

# **BROADWATER, FRAUDWATER**

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OUR TOWN by Julie Penny  
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This coming February Broadwater Energy, a joint venture of Shell U.S. Gas and Power and Trans-Canada Corporation, will file its application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to build a floating “liquefied natural gas” (LNG) terminal in L.I. Sound off Rocky Point. It’s a giant salvo in industrializing Long Island Sound, an important and fragile natural resource that contributes over five billion dollars to Long Island’s economy. No matter that officials in New York and Connecticut have turned out en masse to oppose it. This past summer people jammed a High School auditorium to the rafters in Shoreham to speak at a hearing conjoined by the US Coast Guard and FERC. An army of politicians, environmentalists, and citizens lambasted the proposal. Two people supported it—one was from the Bronx.

This past spring, East Hampton Democracy for America sponsored a presentation on Broadwater featuring Jon Schneider, an Aide to Congressman Tim Bishop, and Maureen Dolan of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. It was a lively “Q & A” talkfest. In an effort to make a silk purse from a sow’s ear, Broadwater Energy tried to induce our local populace into accepting its offshore LNG terminal by putting on the

beguiling face of one of its geologists: blonde, attractive, Froydis Cameron with her assuring, oh-so-British accent. Planted in the audience, she rose and identified herself, and employing corporate spin she tried to assuage our fears and assure us—as if we were ignorant children or brain dead—what a marvelous and safe project the Broadwater Floating Storage and Regasification Unit would be.

Puts one in mind of the hundreds of millions of dollars that “BP” and its ilk spends on TV ads showing earnest, studious, and athletic women scientists in beautiful natural surroundings (underwater or on mountains peaks) in their quest to find and deliver environmentally-friendly energy to us via technology. By these ads you’d never know that, in actuality, the energy industry is a giant polluter, despoilers and destroyers of natural beauty, wildlife and ecosystems, and, with it, the fabric of people’s lives. You know—soften the image of uncaring, money-driven, exploitative male corporate knaves—by using the “woman” card. They dangle these pseudo earth-caring women before us, the implication being that their only motive is noble—to protect the planet, our oceans, our air, in delivering cheap and safe energy. The message is trust these women. They wouldn’t dissemble. So wholesome an image. So safe. So benign. So smooth the propaganda. So cynical. So manipulative.

Of course, ever since Ronald Reagan did away with the “Fairness Doctrine,” in 1987 the opposition doesn’t get free airtime to dispute such gauzy spin. (Think about the great public interest anti-smoking ads of

yesteryear that countered the tobacco industry.) Today, we can't counter drug ads, energy ads, the pundits, bloviators, and talking heads. We've been squelched, our hands tied. By axing the Fairness Doctrine, the "Great Communicator" removed from us the only potent tool the public had in its arsenal—the opportunity to tell the truth to power—by having free time on the airwaves. As for cheap. That's only in the short-term. The game plan is to make us dependent on LNG as they want LNG terminals dotting all our coasts rather than pursuing sustainable alternatives and a real comprehensive energy policy.

To our south, in Maryland, a LNG facility owned by "Dominion" is looking to expand. Dominion is trying to screw gas consumers by requesting FERC condone an agreement between Dominion and Norway's Statoil that would "waive" market transparency rules thereby inviting collusive, anti-competitive behavior—an arrangement that would ensure fantastic financial returns for the two companies while at the same time gouging consumers. Broadwater need only to borrow a page from the Dominion playbook if it ever wants to follow suit in obscene profit making off consumers a la Dominion.

So, here we were in a public forum with Bishop's aide, and CCE's environmentalist, and where Ms. Cameron sat like a Trojan Horse in the audience, waiting for the opportune moment to expound and inject the corporate POV. Yes, she did identify herself as an employee of

Broadwater when she rose to speak. And, yes, she was granted a goodly chunk of time to expound. But her spin didn't sway the audience.

This attempt at PR had followed close on the heels of county lawmakers having received—in the space of a few days—a flood of phone calls from their constituents urging them to hold “full and fair hearings” on the Broadwater proposal. But here's what's weird, this “grassroots” lobbying campaign was bogus. It extended from Houston-based Broadwater Energy itself when, in its aggressive use of marketing tactics, it had called unsuspecting local residents and patched them unawares directly to their legislators' offices after these same phone reps had been advocating to them the need for a public review of the Broadwater plan.

Broadwater's VP, John Hritcko, was unrepentant for this cheap trick.

Fact is, the energy industry has tremendous economic resources and many friends to promote its LNG agenda. Thanks to consumer advocates in California, Tim and Hayden Riley, you can see the menace LNG poses us, in their film, “The Risks and Danger of LNG” which was a nominee for best documentary in the Malibu Film Festival. Of their film (which is on DVD) they say: “We made a movie to provide information to all Americans about the real hazards of LNG by focusing on the actual risks and dangers of LNG which are routinely minimized by the energy industry, LNG proponents, LNG investors, political allies and their internet blogging friends.” Of course, it's a film the energy industry

doesn't want you to see. Because it demonstrates the imminent perils of LNG, its vulnerability to accidental disaster, terrorism, and how massive its destruction can be to our coastal communities. Their Website is:

<http://timrileylaw.com/LNG.htm>

All LNG proposals require a constant fleet of huge LNG tankers. Enormous and vulnerable these tankers will be rounding Montauk Point, carrying billions of gallons of natural gas, will arrive and dock dangerously close to populated areas posing an imminent risk of danger and widespread devastation—A Congressional Report warns that a LNG tanker fire caused by a leak would cause second-degree burns at 2 miles in less than one minute. In 1977, when LNG wanted to place LNG in Oxnard, CA, the city did an Environmental Impact Report that showed up to 70,000 casualties could occur from an offshore LNG tanker accident.

Hurricane Katrina proved two things. First, our government is a woeful failure and cannot be depended on in a disaster. Second, category 4 and 5 hurricanes are devastating in their damage and Katrina inflicted “oil spills rivaling the Exxon Valdez” in the Gulf of Mexico. Global Warming is only creating more and deadlier hurricanes. Long Island will be hit by a category 4 or 5; it's only a matter of time.

Regarding the LNG platform, when I read the Coast Guard's “Risk Assessment and Mitigation Report for Long Island Sound,” a few months

ago I found it mind-boggling that they did not take into account the risks posed by “Hurricanes” or “Terrorist Attacks.”

For the latter, one need only look at the ex-czar for terrorism, Richard Clarke’s “Counterterrorism Report – LNG Facilities in Urban Areas, A Security Risk Management Analysis For Attorney General Patrick Lynch Rhode Island.” In essence, it says, there are not resources enough to cope with the aftermath of any such catastrophe. This comprehensive report is a harrowing read.

In the Gulf, Katrina damaged or displaced an estimated 58 platforms and rigs, 30 of which are reported lost. Platforms broke from their moorings. Broadwater will be a disaster waiting to happen. And who will pay to indemnify people injured (killed), for a destroyed ecosystem, and economic damages sustained in such an event?—Not the multinational corporation, but the “taxpayers,” as liability caused by LNG tankers delivering LNG to American Coastal communities is severely limited by current US law.

Unless it’s grown some spine recently, FERC is merely a cat’s-paw for the Bush Administration. An Administration which is not only inept, but has an energy policy that’s profitable to Bush’s cronies and who, in its short-sightedness, has been wrecking America in its dependence on non-renewable oil and gas that comes from politically volatile areas in the world. It gives big subsidies to cash-rich energy companies instead of focusing on, and, investing meaningful amounts of money on renewable,

alternate technologies. Heck, the GOP has even consistently blocked amendments by the Democrats that would demand automakers increase the miles per gallons of its automobiles.

In October, ExxonMobil, Shell, BP together pulled in “quarterly” profits of over \$19 billion. Profits are up nearly 50% over last year, which also saw obscene profits. The government should be taking their windfall profits to use on alternative technologies (and for heating oil for the poor who can’t afford the steep price increases).

The fact is LNG has had a very limited and dubious history. In 1944 LNG holding tanks failed, released their contents and their vaporous cloud ignited and fire engulfed nearby residents and establishments. A fiery inferno devastated one square mile of Cleveland, Ohio. (The energy industry studiously avoids discussing the Cleveland disaster.) There have been other disasters as well. A leak in a tanker could do the same thing. In August 2005 a 28-inch Nigerian LNG underground pipeline exploded engulfing an estimated 27 square kilometers in Nigeria killing once-rich mangroves, killing seafood and cash crops.

The latest wrinkle is that LNG causes pipeline leaks. In July 2005 *The Washington Post* reported that after an explosion leveled a house in the D.C. area in March it was “found that subtle molecular differences in the imported liquefied natural gas the utility began using in August 2003 were drying up rubber seals of aging metal couplings that link sections of

the pipe.” Why am I not surprised that since 1992 the gas industry knew full well that changes in gas composition could cause couplings to leak. Nonetheless, importation of LNG is being fast-tracked. This is stupid and reckless considering that the incidence of leaks began soaring in late 2003 shortly after the company “started supplying Prince George’s with imported gas...brought in by tanker.”

It seems the leaks are caused by the very composition of imported gas itself—which differs from our domestic natural gas. Apparently, the imported LNG “causes the rubber seals in underground pipe couplings to shrink....”

Here, officials of the Iroquois Gas Transmission System could put the kibosh on Broadwater, as they’re the owners of the pipeline that would carry Broadwater’s imported LNG. They’re taking a sober look. They don’t know if they can handle the volume; they don’t know if it’s compatible with their own natural gas. In a pointed letter to the FERC, Iroquois officials say that an emergency shutdown system—as outlined in a draft report from Broadwater—could halt the flow of Iroquois natural gas to New York City and Long Island. “Iroquois would strongly object to such a protocol” and notes that its existing sub-sea pipeline system “should not be vulnerable to abnormal operating conditions caused by Broadwater.”

How will FERC respond to Iroquois? They have yet to answer these questions Sen. Hillary Clinton put to them last summer: “What would

the impact be on tourism, on commercial fisheries, commercial traffic?  
How will the project affect recreational boaters? What will the water and  
air quality impact be? How will the project affect the Long Island Sound  
ecosystem? Are there adequate Coast Guard resources to protect the  
barge when we don't have adequate resources for our  
country?"—"Fraudwater" enters a new phase with its formal application  
to FERC in February. Already the GOP has seen to it with their sleazy  
Energy Bill that our "states' rights" have been trumped by the federal  
government.