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New UAW president vows “social justice” unionism

By John Rummel

There is a new King in the house,” declared Detroit NAACP President Wendell Anthony to the 2,000 United Auto Worker delegates, guests and friends who had marched June 17 from the union’s convention to Detroit’s financial center.

Led by Anthony, newly-elected UAW President Bob King (the “King” Anthony referred to), NAACP President Ben Jealous, International Brotherhood of Teamsters President James Hoffa and Detroit Metro President Sandra Williams, the marchers chanted, “Good jobs now, make Wall St. pay.”

When marchers answered the call, “justice” with the response, “power”, and shouted “Enough is enough, let’s take America back,” one quickly understood that more than the signing of contracts was being demanded. It felt like a new day.

Jealous announced the Oct. 2, “One Nation, One Dream” rally for jobs and justice that the NAACP, and now the AFL-CIO, have endorsed.

“It was time to put this country together from those who want to take it apart,” said Jealous.

Anthony told the crowd it was also a June day in 1963 that Martin Luther King came to Detroit for a rally and speech that set the stage for the great March on Washington.

Earlier in the day, UAW’s King gave a rous-



ing acceptance speech and charted a path for the union of being “out on the streets rebuilding the social justice we all believe in.”

He said the first act of the new Executive Board would be to endorse the Oct. 2 rally in Washington.

King noted the UAW must speak and work for all working families. “We can only achieve it and keep it, if we do it for everybody.”

Waxing philosophical, King said that some-

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times people call us dreamers, idealists, and say we have to be more realistic. “I want to be known as an idealist, a dreamer.”

He said great leaders such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, and Cesar Chavez, were dreamers and idealists.

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We are not going to let those in power say the dreams we have are impossible to achieve, said King. “We are going to be a sower of seeds for social and economic justice for all Americans.”

King also laid out what should be a vigorous campaign to organize Toyota, starting with the former NUMMI plant in Fremont, Calif.

The UAW organized plant was jointly operated by GM and Toyota and built Toyota Corollas. Toyota’s decision to move Corolla production to a nonunion operation in Mississippi will be fiercely resisted by the union. “We are calling on Toyota to recognize the rights of workers to come into the union.”

While the Tesla Corporation has announced plans to build electric cars in the plant, they have not committed to hiring its former workers and, as King noted, the small production run of Tesla is far less than the former Toyota Corolla production.

It was a speech interrupted by standing ovations and delegates interviewed afterwards were

charged up.

Edan Dhanraj, cited King’s emphasis on organizing. “Just inspiring to me. Myself and all my colleagues feel the same.”

Regarding the midterm elections and the need to insure Republican do not make gains, Carl Perkins of GM powertrain local 1181 said, “I’m definitely fired up about the midterm elections, we have to keep the direction going forward.”

Tim Stewart, alternate delegate from local 3000 who works at Auto Alliance in Flat Rock, Michigan, where the Ford Mustang and Mazda 6 are made said, “He did a great job. He’s on the more progressive, activist side. The UAW has done a great job and because of that we got a little complacent. I’ve probably been guilty of it too. Now it’s time to wake up and get back after them so the rest of this country can enjoy the fruit of their blessings.”



John Rummel writes for the People’s World.

Beyond BP’s spin

By PW Editorial Board

British Petroleum is now putting a special spin on the crisis caused by the explosion of its deep-sea oil well in the Gulf of Mexico. It seems that innocent pensioners in the UK will get whacked if BP is punished, and U.S.-British relations will go down the tubes.

If poor and working people in the UK are harmed by whatever happens to BP, they should be compensated, just as people in the Gulf of Mexico region should be compensated. And nobody should blame British working people for the disaster.

Almost as nauseating as the sight of dead birds, turtles and dolphins rotting in the oil that has gushed from the out-of-control spill is the media campaign that BP has launched, with teary-eyed CEO Tony Hayward telling us in TV ads how very, very sorry he is and with the multi-billion-dollar corporation buying expensive ads to tell us what a good job they are doing in fixing the problem.

The current British Petroleum multinational

combines capital from both the old British Petroleum, which used to rip off oil workers in Iran and elsewhere in such an arrogant way, with the U.S.-based AMOCO and ARCO petroleum giants, heirs to the old John D. Rockefeller empire and thus as American as apple pie, and no angels either. Currently, BP is 28 percent owned by JPMorgan Chase, the U.S. financial giant. Also, U.S.-based Halliburton and Transocean should not get a pass, and may well be in court alongside BP.

We cannot allow corporations run amuck to avoid legal sanctions because of possible harm to their modest-scale share and bondholders or indeed even their employees. In the Enron and Arthur Anderson blowup of a decade ago, you will remember that a lot of innocent people, including many honest employees, got hurt. Everybody who is harmed by the actions of BP, Halliburton and Transocean should get redress.

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Marriage equality supporters keep up fight

By Marilyn Bechtel

Attorneys for the opposing sides in the trial over California's same-sex marriage ban gave their closing arguments before Chief U.S. District Judge Vaughan Walker June 16, moving the historic case one more step toward its probable destination, the U.S. Supreme Court.

Before the hearing, supporters of marriage equality gathered outside the courthouse. Noting that the closing arguments were taking place exactly two years after California began issuing marriage licenses to same sex couples, John Lewis told the crowd that he and his husband, Stuart Gaffney, "are the living proof that freedom to marry makes the lives of committed same sex couples better."

The two, who have been together for 23 years, wed while it was legal to do so, after the California Supreme Court overturned the state's ban on same sex marriages in May 2008 and before voters passed Proposition 8 again banning them the following November. They were plaintiffs in an earlier marriage equality trial.

"Something that was beautiful about the days before Prop. 8 was that every single human being in this state had the freedom to marry the person whom they loved," Lewis said. "It didn't matter what color skin you had, if you were rich or poor, what your gender or sexual orientation was. It was your humanity, your basic human shared instinct to love another human being."

Gaffney added that the U.S. Supreme Court's decision 43 years ago, in *Loving v. Virginia*, had "made it possible for my mom and dad, an interracial couple, to be legally married in all 50 states." While it's now "unthinkable" for interracial couples to be denied the right to marry, he said, "to-



day couples like us face that same patchwork, legal here, not legal there. It needs to be healed now." Same sex marriages are now legal in five states and the District of Columbia.

During 12 days of testimony in January, the case for marriage equality was presented by the plaintiffs, Kristin Perry and Sandy Stier of Berkeley and Paul Katami and Jeff Zarrillo of Burbank, and by eight academic witnesses who testified that marriage has evolved over millennia and that procreation is a purpose, but not its sole purpose.

Supporters of a ban presented just two witnesses, and Cooper claimed it was not necessary to have evidence to prove the purpose of marriage was to have and raise children.

In 2000, Theodore Olson represented George W. Bush in *Bush v. Gore*, while the other lead attorney for the plaintiffs, David Boies, was on the other side, representing then-Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore.

Walker is expected to announce his decision this summer. If as anticipated, the case goes to the U.S. Supreme Court, it could be two more years before a final decision is reached.

Same sex marriages are now legal in five states and the District of Columbia.

No labor peace at Sacramento airport

By Gail Ryall

The Board of Supervisors of California's capital city has voted 3-2 to reject "labor harmony" contract language that would have saved 100 union jobs. The June 15 vote was a slap at the jobs of unionized retail concession workers in the new Terminal B, now under construction and expected to open in 2011 at Sacramento International Airport.

"I am pissed, I am really mad!" declared Chris Rak, president of Unite Here Local 49, as union members and supporters rallied outside the County Administration Building after the vote. "That airport has been union for decades, and that airport will remain union for decades," he continued.

Airport contracts with concession owners are to be awarded this October, and the supervisors voted on the contract criteria for businesses catering to airline passengers. Previous agreements had included the requirement that businesses negotiate with the unions representing their workers, while the unions on their part agreed not to strike, picket or boycott at the airport.

Similar agreements are in force at the San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles airports, it was noted.

At a previous meeting on June 1, over 150 union members and supporters, wearing their distinctive red Unite Here T-shirts, filled the board chambers.

Local 49 has a reputation as an activist union, assembling enormous union/community picket lines accompanied by chanting, songs and noisemakers in front of hotels that resist union contracts.

BP no ha podido detener el peor derrame

Por Prensa Asociada

Pedazos de madera flotante y conchas manchadas con un alquitrán de color rojizo aparecieron el sábado sobre la costa del Golfo de México mientras el petróleo del derrame continuaba llegando en grandes cantidades y bastante al este a pesar de la colocación de un embudo para aminorar el derrame.

Seis semanas después de que explotara una plataforma el 20 de abril, causando la muerte de 11 trabajadores, la gigante petrolera British Petroleum PLC no ha podido detener de forma apreciable el peor derrame en la historia de Estados Unidos.

El hombre asignado por el gobierno de Barack Obama para lidiar con la crisis, el almirante de la Guardia Costera Thad Allen, dijo el sábado en una conferencia de prensa que el tapón recolectó el viernes unos 953.000 litros (252.000 galones) de petróleo en su primer día de función completa.

La cantidad es de entre de medio punto porcentual y 1% del total de petróleo que, según cifras oficiales, ya está disperso en el mar y las costas.

En Gulf Shores, Alabama se podían ver las huellas de petróleo que dejaban las personas que habían estado en la playa. Incluso en algunos hoteles se proporcionaban solventes

para los huéspedes con manchas parduscas.

Erin Tamber se mudó a la zona de la playa después de sobrevivir al huracán Katrina en Nueva Orleans, donde había vivido 30 años.

"Siento que pasé de ser la propietaria de un pedazo de paraíso a la de un basural de desperdicios tóxicos", dijo mientras revisaba la playa.

En su mensaje semanal el presidente Barack Obama dijo que apoyará a los residentes de la costa del Golfo de México.

Obama grabó su mensaje desde la isla Grand Isle que visitó el viernes en su tercer viaje al golfo desde la explosión de la plataforma petrolera.

El mandatario habló de las personas que conoció y han sido afectadas por el derrame.

"Estos tipos trabajan duro", dijo Obama. "Cumplen con sus responsabilidades, pero ahora, debido a una catástrofe creada por el hombre, de la que no tienen la culpa y está más allá de su control, su vida ha entrado en crisis".

"Esto es totalmente injusto, está mal. A esos hombres y mujeres les digo lo que he afirmado desde el comienzo de este desastre: seguiré con la gente de la costa del Golfo de México hasta que logren recuperarse", dijo el presidente.