



# Justice Rising

## Grassroots Solutions to Corporate Domination

### Corporate Energy or Grassroots Power

by Jim Tarbell

Over a century ago, our drive for energy from petroleum and electricity spawned the most powerful and dominant corporate monopolies in history. John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust established the model of the modern corporate behemoth. J. P. Morgan's General Electric sought to dominate the electrical business. Eventually, the public rose and broke up Standard Oil and settled for regulated electrical monopolies.

But now the giant energy corporations are back. The old Standard Oil Trust can be seen in the recombined ExxonMobil, and corporate monsters such as Enron have been set loose on the land by electricity deregulation.

Michael Klare points out that in recent years, national governments have taken over the oil industry in much of the world. In the United States the oil industry has taken over the national government. They use campaign contributions, lobbyists and the revolving door to completely manipulate US policy and are creating chaos in the world, from skyrocketing prices to war and climate destruction. Even the Global Environment and Energy Correspondent for the *Economist* identifies the concentration of power in the energy industry as a major cause of these problems and the lack of anti-trust enforcement as a key policy failure.

So far in the 2008 election cycle, energy industry contributors have spent \$38.5 million on Congressional and Presidential candidates. Forty corporate contributors gave 50% of that total. But the biggest money is going into lobbying. Between 2000 and 2006, lobbying expenditures increased 52%, from \$153 million in 2000 to \$232 million in 2007. Forty energy corporations spent over one million dollars on lobbying in 2007, which equaled 57% of the industry total. The top ten companies spent \$77 million on lobbying (see page 3).

People connected with corporate energy are also playing a major role in the presidential campaign. Public Campaign, identified 33 staffers and fundraisers for John McCain connected to gas and oil corporations including lobbyists for Chevron, ExxonMobil, Shell and BP.

In the fight between clean energy and dirty fossil fuels, John McCain is pushing a nuclear solution, despite heavy evidence that nuclear power does not make sense (see page 13). Barack Obama, on the other hand, with connections to corporate biofuel manufacturers, has championed the next generation of biofuels as a solution to high gas prices.

Real solutions to peak oil and climate change have to be found and they are not being promoted by the corporate lobbyists or their funded candidates. Al Gore says we have to move to 100% renewable energy sources for electricity in ten years. The International Energy Agency predicts that "investments of at least \$45 trillion might be needed over the next half-century to prevent energy shortages and greenhouse gas emissions from slowing economic growth."

To create a secure energy future, though, it is going to take more than money. It will require a reinforcement of our anti-trust laws to once again break up the oil monopolies and reclaim our country. It will also take a fortification of political will for the public to takeover the electric industry in the form of public utility districts, electrical co-ops and Community Choice Aggregations. As Cleveland Mayor Tom Johnson once pointed out, "I believe in municipal ownership of these monopolies, because if you do not own them, they will in time own you."



Clean Energy confronts Dirty Coal on the Texas Capitol Steps.

photo: burntorangereport.com

**The anti-coal movement has succeeded in blocking so many coal plants...that the industry has entered a state of "de facto moratorium."**

Ted Nace, page 2

**In 2008, three-quarters of federal subsidies benefit the oil, coal and nuclear power industries**

Tyson Slocum, page 3

**The oil industry's annual profit of \$133 billion buys an unparalleled influence in state governments, Congress, and the White House.**

Antonia Juhasz, page 5

**Bush's belief in empowering corporations...is reflected in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.**

Frank Hartzell, page 8

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