

PEOPLE'S WORLD

www.peoplesworld.org

June 11, 2010

Worries mount on oil spill health effects

By John Wojcik

Oil washes ashore on Florida beaches as the toll across the Gulf Coast continued to mount: tens of thousands already out of work, countless sea birds and brown pelicans mired in oil, fisheries shut down, cleanup workers falling ill and scientists warning about dangers to the health of the general population.

Lifelong shrimp farmer David Dixon sits idle at his bait shop in St. Bernard Parish, La., as federal authorities have closed nearly a third of U.S. Gulf of Mexico waters to fishing. His shrimp boat, docked in back of the shop, has been turned, like hundreds of other shrimp boats, into an oily boom boat.

"It's the only work available," he said. "It's not what we want to do but when they call us we'll do it because there's nothing else." He was referring to BP's enlistment of area fishermen and their boats in laying protective booms against the advancing oil.

Dixon said he worries about the long-term health effects of working amidst the oil and dispersants.

Scores of cleanup workers are falling ill and at least nine have been treated at Louisiana's West Jefferson Medical Center. Dr. Robert Chudgen, a physician there, said, "They are suffering from ir-



ritated skin, nausea, difficulty breathing and dehydration." BP at first tried to dismiss reports of illness among cleanup workers, suggesting food poisoning was the cause.

Many medical experts say there are long-term dangers for the entire population in the area, including possible blood, lung and genetic disorders.

Oil came ashore on Pensacola Beach in Florida, part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore,

T H I S W E E K :

- **Worries mount on oil spill health effects**
- **Editorial: End Gaza blockade**
- **Senator presses \$100 billion jobs bill**
- **Cuba reitera casos de esposas de antiterroristas**
- **Strikers at Spectrum Nursing Homes gain support**

READ MORE NEWS AND OPINION DAILY AT WWW.PEOPLESWORLD.ORG

which advertises "the world's whitest beaches."

Keith Wilkins from Florida's Escambia County emergency management said tar patties were thick along the Pensacola beach, often not more than a foot apart. No cleanup crews were anywhere in sight along the beach, Reuters reported.

Federal regulators rescinded two new offshore drilling permits - less than 24 hours after authorizing them as part of the temporary halt to oil and gas exploration.

In Gulf Shores, Ala., the surf brought oil, and a strong petroleum smell tinged the air.

Meanwhile BP said a cap has been placed atop its blown-out Deepwater Horizon well and has been collecting some oil. Robots a mile beneath the Gulf put the inverted funnel-like lid in place.

A top BP official said this morning that the dome should capture 'the vast majority' of leaking oil, though some seepage will continue in a best-case scenario."

Live video footage, however, is showing what appears to be an unimpeded flow of oil into the Gulf.

Some of the most right-wing politicians in the Gulf seem to be reconsidering their open support of BP.

Mississippi's Republican Gov. Haley Barbour, who just last week encouraged residents and tourists to frolic in the oil-tainted waters off his state's coastline, has been quiet this week. The governor,

who received \$1.8 million in campaign contributions from BP, had defended the company in the first weeks of the crisis.

Bloomberg News said in an editorial that "Republicans' embrace of offshore drilling and their skepticism of 'big' government may hamper the party's efforts to gain politically from President Barack Obama's handling of the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico."

Federal regulators rescinded two new offshore drilling permits - less than 24 hours after authorizing them - as part of the temporary halt to oil and gas exploration in shallow Gulf of Mexico waters. Oil and natural gas producers drilling in 500 feet or less of water will be able to resume operations once they resubmit plans and comply with new safety standards the government will soon be issuing.



John Wojcik writes for the People's World.

End Gaza blockade

By PW Editorial Board

Israel's attack on the convoy of ships bringing humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza has garnered international condemnation - and rightfully so. At least nine civilians were killed, many more injured, and hundreds were detained in Israeli jails. Once again, bloodshed and violence has pushed to the fore the most festering international issue of the last decades: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This can be a watershed moment for the Obama administration and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The far-right militarists both in Israel and the U.S. are on the defensive as a result of the outrageous Israeli attack on the Gaza flotilla. Out of this crisis can come a real opening for peace.

The U.S. should see this as an opportunity to take stronger action to push Israel to end the blockade of Gaza, stop settlement construction in the West Bank, and engage in serious talks that will achieve the widely accepted solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on two states

living side by side in peace.

U.S. taxpayer dollars - to the tune of several billion a year - should no longer go to support Israeli policies of militarism, occupation and repression. It's simply not in the interests of the American, Israeli or Palestinian people. Enough is enough. Even U.S. generals are saying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is contrary to U.S. national security interests.

The U.S. should insist that Israel end its inhuman - and illegal - blockade of Gaza and curb its own right-wing fanatics; stop obstructing the peace process with settlement construction or other provocations, and get to the negotiating table for real, with a clear timetable to achieve a two-state solution.

The people of the U.S. have a critical role to play in ending this deadly conflict. To help the Obama administration move ahead, it is essential to build the broadest, all-inclusive movement among the American people that presses for strong U.S. action to at long last achieve peace with justice in the Middle East.

The U.S. should insist that Israel end its inhuman - and illegal - blockade of Gaza and curb its own right-wing fanatics.

Senator presses \$100 billion jobs bill

By Rick Nagin

At a packed Cleveland press conference and rally Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, announced plans to introduce a \$100 billion jobs bill when the Senate reconvenes.

The bill, called the Local Jobs for America Act, “would create or save up to a million jobs quickly in both the public and private sectors and help restore access to vital services on which families rely,” he said. Joined by Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic in front of Cleveland’s Fire Station 1, Brown said the bill would allocate \$75 billion directly to local municipalities and nonprofit community organizations who would decide how best to use the funds. The purpose, he said, was to prevent planned cuts and rehire critical public safety and service workers who have been laid off because of declining tax revenues.

An additional \$24 billion would go to states for jobs in education and public safety. The bill would also authorize \$1 billion for private sector job training programs.

The bill is companion to HB 4812 introduced in the House by Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., which now has 161 co-sponsors.

Brown said the legislation could be partly funded by taxes on Wall Street speculation and by renewed tax revenues from the jobs created directly and indirectly. But, he said, “the most important thing is getting people back to work.”

“We had a balanced budget under President Clinton,” he said. “The people who are pushing the deficit alarm now didn’t ring the bell when the real deficit spending occurred” under President George W. Bush. This included the huge unfunded spending on the Iraq war, the tax cuts for the richest Americans and the massive payouts to insurance and drug companies through the 2003 Medi-



care Modernization Act.

“They started the fire,” Brown said of the Republicans. “They are now calling the fire department, yet they don’t want to give the firefighters the resources they need to keep us safe and communities thriving.” Brown’s remarks were applauded by those present including about 100 members of public sector unions - firefighters, police, service employees, transit workers and teachers.

“This will definitely help the safety forces,” said Third District Police Commander Calvin Williams. “We usually get called when people need help. I’m glad Senator Brown is there when we need help.”

Plusquellic, representing both the city of Akron and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, said people understood when Wall Street and the auto industry were “too important to fail.” He asked, “Why is it so hard for people to understand the importance of local services - schools, police, fire?”

Akron used to have 3,400 employees and now has 1,950, he noted. “I don’t want to hear from those right-wing wackos that we don’t know how to run a city.”

Brown said the legislation could be partly funded by taxes on Wall Street speculation.

Strikers at Spectrum Nursing Homes gain support

By Tom Connolly

Twenty-one labor, community, elected officials and clergy members were arrested by Hartford police recently for blocking the entrance of Park Place Health Center in support of District 1199 Spectrum strikers.

Hundreds of other vocal strikers and supporters attended the rally, held on the 48th day of the strike of nearly 400 workers against four nursing homes in Connecticut owned by Spectrum Care, a local corporation. The workers' stayed on the job for over a year after their contract expired although the company fired, suspended and intimidated dozens of workers lacking full union protection. District 1199 has filed charges of illegal activity and unfair labor practices by the company with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

All the homes on strike were cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for illness and injury rates "more than twice the national average among all US workplaces." Thompson said Spectrum's proposal includes cutting pay to \$10 an hour for workers injured on the job if lighter duty work is required.

The strikers have received wide solidarity including a Hartford City Council resolution of support passed unanimously on May 24. The resolution calls upon Spectrum owners not to hire permanent replacement workers, to pay for police picket line overtime, and to settle a fair contract. Hartford City Council member Larry Deutsch (Working Families Party) was among those arrested in the civil disobedience.

Cuba reitera casos de esposas de antiterroristas

Por Prensa Latina

Cuba reiteró ante el Consejo de Derechos Humanos (CDH) de Naciones Unidas el caso de Olga Salanueva y Adriana Pérez, esposas de dos de los cinco antiterroristas de la Isla que cumplen largas condenas en Estados Unidos.

La delegada cubana Janet Román se refirió en particular a la "violencia psicológica" que se ejerce contra dos mujeres cubanas, a quienes el gobierno de Estados Unidos les impide desde hace más de 10 años visitar a sus esposos presos.

Al hablar en el debate interactivo acerca del informe de Rashida Manjoo, Relatora Especial sobre la violencia contra la mujer, la diplomática explicó los problemas afrontados por Salanueva y Pérez, esposas de René González y Gerardo Hernández, respectivamente.

"A ellas se les ha negado en múltiples ocasiones las visas requeridas. La negativa de otorgar las visas a estas mujeres cubanas, viola flagrantemente varios instrumentos del Derecho Internacional", recalcó.

Cuba solicita a todos los pueblos defensores de la justicia el apoyo a la reivindicación del derecho de estas cubanas a visitar a sus esposos, así como la inmediata liberación de los Cinco luchadores antiterroristas cubanos, demandó.

Los Cinco son además Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino y Fernando González, quienes cumplirán 12

años de prisión en 2010, sentenciados a largas penas en juicios amañados por realizar actividades de prevención del terrorismo contra su país.

Román también tomó parte en las deliberaciones a partir del reporte de la Experta Independiente sobre la cuestión de los derechos humanos y la extrema pobreza, Magdalena Sepúlveda.

Al respecto, coincidió con la Relatora en la necesidad de que todos los países ricos cumplan su compromiso de donar el 0,7 por ciento de su Producto Interno Bruto para la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo con el fin de contribuir a reducir la pobreza en el mundo.

Mientras tanto, un grupo de jóvenes peruanos realizaron una caminata al cerro San Cristóbal de Lima, Peru, que domina a esta ciudad, en demanda de la libertad de los cinco.

Los integrantes del Comité Juvenil de Solidaridad con los Cinco coronaron, tras un esforzado recorrido de una hora, la cumbre de la elevación, donde hay una cruz que puede verse a gran distancia.

El presidente del comité nacional, Gustavo Espinoza, quien destacó la importancia de la iniciativa, por coincidir con la realización en Lima de la XL Asamblea de la Organización de Estados Americanos.

La actividad, según Espinoza, fue una muestra de los peruanos solidarios con los Cinco.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523
Email: contact@peoplesworld.org