

Language matters, especially at times of crisis. The explosion on BP's Deepwater Horizon rig that released hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico has been called a "disaster" by many. It isn't a disaster. It is a crime. Early estimates are that the spill will cost more than \$14 billion to clean, will devastate local fisheries for generations and will result in untold damage to all parts of the ecology in the Gulf region. Corporations are the criminals here - British Petroleum (BP) and, a company that is no stranger to corporate crime, Halliburton. This massive spill highlights both the need for an immediate transition to clean energy sources and the need to apply democratic controls to inherently criminal multinational corporations.

The clean up of the area must begin immediately, it must be conducted with the consultation and best interest of local fishermen and environmentalists and it must be entirely paid for by BP. In addition, BP should be made to pay into a public fund that would be used for the continued clean up and preservation of the local ecology. Any failure to meet these demands should result in the seizure of the US holdings of BP and its banning from conducting business in this country. Anything less than this should be considered as a betrayal to the best interests of residents of region and the broader international community.

This massive oil spill demonstrates the urgent need to transition to clean renewable energy forms. Such a transition will not likely take place inside of a capitalist system where short-term profiteering dominates the allocation of capital funds. BP has fought the federal government on safety procedures that might have minimized the impact of the most recent spill for more than a decade. CEOs do not get bonuses based upon ensuring future generation's access to resources, clean air, or a hospitable climate. The purpose of corporations is not to oversee the welfare of the people of the world, but to make

money. Environmental damage is not factored into the corporate calculations of costs and profits. Instead, environmental damage is viewed as the collateral damage of the free market in operation.

Not surprisingly, BP had a partner in this crime - Halliburton. Fresh off their stint bilking US taxpayers during the war in Iraq, the company was contracted by BP to cement the drill, oil well and pipe into the ocean floor. The Los Angeles Times reports that this task was completed a mere 20 hours before the well exploded. Not surprisingly, Halliburton has also been accused of being responsible for another oil spill in the Timor Sea last August after completing a similar cementing job. Here we see the logic of capitalism in full display. BP wants to take the cheapest bid for the job and Halliburton wants to pocket the most money with the least costs. All with no mind paid to the environment, local fishermen, or the future of the planet.

Meanwhile, politicians from the Democratic and Republican parties serve as willing accomplices to the corporations. In 2008, the McCain/Palin ticket was run on the suicidal slogan of "Drill Baby Drill!" The campaign of now President Barack Obama softly dismissed these claims, but once in office, designed a plan to allow oil exploration off the coastline of North America. The current spill exposes the bankruptcy of Obama's drilling plan and the futility of his cap-and-trade market based proposals to address carbon emissions. Corporations will continue to pollute the environment as long as they have political partners who will allow them to evade the desires of the vast majority of people in this country for clean energy and a safe environment.

The Socialist Party USA offers a clear eco-socialist alternative to the proposals of the two parties. By establishing a system of public ownership and democratic control over our

natural resources, we will ensure that corporations are prevented from exploiting and spoiling our environment. By creating strong enforceable laws regarding endangered species that focus on habitat-centered protection, we propose to begin repairing the damage done by capitalist production. Finally, we intend to bring the United States back into line with the world by signing on to international environmental treaties and participating and supporting grassroots environmental justice efforts. In short, our goal is to create a cleaner, more democratic future where environmental preservation, instead of profit motive, becomes a primary part of economic decision-making.

Capitalist profit-motive will be the death of our planet. Democratic socialism, operating on an international basis, can save our fragile ecosystem and our health by defending the rights of future generations to clean water, clean air and a democratically run society.

Passed by the National Action Committee of the Socialist Party USA: May 2009



## Socialist Party USA Platform Environment & Energy Highlights

- We call for public ownership and democratic control of all our natural resources in order to conserve resources, preserve our wilderness areas, and restore environmental quality.
- The U.S. must immediately return to participation in international agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol, limiting carbon emissions, and accept a major role in worldwide efforts to control global warming.
- We call for placing full financial responsibility on private companies for prevention and clean up of their own toxic wastes and for full compensation of workers and residents adversely affected by environmental hazards.
- We oppose policies that target minority communities for placement of local landfills, toxic waste disposal sites, or incinerators.
- We call for strong, enforceable endangered species protection that focuses on habitat-centered protection for plants and animals.
- We call for shutting down waste incinerators and phasing out landfills and especially oppose targeting minority communities for hazardous waste disposal sites.
- We oppose open-pit mining operations and support the reclamation of land used by mining operations at the company's expense.
- We support large-scale environmental restoration efforts.
- We call for the development of alternative energy sources including solar, geothermal, wind, hydropower, and biomass to end dependence on fossil fuels.

**More info:** [www.socialistparty-usa.org](http://www.socialistparty-usa.org). The full platform can be read on –line at:  
[www.socialistparty-usa.org/platform/](http://www.socialistparty-usa.org/platform/)



Socialist Party USA  
339 Lafayette St. Rm. 303  
New York, NY 10012  
(212) 982-4586  
[www.socialistparty-usa.org](http://www.socialistparty-usa.org)

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**Local Contact:**

# BP Oil Spill a Crime Not a Disaster



339 Lafayette St. #303 New York, NY 10012  
[www.socialistparty-usa.org](http://www.socialistparty-usa.org)