here, your pigs wherever you are could and will do to you as soon as economic priority, their commanding officers, or the pre-existing patriarchy that informs "policing" suggests it. It's not an aberration you can guard against, it's as natural as a rainbow after rain. The buzz-cut boy currently writing you a ticket for speeding will look no different, will give no warning when he backhands you, when he kicks you down and bloodily violates you with his nightstick. He will be the same police officer he always was, serving the same system. Only your place in the system will have changed, only your relationship to the privilege you thought protected you.

The New Orleanians abandoned to die by the Federal Government and drowned by the failure of the Army Corps of Engineers' negligently constructed levees are all the proof anyone should need of even the most powerful government's uselessness to its people. Note this is the uselessness of government, not merely the uselessness of the members of government. We keep replacing politicians, and government keeps being useless to us. Obama has left us to die as surely as Bush did, and with just as much sanctimonious speechifying and after-the-fact bullshit. This is a lesson some seem slow to learn: government is useless. We should already know better.

The rig workers murdered by BP's greed for profits and the fishermen sickened by EPA-sanctioned exposure to Corexit and benzene are merely numbers in columns, at most a tiny, temporary tax-negotiated leverage shift in the endless tantric-sex seesaw between the intermeshed interests of government and business. Human suffering has only ever been a small factor in the industrial equation, minor math on shareholder tally sheets. The only number that matters is the bottom line, and nothing's new under the green-and-white sun. Some of us in Louisiana, USA are learning from BP the same lesson residents of Akwa Ibom, Nigeria already learned from ExxonMobile. Corporations rule, laws protect them, people aren't important. These facts aren't new, only our experience of them.



The mass suffering of the world's poor is necessary to the free market. That's the dynamic of late capitalism: the privileged few get rich, a thin scrim of the globally comfortable get HDTV and diabetes, and the vast, mostly invisible mega-majority are worked to death, starve, and die poisoned manufacturing HDTVs... HDTVs which pacify with fatuous fairytales about the privileged few.

We in South Louisiana are not as disempowered as most of the worlds' poor, not yet, and the question of whether we accept our victimization is still to be resolved. Will our suffering be visible to our fellow Americans in a meaningful way, or will we lie supine and silenced, another fait accompli for our attackers?

We're a first-world bellwether, again, and again unwillingly. Will the current talk of "disaster," of "accident," the specious, cynical narrative of one-in-a-million whoops-a-daisy successfully occlude the larger truths of this horror? The government and media are working hard to cap & plug this ugly gusher of reality, this unambiguous demonstration of late-capitalist consequence. Will we let their lies carry the day? Every victory over truth emboldens the enemy. Will this oil war be a one-sided massacre, or will we fight back?



WHAT DOES RESISTANCE LOOK LIKE?

THE NIGER DELTA MODEL

By: Ray Boudreaux

CALCULATED RISKS

When black plumes of oil started gushing forth from the silent bottom deep in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20th, everyone in South Louisiana reverted to the crisis mode we have all lived in for periods of time since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Our first question became “What can we do to help save our wetlands?” Thousands of willing locals called & signed up to volunteer in the protection and cleanup efforts, and people began planning to carpool as far down the road as it goes and help out.

Like an episode of smallpox, chestnut blight, or a mine explosion, BP’s oil spill looked like just another disaster, a tragic mistake made by benevolent capitalists. But like those past tragedies, this oil spill is a predictable consequence of an industrial civilization where risks are not calculated by those who will face the consequences should something go wrong. There was no doubt a deepwater oil spill could rob people of their landbase and their ability to feed themselves, but that was considered an acceptable risk: those affected could just move to the city and work for money to buy their food. Of course, the people weighing these risks were not those who would be denied the ability to feed themselves; they were lawyers and businessmen in corporate offices where cheese and danish plates greet their conference room meetings exactly at 12:30pm every day.

If you ask anyone who lives off the land if the risks of the conquests and further expansion of civilization are worth it, they will tell you no. If you asked the Cherokee if logging the Appalachians is worth the risk of the Eastern Elk and Bison going extinct, of River Trout going extinct, they would have of course told you no. Logging for what benefit? For timber to build factories and shanties that poor immigrants will break their backs in every day, paid just enough to keep from starving? For mansions for the factory owners? For train cars to whisk more people who don’t know or care about the landbase to Cherokee land, to destroy it?

Is it worth it? Ask the fishermen and shrimpers and bayou people who live on the bounty of South Louisiana: is oil drilling worth the risk of destroying the ability of Louisianans to eat seafood and live on the coast? They were never asked. The decisions about the land were made by people who don’t live on or rely on the land. These decisions were made in business office buildings, and after the proper campaign contributions they were echoed in the halls of Congress.

MIRRORED HISTORIES

Our story is not new, not unique, and probably surprises no one. In fact, there are some other people who know almost this exact story already. They live half way around the world, in a country called Nigeria.

The story begins much the same way as it does in South Louisiana: Europeans arrived in Nigeria, having calculated risks much differently than the people who actually lived there. In this case, the capitalists calculated the worth of human beings’ labor, and bought and sold them as slaves. These profiteers weren’t bothered by the consequences to Nigerian lifeways of people being enslaved, abducted from their land, and murdered through work.

Slavery is a peculiar institution of capitalism. It is useful to capitalists (who become the slave-owners) when there is a lot of land but few people willing to work it for


the capitalists’ benefit. This is often the case at capitalism’s frontiers, before the landbase and locals’ ability to feed themselves has been destroyed-- in other words, while people still have a choice whether or not to work for the capitalists or not.

These were the circumstances in the Southern U.S. that heralded its economic rise, and one of the many points at which Nigerian and Louisianan genealogy intertwine. The Native Americans who called South Louisiana home refused to willingly give up their landbase to capitalist exploitation. Knowing the land as they did, they preferred to live from it and be taken care of by it rather than to work for the colonizers who wanted to pillage it beyond sustainability. The Native Americans took in runaway slaves, and the two peoples lived together off the land here.

The memory of this generosity between peoples fighting capitalist expansion is alive today in the celebrations of the Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans, and in native communities such as the Houma Nation in South Louisiana, continuing to fight for the wetlands and against oil companies destroying them.

Back in contemporary Nigeria, the residents of the Niger Delta, a vast river delta and marshland ecosystem similar to that of the Mississippi River, also live in a landbase sitting on vast oil reserves. Like many Gulf Coast residents, they are fishermen, shrimpers, and bayou dwellers. As it did here, oil exploration came to the Niger Delta area decades ago. People in boardrooms and banks made decisions about the risks of drilling for oil in the Niger Delta, and decided the risks were worth it. The people of the Niger Delta did not make the decision, oil companies and paid-off politicians did.

Oil companies promised tax revenues and campaign contributions to the national government in exchange for the “right” to drill for oil in the Delta-- a right which, as in South Louisiana, the politicians had no real authority to give away, since they would not bear the consequences of the risks.



Today, after repeated, massive oil spills, the Niger Delta is one of the most polluted places in the world, worse even than our infamous Cancer Alley. Despite their oil, the people of the Niger Delta are still the poorest in the nation; revenues flow to the national government and are never returned to the people who take the risks and bear the costs of the oil drilling. Sound familiar? James Carville recently said of South Louisiana, "We have not seen a single penny of royalties for oil produced more than six miles off our coast. We assume all of the risk, produce seafood and oil and gas, with none of the reward. Yes, \$165 billion of royalties have gone to the federal treasury that could go to help repair this pressing issue."

The Mississippi and Niger Deltas bear striking parallels. The oil companies have been able to buy themselves even greater exemption from regulation and accountability in Nigeria than here (a scary thought). The people are even poorer and their Delta is even more polluted as a result. Their situation provides a serious warning as to where Louisiana's coast is headed.

There is one major difference, however, between Southern Nigeria and Southern Louisiana: In the Niger Delta, they have MEND.

MEND- THE MOVEMENT FOR EMANCIPATION OF THE NIGER DELTA

The people of the Niger Delta fought the oil companies for decades. They fought for better protections from-- and regulations to stop-- the oil spills that were despoiling their land, harming their ability to fish and farm, and harming their ability to survive with dignity. They fought for more oil revenue to come to the Delta to help the people who were losing their way of life. They fought dictatorships and elected politicians alike, since both had the same position regarding oil drilling and compensation in the Delta... as do our two national parties we have.

The Nigerians fought peacefully, they organized, they protested, and they created large united movements fighting together for justice. Their leaders were murdered and arrested by government and private oil company hit squads. In 1995, after leading a protest movement against Shell, one leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was famously executed at Shell's behest.

After decades of frustratingly unsuccessful peaceful struggle, a few years ago some smaller outlaw groups united to fight together by any means necessary, to force the oil companies to change their practices. The need for change was urgent: it was that or toxic death, or being forced to become new slum dwellers in cities, working for peanuts at jobs they hated, if they could even find jobs. This is how MEND was born.

MEND, the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta, have engaged in everything from destroying oil pipelines and giving away free oil to local Niger Delta residents, to occupying oil platforms, guns mounted on their fishing boats, kidnapping foreign employees for ransom, and bombing oil company offices. Can you blame them? What threat is more fundamental, more existential than taking away a community's ability to feed itself? Native Americans fought back as their buffalo were slaughtered, Native Mapuche warriors in Chile continue to fight logging companies fouling their rivers and destroying their hunting habitat, Natives in West Papua, Indonesia continue to fight against mining by local capitalists Freeport-McMoRan polluting their rivers and killing the fish. They fight, the way people who have relied on the land have done for millennia against people from elsewhere who decide someone else's land, food and way of life can be sacrificed for the greater good of civilization, a.k.a. profit.

OUR FUTURE, OUR DECISION

The BP oil spill is an accident the same way that fouling the rivers in a clearcut with silt is an accident. It is an accident the same way the oil company canals destroying our wetlands are an accident. When you hear "accident" from a corporation, it can be translated as "an acceptable risk that was taken with your lives and lands."

People who actually live on the land know risks that could destroy the entire basis for the community's survival are not risks worth taking.

For decades in Louisiana, it has been "one damned thing after another," in the words of James Carville. Caller after caller on WWL radio has said if the Gulf Coast was its own nation, we'd be rich as Saudi Arabia with all the oil revenues we'd have. Instead, we are part of the perpetually poor Deep South. When will it stop being one damned thing af-

ter another? When will we get to be the ones who decide what happens on our coastline? When will we be the ones to decide which risks are acceptable?

Let's hope it doesn't take a fight like the one MEND is waging in Nigeria... but if history is any guide, it just might.

Will the future see the emergence of MELD, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Louisiana Delta? Lord knows we have all the guns we need. Now we must decide what our way of life is worth to us, our kids and our grandkids. Are we willing to fight for our ability to live from the bayous and the land? Will we fight, or will we surrender to the monstrous pressures of corporations, protected by the military? Will we fight, or will we accept the decisions the politicians make for us, even when those decisions destroy our lives?

The decision about which path to take, resistance or capitulation, is really the only decision we have left. It's the only decision not taken out of our hands by powerful interests backed by guns, and it's the same decision posed to every people deemed expendable by the insatiable appetites of "civilization." It's a decision that has been made thousands of times throughout history, and now, thanks to the risk analyses of British Petroleum and every oil company carving up and spilling oil in our wetlands, it's a decision we must make. It's a decision that has been nagging in the back of our minds for decades as Army Corps projects deprived the wetlands of sediment, as the rest of the US was allowed to use the Mississippi as a giant sewer resulting in Gulf dead zones, and as chemicals have rained from the skies and poured as poisons into the water from the refineries of Cancer Alley.

If such a resistance comes to exist, MELD will always find a welcome place in my home, and I know many people of the Gulf Coast who feel exactly the same way. Onward, to a resistance worthy of the love we feel for this place we call home.

LESSONS LEARNED

By: Drew Natterjack

The Yup'ik saw this. They saw thousands of sea otters die. They saw hundreds of thousands of seabirds die. They saw billions of salmon and herring die. This wasn't a dream. It was a very real nightmare. You may have heard of it. It was called the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill.

It all began on 24th March 1989, when the Exxon Valdez oil tanker grounded on a reef in Prince William Sound, 40 miles off the Alaskan coast. It spilled 11 million gallons of crude oil into the sea that contaminated about 1,300 miles of coastline. But for the Yup'ik, and other southern Alaskans, the nightmare was just beginning.

"We had suicides, domestic violence, child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, divorces, and we lost people in the community who went elsewhere," said Patience Andersen Faulkner, a Yup'ik from the Chugach people, on a recent visit to Louisiana coastal communities. J. Steven Picou, Professor of Sociology at the University of South Alabama, who has researched the community impacts of disasters for 30 years, supports these findings. He says, "These empirical findings are consistent with smaller studies of survivors of Three-Mile Island, Bhopal and Chernobyl." But this was the Exxon Valdez oil spill, so BP had nothing to do with it, right?

Well actually, no, BP were in it up to their necks. They were in charge of the botched response to the spill. They are the major player in the Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. who control oil production in Alaska. Exxon, despite having its name on the ship, was a junior partner. Captain James Woodle, then the Alyeska's Valdez port commander, states that four years before the disaster he reported the following to BP's Alaska chief, George Nelson: "Due to a reduction in manning, age of equipment, limited training and lack of personnel, serious doubt exists that [we] would be able to contain and clean up effectively a medium- or large-size oil spill."

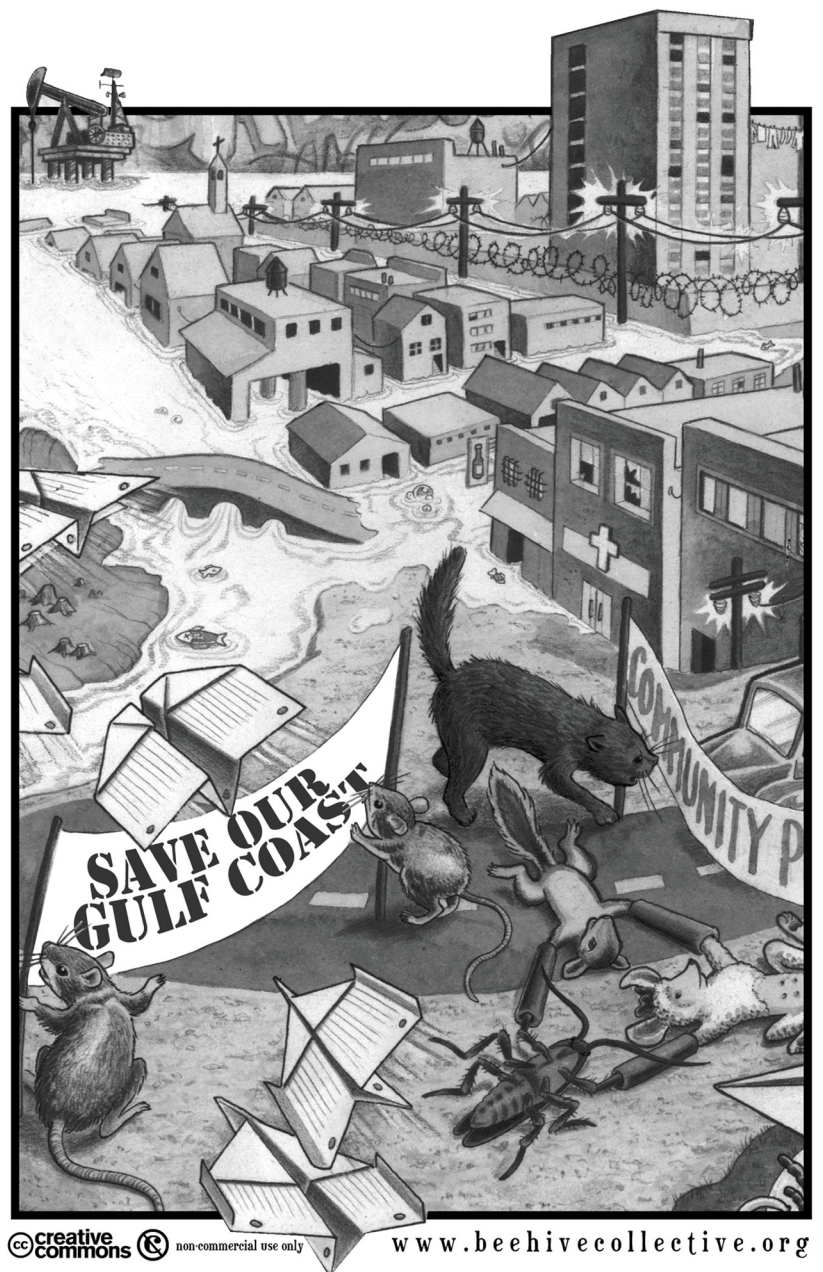
BP sought to bury this report and blackmail its author. As investigative journalist Greg Palast reported, "Alyeska showed Captain Woodle a file of his marital infidelities (all bogus). It then offered him payouts on condition that he leave the state within days, promising never to return." Palast adds, "Charles Hamel of Washington DC, shaken by evidence he received from Alyeska employees, warn[ed] BP executives in London about scandalous goings-on at Valdez." BP thanked him. "Then a secret campaign was launched to hound him out of the industry. A CIA expert was hired to wiretap Hamel's phone lines, smuggle microphones into his home, intercept his mail and try to entrap him with young women. The industrial espionage caper was personally ordered and controlled by BP executive James Hermiller, President of Alyeska. A US Federal Judge later told Alyeska this conduct was 'reminiscent of Nazi Germany'."

Only last year, 20 years after the oil spill, did Exxon pay up. They have spent this time battling Alaskan coastal communities over damages. Damages were initially set by the court at \$5 billion. Exxon have managed to get this slashed by 90% to half a billion dollars for 30,000 Natives and fishermen. There

is still oil on Alaskan beaches. The fishing industry still hasn't recovered. Cleanup workers' health is still affected. BP got away with paying a pittance.

But don't worry, BP learned its lesson from the Exxon Valdez. Not lessons about safety or environmental protection of course; BP has had a string of accidents, leaks and near misses over the last few years. In late May 2010 it spilled over 100,000 gallons of oil from its Alaska pipeline operation. This happened, according to state investigators, because, "procedures weren't properly implemented." Does this sound familiar? They did, however, learn lessons about oiling the wheels of power in their favor. In 2009 they spent \$16 million on federal lobbying, with Louisiana's Senator Mary Landrieu being the top congressional recipient.

Why, given 20 years since the Exxon Valdez oil spill, did BP not put more time and money in to preparing for another leak? If the people of the Gulf Coast ask, I'm sure the Yup'ik would remind them of Tony Hayward's words in 2009 when he said BP's "primary purpose was to generate profit for our shareholders" and that "our primary purpose in life was not to save the world."



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This image is one of many found in the Beehive Design Collective's newest graphic campaign "The True Cost of Coal"

MURDERED

@WORK The Deepwater Horizon Massacre



By: R. Shoalgrass

A lot of people are losing sight of the poor eleven people who lost their lives... Let the people across this goddamn country understand, people got killed here! Understand? And if it's not from gross negligence, it's at least negligence. We've got commercial fishermen out there that came in the other day that could have got killed. So we need a body count before BP steps up.

--George Barisich, head of the United Commercial Fisherman's Association, at protest in Jackson Square. As Quoted by Democracy Now!

The eleven workers murdered in the BP rig explosion left this earth with little public outcry. Corporate negligence has been documented. According to the New York Times, BP was aware that the casing they used on the well was "the riskier of two options" and that it "might collapse under pressure." BP also declined to test the strength of the cement used in the well with a common cement bond log test. Profit was valued above the safety of the workers. To call this an industrial accident would be a misnomer. It is a result not of mismanagement but of intentional disregard for safety, the same disregard with which BP killed 15 and injured 170 in the Texas oil refinery explosion in 2005, also caused by negligence for worker safety. In that case, BP ended up pleading guilty to charges of violating the Clean Air Act.

The brunt of this oil geyser and coming ecological destruction will be felt by the poor and working people of Louisiana. The fishing communities will continue to be devastated both economically and culturally. The cleanup workers have already been sent to hospitals with breathing problems from "chemical irritation." Workers have said that BP is not providing them with necessary safety materials. NPR has reported the health problems happening here and now mirror the ones that occurred during cleanup of the Exxon Valdez spill.

Alaska Community Action on Toxics put out a report in 2004, the fifteenth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill, stating

What we didn't know about oil then is killing us now: hundreds, and potentially thousands, of workers from the 1989 cleanup are suffering from debilitating respiratory difficulties, central nervous system problems (e.g., memory loss, brain fog, headaches), and heightened sensitivity

to chemicals. Many have had to alter their lives and work to accommodate their illnesses. The oil companies have used their massive profits not to offer solutions to these catastrophes or safety to their workers, but instead to hire lawyers and effect legislation that can shield them from responsibility. Over 20 years later they have still not solved these health issues.

The deafening silence on the part of the media, the government, BP and the country at large in regard to the 11 murders is frightening. Washed away by the overwhelming ecological destruction, madcap plans to stop the well, and vague promises to hold BP accountable made by the federal government, these deaths have largely been left out of discourse. While there is much to talk about right now, and many problems to be solved, we must remember the cry of the Industrial Workers of The World: "An injury to one is an injury to all." If these eleven workers can be killed without a response, then none of us are safe at work. This disaster comes on the heels of 25 coal miners murdered by the negligence of Massey Coal. The message sent to working people is clear: it's okay for corporations to kill you.

This is not the work of one particularly evil corporation, this is capitalism as usual. Profits are the only driving force of corporations. The history of industrial capitalism is one of countless so-called accidents. Only when the working class has more power in their own hands will they be safer. Labor reforms have occurred not because of thoughtful or benevolent politicians but because of the threat of an organized and angry working class.

The workers on Deepwater Horizon should not be viewed as passive victims. According to an article by AP reporters Michael Kunzelman, Mike Baker, and Jeff Donn, workers had clashed hours

before the explosion with a Scrooge-like management unwilling to use the proper materials to ensure safety. The workers resisted using materials they considered to be cutting corners. They stood up for themselves and the rest of us in the Gulf, but they lost the battle to a BP official who told them "This is how it's going to be."

The article paints a haunting picture of the moment of disaster, illustrating the need for decision-making to be in the hands of labor.

"As the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig burned around him, Chris Pleasant hesitated, waiting for approval from his superiors before activating the emergency disconnect system that was supposed to slam the oil well shut at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.

The delay may have cost critical seconds. When Pleasant and his co-workers at rig owner Transocean finally got the go-ahead to throw the emergency disconnect switch, they realized there was no hydraulic power to operate the machinery."

The lack of control over decision-making and the strict hierarchy that kept him from making a quick decision prevented this worker from protecting the rig, the gulf, the workers, and everything else threatened by this disaster. We can only guess how things would have gone differently on a worker-controlled oil rig. The world has never seen one, nor is it certain that a classless society would make the decision to serve affluence by taking the great personal and ecological risk of drilling 5,000 feet underneath the water. What is certain is that for our own safety, our own lives, and for the protection of the ecological systems on which we depend, we must take up the struggle for workers' power fought aboard the rig in the hours leading up to the Deepwater Horizon massacre.





Maaaaaan... I been eyeballin at that green and yellor bp logo, sorter looking INTO it naw mean, resemblin like it does a cat's eye, flaming star, lord of the rings or sommat. But man when I stare closer, deeper in them nested rosettes I start ter see... it's... hey I think this sombitch just WINKED at me! And what's that peeking shyly from the ultra-violet center? Is that... profit? O this is a fulsome flower indeed, bruh: I see now that what I'm gaze inter is in reality a stylize-type, spikily crenellated poopin' hole. Now wait you say to me wait now wait what kinder anus you tryin' tell me that is? I ain't never seen no butthole color of green like that. Well pffff 'course you ain't, fool. It's green 'cause this motherfucker here shits MONEY! This flar craps cold cash into the waitin' wallets of its ownership, just diarrheein' out the dollars like a pipe steady pumping toxic crude. I mean long's this magic mudhole keep backdoor-birthing big bucks, you reckon anybody important gives a duck what else goes on? You think anyone gwine stand up, long's the chartreuse goose still shittin' out shekels for its shareholders? No I don't reckon so, me...

... **FEEDBACK? SUBMISSIONS? \$\$\$ DONATIONS?** ...

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