



COCK & BULL

OILED UP

The Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico reminds us all of the increasing cost of energy.

The oil spill, eh? Who should we blame?

There are plenty of villains to choose from, but BP looks like a good candidate.

Don't you mean "British Petroleum"?

Ha. Even President Obama insisted on emphasising the Britishness of the disaster, which hardly chimes with his hug-the-world rhetoric, but there's really no escaping BP's culpability.

Try harder. Who else can we blame?

Pretty much everyone but the Amish. D'you think that iPad fuels itself?

Are you sure it isn't China's fault?

Well, Korea's Hyundai built the Deepwater Horizon in 2000. They then delivered it to US-owned Transocean in 2001, which, through a Swiss subsidiary, operated the rig under a Marshall Islands flag of convenience in the Gulf of Mexico.

Eh? Where does BP come in?

BP leased the rig from Transocean, which in effect meant that it took the oil Deepwater Horizon produced and sold it to motorists through its forecourts.

So who was actually on the rig? BP or Transocean?

On the day of the accident, management from both companies were on board to celebrate seven years without a major accident.

Seriously?

Yup. In total, there were seven BP staff on board, 79 from Transocean and 40 folk from various other companies, including Halliburton.

Did they ever actually inspect the rig?

Oh, sure. They conducted monthly inspections on the rig in the run-up to the accident.

I see.

They, however, didn't see anything. They didn't notice, for example, that rig workers had disabled all of the alarms so their sleep wouldn't be disturbed by them going off.

Ouch. Did any of the workers sleep through the rig exploding?

Unlikely. People reported seeing the fireball 35 miles away.

Will we ever learn?

Yes. The North Sea has a world-leading safety record, but it took the Piper Alpha disaster to get there. Let's hope this accident helps the US offshore industry to buck up its ideas.

Hang on. I thought we Brits were the reckless ones?

Not in our own waters. Oil companies are as lax as they are allowed to be, obviously, and the US attitude has been fairly industry-friendly, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico.

No, no, no. The Gulf of Mexico was an aquatic paradise before all this.

Sadly not. The Mississippi River sucks pollution from America's heartlands and

spews it straight into the Gulf, creating a zone of lifeless water the size of Wales. And that's before we even start talking about 50 years of intensive drilling and commercial shipping.

I guess that explains why I've never been on a Louisiana beach holiday...

Exactly. This ain't the Alaskan coast.

So, will BP's new boss turn things around?

We'll see. Interestingly, BP is sending Tony Hayward to Russia and bringing in Bob Dudley, who himself had to flee Moscow and go into hiding after upsetting a gaggle of oligarchs there.

He sounds like just the man for the job.

Don't knock it. Fox News is like a puppy dog once you've had the Russian mob after you.

Oils well that ends well...

