Ecological Denial on the Gulf Oil Disaster: U.S. Policies Continue Toward Collapse

Contributed by Jan Lundberg, oil industry analyst
28 May 2010

The impact of the Gulf oil disaster on the national psyche and the economy have barely begun. When Florida, a more substantial state than Louisiana, is hit by the unprecedented pollution assured to have lasting effects, the quickened erosion of confidence in government, industry and modern technology may accelerate the end of this current phase of U.S. society.
A transition or breakdown was already afoot. Thus, the shock of the Gulf oil disaster's impacts will further undermine the dominant consumer culture and life as we know it.

There are several unacknowledged problems with the oil gusher and the growing mess:

(1) The first priority has been to plug the hole and stop the hemorrhage. This is only logical and understandable, but it does not include the idea of retreating from the ongoing, inevitable devastation of usual petroleum industry activity. Who is framing the discussion, and why?

(2) The idea of cleaning up the current mess in the Gulf is questionable. Yes, it must be tried, but clean-up attempts give the impression that this is the answer and that clean up will be successful. The dispersal of the oil, much of it not even visible yet on the surface, presents an insurmountable challenge to contain. Again, the ongoing devastation of petroleum activity is exempt from consideration except by marginalized, independent thinkers and activists.

(3) Finally, the ecological consequences of the Gulf oil disaster are global. Louisiana's suffering is the tip of the iceberg that industrial society has smashed into. The oil and chemicals are on their way to Florida, Cuba and the Bahamas, an inevitably Texas and Mexico -- even before hurricanes hit and drive much of the oil onto many a shore. Even if all the spilled oil could be gathered by men in boats, it would somewhere be burned in engines in order to warm the globe in the name of the economy. The ocean is a sad place for oil pollution, but so is the atmosphere.

The economy must be declared subservient to the ecosystem. Any good citizen must become a foe of the present economy and a friend or worshipper of nature, before it is too late. Recently one Christian church leader publicly prayed that the oil would be blown south. Not only is this a wish for devastation of Mexico and other countries, this wish reveals total ecological ignorance.

The Natural Resources Defense Council's (NRDC) president Frances Beinecke appeared on the PBS TV Newshour on May 27 along with the American Petroleum Institute's (API) chief economist John Felmy. They had a similar message regarding future energy alternatives, except that Felmy warned that oil is still to be heavily relied upon, and any pause in offshore oil drilling has economic impacts.

Rather than take a stand for slashing energy use, Beinecke came out for a clean energy transformation. She mentioned "oil addiction," but implied that solar panels, etc. are the answer. Her ignorance of energy technologies' ability to replace petroleum, based on assumptions about continued energy and agricultural-chemicals' & fuels' availability for the present overpopulation, is only typical. Thus, her ecological ignorance is almost as dangerous as the American Petroleum Institute's and President Obama's. Beinecke’s praise for the just-announced brief moratorium on offshore oil drilling buys into calming the public while setting the stage for a resumption of full-on oil addiction and energy gluttony. NRDC wants something better, but lacks the vision to offer it.

It was API, not NRDC, that brought up the fact that there are 250 million motor vehicles on U.S. roads. The opportunity for a real environmentalist to say we need to cut back on the number of vehicles by adopting a car-free lifestyle was missed, deliberately. The auto is as sacred to the major environmental groups as it is to API and its friend the government.

The U.S. is missing an historic chance to question oil dependence and to actually do something about it -- instead of scrambling to react to the moment and gazing off into the haze to some Holy Grail of clean energy for perpetual consumption. Worse, the business-as-usual approach to the present Gulf oil disaster continues the national pretense of ecological stability. The ongoing assault against nature cannot be denied, except by those holding their ears and eyes closed while they continue to shell out dollars to buy cars, gasoline and plastic. They wish to continue uninterrupted their lives of shopping, paying their bills, and imagining they have the best leadership in Washington and state capitals that money can buy.

Petrocollapse that stems from the effects of global peak oil extraction has been raised a notch and clarified by the Gulf disaster. But make no mistake: the uncounted millions of gallons of rampaging oil and chemicals are just par for the course, slated to enter the ecosystem anyway. The idea that things were under control before the BP blowout, or that soon things might again be under control, is as delusional as the continuation of the oil wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: keep on fighting, killing, and wasting while we hope for some positive result. But in reality, we have no business over there -- even if we could afford the trillions of dollars spent. Similarly, we have no business extracting and refining oil or other fossil fuels -- unless our business is death and the unraveling of nature. Count me out. How about you?

President Obama's May 27 news conference was almost a convincing performance, suggesting with his deep, clear voice that he is doing his best to deal with a crisis. However, he doesn't understand the true nature of the crisis. The crisis was raging before the blowout, when our commander-in-chief and "nut case at the wheel" called for more offshore oil drilling. Does he now warn of worse-case scenarios, now that they're possible? No, he's a pacifier -- except with his war machine.

When the President brings his little daughter Malia into the news conference, to depict himself as a regular guy shaving and assuring a child (emblematic of the American people) that he is on top of the situation, he is surely desperate. Obama tries to exude confidence over handling the BP oil disaster, but is he really so unshakable when the evidence is clear that BP's handling of the event and clean-up have been less than competent? And when the government has been predictably slow and inefficient? On-the-ground reports tell more than official assurances. Aside from protecting one's job performance as a politician or corporado, there is a public relations campaign to tranquilize the American people and fool the world. Except, people are not as simple minded and gullible as BP and Obama hope. The question is whether people will get beyond blaming and hand-wringing to the point of taking wise action.

Until then, Drill Baby Drill is mostly alive and well. This is excused among pseudo progressives such as the Democratic Party leadership, and people buy it because the Republicans are a tad worse and might invade Iran. To believe in such non-solutions is to hope that the march of the sheople to the slaughter house can be slowed down a bit -- with a clean energy miracle coming along some day or decade to save us from having to make lifestyle change and experience the collapse of the American Empire.

No matter what Obama does or does not do, no matter how much he or the public "get it" or don't get it, the Gulf oil disaster is an historic, watershed event far greater than Exxon Valdez. Collapse of the system has gotten a big boost.

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Jan Lundberg is a former oil industry analyst who, among other functions, formally studied offshore oil drilling's potential for California on behalf of the oil industry -- resulting in Congress's immediate lifting of the moratorium there in the mid

1980s. He ran Lundberg Survey which published the Lundberg Letter, then known widely as “the bible of the oil industry.”

Further reading:

Oil Gusher in Gulf: Energy Gluttony, not Oil Addiction, is Greater Challenge

No Offshore Oil Drilling: Committee Against Oil Exploration (CAOE)

Message to Culture Change from a Gulf Coast businesswoman:

Greetings,

My name is Renee D. Mills, I own Destin Angler Charters, I'm a broker for deep sea fisherman out of Destin, FL. I have included a link to my web site below for further verification & information.

BP has placed many charter fishing boats that I use for my customers under contract to assist in oil clean up. BP has had these boats under paid contract for nearly 1 month now, paying $1,500.00 - $3,000.00 per day, per boat, depending on the length of the boat. Strangely enough not one of these boats has left the dock to assist in oil clean up or anything that has to do with BP or oil clean up and since BP has them on stand-by they are not permitted to run charter trips for my customers.

This is an economic & environmental disaster of astronomical proportions and they are not using these boats for anything, yet they are paying them big bucks to just sit on the docks. I cannot figure out why. Can you?

Is this an angle to hold off legal claims for the time being? I don't know.

This information needs to be public & needs to be investigated.

Please feel free to call me, I have also included my personal cell number.

Please, Please, help us.

Sincerely,

Renee D. Mills

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(850) 218-8028 Cell

(850) 864-2227 Fax

Web Site:
www.DestinAngler.com