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The



LOWDOWN

EDITED BY JIM HIGHTOWER AND PHILLIP FRAZER

“When injustice becomes law, rebellion becomes duty.”

—DAYNE PRATZKY, an Australian resident whose life was turned upside down by corporate gas frackers, turning him into an inspirational anti-fracking leader.

What the frack!?!

Oil and gas marauders are destroying our land, water, and communities all over America

WHETHER YOU'RE RELIGIOUS OR NOT, seeing flames coming out of your kitchen faucet would be enough to make you fall to your knees, fearing that a cosmic force of incomprehensible evil is loose on our land.

In more and more areas across America, families are discovering to their astonishment that their “water” has turned combustible. Rather than metaphysical, however, the force behind this fiery phenomenon is all too human, and we can even put a name on it: Dick Cheney. His is, after all, the picture-perfect face of snarling political evil, and while you had probably hoped that we'd seen the last of him when he left office three years ago, his presence still looms—including in the form of flaming faucets.

Those flames come straight from behind-the-scenes maneuvers that Cheney began right at the very start of his vice presidency to achieve a personal legislative goal, which he finally did by inserting this arcane bit of language into the 2005 Bush-Cheney energy policy bill: “Paragraph (1) of section 1421(d) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300h (d)) is amended... [to exclude] the underground injection of fluids or propping agents (other than diesel fuels) pursuant to hydraulic fracturing operations related to oil, gas, or geothermal production activities.” With that, Dick Cheney fracked us.

Hydraulic fracturing—commonly known in the natural gas drilling industry as “fracking”—is as coarse as it sounds. It's a mining technique for forcing gas (or oil) out of underground rock formations, in particular gas contained within layers of shale rock that generally lie from 5,000 to 20,000 feet beneath Earth's surface. Here's how it's done: **(1)** a borehole is drilled down to the shale; **(2)** a pipe is then cemented into the hole to allow millions of gallons of fracking fluid (water and sand slurry laced with nearly 600 chemicals;

of those, 71 can cause 10 or more ailments) to be shot under extremely-high pressure straight down the pipe into the shale rock to crack it apart and prop it open; **(3)** with the shale fractured, the gas that was trapped in it will naturally seek the easiest path to the surface. Drillers intend for that path to be up the drill hole into their storage tanks, but the gas can have a mind of its own, often escaping like a fugitive into local aquifers or into the air. Stuff happens.

Stuff like gas ending up in the area's drinking water—leading to such unpleasant surprises as faucets of flame. This tends to upset people, prompting them to action. Thus, to save gas drillers from pesky regulators and bothersome legal liabilities under our Safe Drinking Water Act, the ever-helpful Cheney simply exempted them from the law. Neat.

[FLASHBACK: Aside from his general snarliness and autocratic wickedness, one reason for the Veep's hand-holding attentiveness to the industry is that he has been a central player in it. Prior to becoming

George W's vice, he was CEO of Halliburton—a conglomerate that pioneered fracking and is now the industry's number one fracker, hauling in \$1.5 billion a year for such destructive drilling work. Halliburton honchos were on Cheney's secret industry task force that he convened in only his second week in office to rewrite the national energy policy. Even while serving as VP, Dick continued drawing annual paychecks from the giant, totaling more than a million dollars from 2001 through 2005! So, not for nothing is his little amendment to our water safety law dubbed “**The Halliburton Loophole.**”]

Maybe you think this doesn't affect you, because you don't

see any fracking where you live, but there's a good chance that you soon will, because profiteering drillers have caught a gold rush fever over shale gas. Huge swaths of our landscape are above known deposits—from Los Angeles to New York State (*see map, p. 3*)—and more are being found as corporations go for the gold. President



A fracking Obamination

DESPITE LOSING THEIR TRUSTED Washington friend Dick Cheney, gas frackers are doing awfully well these days with their supposed “enemy” Barack Obama.

The industry appeared to lose a round to opponents in May when a much awaited ruling from Obama’s Interior Department came down. It required for the first time that gas drillers on public lands must reveal the chemical recipes they use for fracking each well. But hold the hallelujahs. The Obamacans had quietly “adjusted” their original February proposal—rather than having to disclose the chemical mix 30 days before drilling could start, the final rule says that frackers must reveal it *only after the dirty deed is done*.

A battalion of fracking lobbyists (Exxon/XTO, Anadarko, et al.) had rushed to the White House this spring with the usual anti-government whines about the cost of paperwork and the slowing of permits. But, come on—people’s water, air, health, livelihoods, and general well-being are at stake here! Permits ought to be damned hard to get, and preferably stopped outright. Obama’s team tried to shrug off their backpedaling by claiming that revealing the chemical mix before or after injecting it into our environment did not matter. Really? Try telling that to the people who’re getting sick, seeing their home values plummet, losing jobs and income, having their dreams dashed, and even feeling the ground under them tremble.

Obama and assorted governors have gone all-in to back this wealth of gas (and the tax revenues it might produce), with Obama gushing in a January speech that the US is “the Saudi Arabia of natural gas.”

Fracking operations (benignly called “plays” in industry parlance) are already underway in 34 states, not only in remote rural areas, but also in suburbs and cities. Drillers are now pushing technologies to cause larger fractures in the subterranean rock, intending to extract more than half of America’s natural gas from shale plays by the end of this decade.

Problems

Natural gas is being touted by the industry and its tail-wagging politicians as clean and cheap—the “magic bullet” for our energy problems. Before we swallow such hype, however, let’s just note that the process is named “fracturing” for a reason—it’s inherently destructive, dirty—and way more costly than the market price of the fuel admits.

WATER. Up to seven million gallons of water are needed to frack a single well. In areas of shortages and drought (increasing in scale and frequency all across our country), this volume alone is a problem, taking a precious resource away from public use so a few profit-seeking corporations can shatter underground rock. Also, getting water to the wells from distant sources requires trucking or pipelines, which create their own sets of environmental, public nuisance, and other costs. Then there’s wastewater. One well can recover more than a million gallons of the water shot down its pipe. It comes back up contaminated not only with heavy doses of chemicals that were added to the fracking fluid, but also with cancer-causing chemicals and radioactive elements that occur naturally deep in the Earth, surfacing as a result of the fracking process.

Where does this radioactive mess go? Some of it leaks from the well and gets into drinking water supplies. Some is spilled on-site. Some is actually sprayed on roads as a de-icer—and at least half is merrily trucked to municipal sewage plants that are ill-equipped to purify it, meaning the nasties are discharged into our rivers and lakes.

CHEMICALS. The industry makes light of the chemical cocktail in frack-

ing fluid, saying that the toxic stuff is a mere one-half of one percent of the mix, with the rest consisting of water and sand. Sounds benign—except that the 0.5 percent figure equals 20 tons of chemicals per million gallons of fracking fluid (again, up to seven million gallons of fracking fluid per well).

Okay, scoff the frackers, but those “scary” chemicals are substances like guar gum, an emulsifier used in ice cream—so worry not. Yeah, ice cream from hell! To keep microbes earthborne from devouring the guar gum, it has to be dosed with poisonous biocides. Then, to thin the emulsifier later in the process, it is treated with a form of extremely toxic kerosene (a substance that families in fracking areas say they smell and taste in their air and water—and a possible source of those pyrotechnic faucets).

Among the cancer-causing and environmental toxins mixed into fracking fluid are acrylamide, benzene, naphthalene, ethylbenzene, toluene, and xylene. In addition, the deep-earth contaminants brought to the surface in wastewater include arsenic, lead, chromium, barium, and strontium (plus radium-226 and other radioactive materials). A 2011 scientific analysis of 632 chemicals used in natural gas operations found that 25 percent can cause cancer; 37 percent can disrupt the endocrine system; more than 40 percent can affect the brain (as well as nervous, immune, and cardiovascular systems); and more than 75 percent can impair the eyes, intestines, and respiratory system.

The total horror of this river of toxics is not known, because **(1)** our state and federal “regulators” consider the concoction used in any particular frack job to be secret corporate property, and **(2)** many of the chemicals used have not even been tested for their health and environmental risks, and the corporations themselves don’t bother tracking all of the proprietary components they use. Also, as the *New York Times* reported last year, the EPA and some state regulators have ruled that [prepare to gasp] since many sewage plants are unable to cope with the radioactive elements in fracking wastewater (some of it containing more than 1,000 times levels considered safe), the plants should simply not test the wastewater for radioactivity. Voilà, problem solved!

DoSomething! *Check out these great groups*

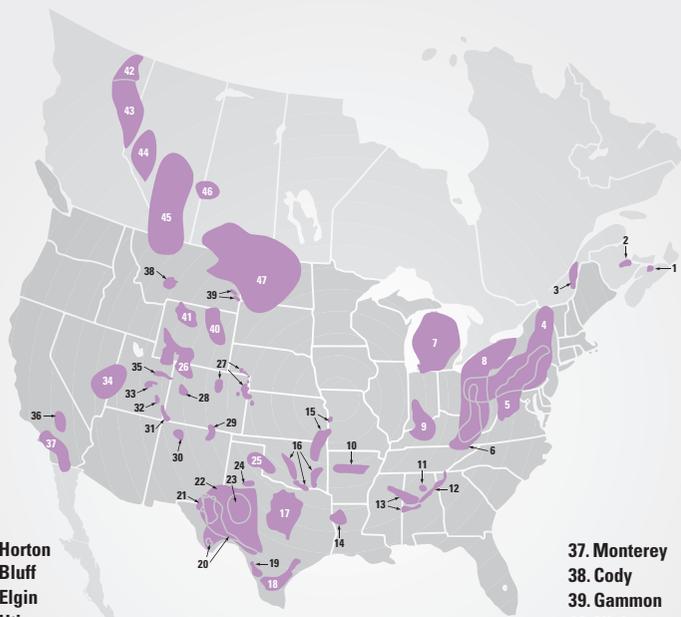
One useful thing to do is to watch—then spread the word about—Josh Fox’s engrossing, award-winning documentary “**Gasland**” (widely available on DVD and at Fox’s website, www.gaslandthemovie.com). Factual, moving, and humorous, this 2010 film tells real-life stories of families across America under attack by the frackers. It’s so compelling and motivating that Energy In Depth, the industry’s PR front, has mounted an all-out campaign to undermine it. Fox, however, turned the tables on the corporate debunkers by issuing a detailed, point-by-

point refutation of their distortions and outright lies. Fox’s 39-page paper is available on the website.

Among the public interest groups producing excellent information about fracking and offering tips for grassroots action to combat it are: **Food & Water Watch** (www.foodandwaterwatch.org), **Center for Media and Democracy** (www.prwatch.org), **ProPublica** (www.propublica.org/series/fracking), **Oil Watchdog** (www.oilwatchdog.org), and **350.org** (www.350.org).

Shale "plays" in North America

In the oil and gas industry, sites being explored and/or fracked are known as "plays"



- | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Horton Bluff | 14. Haynesville-Bossier | 21. Bone Springs | 28. Piceance Basin | 37. Monterey |
| 2. Elgin | 15. Exello-Mulky | 22. Permian Basin | 29. Pierre | 38. Cody |
| 3. Utica | 16. Woodford | 23. Wolfberry | 30. Lewis | 39. Gammon |
| 4. Utica | 17. Barnett | 24. Bend | 31. Cane Creek | 40. Niobrara-Mowry |
| 5. Marcellus | 18. Eagle Ford | 25. Granite Wash | 32. Paradox | 41. Mowry |
| 6. Huron | 19. Pearsall | 26. Hilliard-Baxter | 33. Mancos | 42. Horn River |
| 7. Antrim | 20. Barnett-Woodford | 27. Niobrara | 34. Chainman | 43. Montney |
| 8. Devonian | | | 35. Green River | 44. Cardium |
| 9. New Albany | | | 36. McClure | 45. Exshaw |
| 10. Fayetteville | | | | 46. Viking |
| 11. Chattanooga | | | | 47. Bakken |
| 12. Conasauga | | | | |
| 13. Floyd-Neal | | | | |
- source: PacWest Consulting Partners

Then there are blowouts and explosions, as well as euphemistically phrased "micro-seismic events" (otherwise known as earthquakes). Messing so massively with geological formations literally turns out to be earthshaking, including in such normally stable places as Youngstown, Ohio, Oklahoma (50 events), and Arkansas.

ECONOMICS. "Picky-picky," barks the industry. Such troubles are merely the price of economic prosperity. But prosperity for whom? When entering a region, fracking flimflammers specialize in Enron-style lies, grossly overstating the number of jobs that will be created and just as grossly understating the economic losses.

To start with, not many jobs come with fracking. Those that do are short-lived (lasts about a year), and the high-paying jobs go to transient, out-of-state workers with specialized skills, not to locals. On the other side of the ledger, such reliable industries as farming and tourism suffer severe bodyblows—polluted air, water, and soil are not a plus for growing and marketing crops or livestock, and the whang and blight of gas wells are not attractive lures for travelers seeking scenic places for recreation and relaxation.

Also, there's a dirty little secret hiding behind all the fast talk about America's boom in natural gas: It's a bust waiting to happen. Extractable deposits may be less than ballyhooed, the costs are increasingly intolerable, and rising public opposition can make politicians and regulators skittish about rolling over for frackers. In addition, America is hardly the only player—corporations are all over Argentina, Australia, Poland, South Africa—and, of course, China—pushing big plays. China anticipates overtaking the US in shale gas production as soon as 2015. Amazingly, our government is helping them, having signed a US-China Shale Gas Initiative in 2009 to help foster China's technical expertise in fracking.

Who's who?

There are some 14,000 natural gas companies, but more than half of US production is controlled by the 40 biggest corporations, and a third of it is in the hands of the top 10. More than 90 percent of the gas wells in our country are fracked.

Biggest of all is Exxon Mobil, the \$486 billion-a-year colossus that is America's most profitable corporation. In 2010, Exxon swallowed XTO Energy (then our nation's second-largest gas producer) to become Number One, with 50 percent more drilling production than its nearest competitor. Other brand-name biggies fracking America are BP, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips.

In various regions, however, local folks find themselves confronting so-called "independents," with names most of us never heard of. Industry PR materials portray these as mom-and-pop drillers—but while they're not Exxon-sized, they're huge corporations, including Anadarko (\$14 billion), Chesapeake Energy (\$11.6 billion), EnCana (\$8.5 billion), Southwestern Energy (\$2.9 billion), and Williams (\$7.9 billion). Add to this trillion dollar-amalgamation of corporate power the massive

HEALTH. In heavily fracked locations—from Pennsylvania to Wyoming—repeated "no-drink" warnings have been issued by the EPA and other agencies because of such sickening by-products as methane and fracking fluid migrating into water wells. Also, methane releases from drilling not only add immensely to the global increase in climate change, but they pollute the air with asthma-causing smog. For example, a six-county region of Texas with heavy fracking has a startling 25 percent asthma rate for young children. "It's ruining us," says a mother who has two children severely affected by chemicals from a gas well near their home. "I'm not an activist, an alarmist, a Democrat, environmentalist, or anything like that," she told the *Times*. "I'm just a person who isn't able to manage the health of my family because of all this drilling."

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EDITORS: Jim Hightower, Phillip Frazer
 RESEARCH: Laura Ehrlich COPY WIZ: Cody Garrett
 DESIGN: Sahu Barron ILLUSTRATOR: Brian Duffy
 INTERWEB EMISSARY: Deanna Zandt
 PUBLISHER: Phillip Frazer

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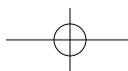
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SHRINKING THE NEWS, EVEN MORE

WHAT'S THE NUMBER ONE

source of news for most Americans? The internet, you say? Nope. The *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*? Uh-uh. Fox TV, the shameless spewer of right-wing hokum? Not even close.

The reality is even scarier than Fox—America's top news source is: Your local television stations. Yes, the daily purveyors of car wrecks and features on the season's biggest zucchini are the media outlets keeping the masses informed on the issues of the day. Should we laugh, sob, or just go bowling?

In fairness, a few local stations do a cracker-jack job, but the vast majority are owned by corporate chains that constantly cut reporters and editors and shy away from aggressive reporting, especially any reporting on major advertisers.

Now, though, another corporate contagion is spreading throughout TV-land, further shriveling the ability (or even the desire) of local stations to fulfill their news reporting duty to the public. Rather than competing to dig up the best stories, two or more stations in a city have been quietly signing "shared services agreements," meaning they share one news director, video reports, local interviews, graphics, office space, and even the scripts read by their news anchors. Except for different network logos on the screen, the broadcasts are basically the same, often word for word.

At least 83 TV markets, from Vermont to Hawaii, now have stations engaged in this anti-competitive collusion, abrogating their responsibility to use our airwaves for the public good. For more information and action, go to the watchdog group FreePress at www.freepress.net.

"Fracking" by any other name...

YOU'LL BE PLEASED TO KNOW that academics at such public-spirited institutions as Louisiana State University are dealing with the problem of fracking. The problem with the word, that is.

After conducting a public opinion survey, LSU researchers recently advised the industry to coin another term, because the harsh consonants in "fracking"—plus the term's striking similarity to a certain four-letter vulgar expletive—cause "public aversion" to the mining method. "This research shows that the unpleasant sound of the word is at least partially responsible for [Louisiana] residents thinking 'fracking' is unsafe," concluded the scholars.

In their survey, researchers got a more positive response when they replaced "fracking" with this phrase: "A way to extract natural gas that involves using a high-pressure injection of water, sand, and chemicals to remove the natural gas from rocks deep in the Earth's surface." That has a nice ring to it, doesn't it? The acronym would be: "AWTENGTIUAHPIOWSACTRTNGFRDITES."

We *Lowdowners* can beat that, can't we? Let's come up with some new terms to describe this hydraulic fracturing nastiness! The top three phraseologists will get free one-year extensions of their *Lowdown* subscriptions or one-year gift subscriptions for anyone they choose. Send your fracking phrases to: editors@hightowerlowdown.org

outfits that do the fracking and that profit from providing other services to the top 10, such as Halliburton (\$24.8 billion), and the reliable polluting profiteer Koch Industries (\$110 billion).

These same brutes are energetically fracturing America's governmental landscape, using high-pressure bursts of toxic corporate dollars to bust up the system so public mining policy flows their way. Common Cause reported last December that the fracking industry had invested \$20.5 million in campaign donations to current members of Congress and spent almost three-quarters of a billion dollars on national lobbying during the past decade.

They have poured many millions more into front groups and PR campaigns, including creating their own fracking front dubbed "Energy In Depth." Pretending to be a spontaneous outpouring of grassroots folks concerned about overzealous regulators trying to shackle poor, beleaguered energy producers, EID was formed in 2009 by the two biggest lobbying consortiums of oil and gas giants and funded by such "folks" as Anadarko, BP, Chevron, EnCana, Halliburton, Shell, and XTO (Exxon).

EID and other flacks for the fracking industry specialize in ruthless attacks on aggrieved homeowners, public interest advocates, critical journalists, and anyone else who raises a peep of protest. At a November

2011 conference of gas-driller PR agents, an Anadarko executive advised them to "Download the [military's] Counterinsurgency Manual, because we're dealing with an insurgency." A spokesman for Range Resources, a big Pennsylvania fracker, told the same conferees that his corporation employs former military psy-ops specialists, because their experiences combatting Middle East terrorist networks help the company overcome angry citizens in America's fracking fields.

It's everyone's fight

The fracking of America is a health, environmental, economic, and natural-resource issue rolled into one—but it's really much bigger than all of these. It poses the fundamental issue facing our society today: WHO RULES? Moneyed corporations... or the people? Are we to be a democracy of, by, and for the many, or a plutocracy of a bullying, profiteering few?

At present—unbeknownst to the great majority of Americans who've been kept in the dark about this assault on our communities and democracy—the moneyed corporations (and their purchased politicians) are ruling. Both the injury and insult of fracking diminishes who we are and what our country represents. That's why this is everyone's fight, whether or not your water faucet has yet caught on fire.

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OIL AND GAS MARAUDERS ARE DESTROYING OUR LAND, WATER, AND COMMUNITIES ALL OVER AMERICA

Shrinking the news, even more.....4

