

Editorial

Bankrupt BP!

You don't have to be an environmentalist to be sickened by what is happening to that common patrimony of mankind, called the ocean, as a result of the criminal negligence of the British Petroleum Company (BP). As a result of short-sighted behavior, aimed at profiting themselves, no matter what the consequences, this British company is now threatening not only the marine life of the Gulf of Mexico, and the livelihood of those who live from the fruits of that Gulf, but also the health of wide swaths of the Atlantic Ocean, potentially all the way to Western Europe.

Lyndon LaRouche blasted BP in a statement issued May 17, charging the company with "unconscionable reckless behavior in the case of the recent Gulf of Mexico oil rig disaster. They should be banned from any further dealings in the Gulf of Mexico," LaRouche said.

On May 18, as news surfaced that the oil slick was beginning to reach the area of the Florida Keys, he escalated: "We should expropriate BP," said LaRouche. The company and its owners should pay the ultimate price for the damage which they have inflicted by their unconscionable practices.

The criminality of BP reflects the company's past as an arm of the British Empire, specifically its beginnings as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1909. As an imperial agent, the oil company was the instrument of brutal oppression in typical British imperial fashion, including its utter lack of concern for the "locals." The lives of the "wogs" were not worth too much expense, in their view.

BP has been convicted of serious environmental crimes three times in the United States. The most devastating was the 2005 explosion at a Houston BP refinery, which resulted in the deaths

of 15 workers, and the injury of many more. The cause of the accident was widely attributed to cuts in maintenance and safety expenditures, which had been ordered from London headquarters.

In the case of the Gulf disaster, which is called Deepwater Horizon, there is evidence of the same kind of criminal negligence. Having chosen to dig an oil well deep into the ocean floor, BP knew it was pushing the limits of technology, and working in an inherently dangerous situation. Yet, the standard means of providing protection against an explosion of the well, the so-called blowout protector, did not function when the accident occurred. It turns out, according to a survivor, who was interviewed on "60 Minutes," that the protector was known to have been damaged a few weeks before—but the damage was ignored.

Even worse, according to this same survivor, a BP representative had intervened during the hours before the attempt to close the well—which led to the explosion—to insist that a critical safety measure not be employed. It was a question of time—and money—for BP.

The cost of BP's decisions has already been quite high—for the country, BP's employees, and for the Gulf. Eleven men died in the explosion, fishing has been curtailed and heavily damaged in the Gulf, and the oil is spreading. It is estimated that 5,000 barrels a day have spewed from the well, with only a recent minor improvement, which allegedly reduces that flow to 3,000.

Instead of this form of "extreme drilling," we should be using safe, and potentially abundant nuclear power. Now, having undertaken such a venture, BP holds *full* responsibility. We should make them pay in full. It will bankrupt them, and so be it.