

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER SMELL-OF-AN-OILY-RAG...



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SLICK PUBLICITY

REPORT FROM NEW ORLEANS ON THE BP OIL-SPILL DISASTER...

In response to America's largest ever environmental disaster, Tony Hayward, CEO of BP, said, "I'd like my life back." We're sure he does, as would the eleven workers who died on BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig when it exploded 40 miles off the Louisiana coast, in the Gulf of Mexico, on April 20th.

But you have to sympathise with Tony. The fact that BP failed to test the strength of the cement in the well, despite knowing that the casing was "the riskier of two options" and that it "might collapse under pressure" can't be held against him. Even though the same disregard for safety killed 15 and injured 170 BP workers in the Texas Oil Refinery explosion of 2005.

BP has also had over 20 years since the Exxon-Valdez oil spill in Alaska to learn from its botched response to that disaster. Yes, despite Exxon having its name on the tanker, it was actually BP who disastrously failed to contain the toxic sludge that spewed into pristine wilderness. But that was then. BP has since spent billions of dollars on advertising telling us they are 'Beyond Petroleum' - so beyond it in fact they don't care how much they lose.

BP has had over 8,000 minor and major recorded spills since 1990 alone. While all eyes have been on the current ecocide in the Gulf of Mexico, their Alaskan Pipeline burst in late May, spewing 100,000 gallons of oil into the environment. State inspectors say this occurred because "procedures weren't properly implemented," in other words - they didn't give a damn.

The ho-hum lackadaisical attitude of Tony Hayward is indicative of BP's disaster response in general. It has been shocking to see BP's slow response to contain the oil. There is a complete lack of any oil containment technology, beyond stringing some booms (vinyl tubes) over the ocean that deflate and blow away. While the oil industry has poured billions of dollars into riskier deep-water drilling, it has not invested in responses to the leaks and disasters that have increased four fold in the last decade.

CRUDE JOKE

Maybe we're overreacting. Let us again heed the soothing words of Tony, or Tiny Tony as he is now known in the US due to the following comment, "The Gulf of Mexico is a very big ocean. The amount of volume of oil and dispersant we are putting into it is tiny in relation to the total water volume." That would be the estimated 47 million to 235 million gallons of toxic crude oil that has poured into the ocean over the last eight weeks. Not to mention the use in the 'clean up' of one million tonnes of the Corexit oil dispersant, a neuro toxin pesticide banned in the UK, arguably as harmful as the oil itself.

We need not worry our silly little heads about

the ecological destruction either. Tiny Tony assures us, "the environmental impact of this disaster is likely to have been very, very modest." Come now Tony, it's you that is being modest. This disaster is going to kill thousands of dolphins and sea turtles, hundreds of thousands of seabirds and billions of fish and shellfish.

The communities along the Louisiana coast, whose main work is fisheries, have lost their catch to a greater predator, and BP are playing on their vulnerability and dividing them by giving the 'lucky' few work cleaning up the toxic waste. BP has refused to provide masks and other safety equipment to those in these communities, and when this resulted in several cases of clean-up workers being hospitalised, Tony said it was probably due to food poisoning. Shrimp à la oil?

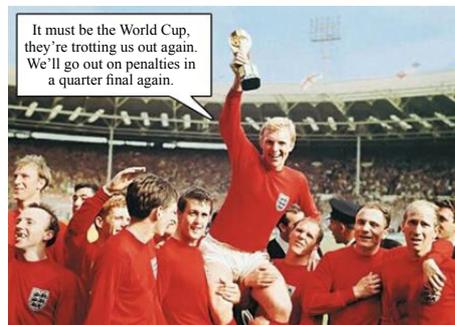
The Louisiana wetlands that nurture the wildlife and communities have already been decimated by the oil industry. The wetlands are a 4.2 million acre region where the Mississippi River flows into the Atlantic. They have formed over 7,500 years by the rivers flooding and annually depositing silt creating long fingers of land and barrier islands. It has taken just 75 years for them to have been almost completely destroyed. They are disappearing faster than any other part of the world, with an area the size of a football field lost every 38 minutes.

Oil and natural gas were discovered in Louisiana's coastal areas in the early 1900s. This led to long canals being cut through the wetlands to transport drilling equipment and oil. As well as being destructive in itself, this allowed more salt water to seep in to the wetlands, which killed the freshwater plants' roots leading to further soil erosion. These wetlands act as a natural defence against hurricane storm surges. The further they are destroyed the more vulnerable coastal towns all the way up to New Orleans become. The storm surge from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 flooded 80% of the city, killing over 2,000 people.

As New Orleans and the coastal region still struggle to recover five years after Katrina they face a real kick in the teeth. Meteorological experts are predicting, "the most active season on record" for hurricanes, comparing ocean temperatures that contribute to hurricane formation to those in the summer of Katrina. Oil from the BP rig is predicted to continue to spew in to the gulf for months to come. A hurricane sweeping a surge of oil into the wetlands and towns of Louisiana would be apocalyptic for the region.

Tiny Tony put it best last year, saying BP's "primary purpose was to generate profit for our share holders" and that "our primary purpose in life was not to save the world." Really Tony, you don't say.

* See <http://ragingpelican.wordpress.com>



AND SO ITT BEGINS

So finally the EDO Decommissioners Trial began this Monday (7th) after an 18-month long wait. A vigil was held at 9am on the first day, with a crowd of over 150 turning up to show their support outside Hove Crown Court. The proceedings are estimated to run a course of at least seven weeks.

The EDO/ITT factory got decommissioned on the 17th January 2009 in solidarity with the people of Gaza as they were being bombed during Israel's Operation Cast Lead (see SchNEWS 721). A group of people are up on trial, most on a charge of criminal damage and several for conspiracy to commit criminal damage.

Four days into the trial it already appears that EDO are going to face a more thorough investigation into their involvement with Israel's war crimes than during the previous 100+ court cases which have followed actions against this company. Paul Hills, Managing Director of the factory, has taken the stand since Tuesday (8th). His cross examination was off to an abrasive start with the defence stating "Everything you say about this company is a pack of lies" as part of their opening gambit.

What the eventual outcome will be is obviously an unknown quantity but there will certainly be some right courtroom dramas in the weeks to follow...

* For updates see <http://decommissioners.co.uk> www.smashedo.org.uk

CALAIS EVICTION ALERT

Migrants in Calais were under further duress this week. Africa House occupants have been expecting a visit from their local Gendarmerie since Wednesday (9th) morning. There was a notable increase in CRS in the Calais camp on Tuesday (8th) and later on that evening police were seen practising with CS gas, flash balls (plastic bullets), sound bombs as well as drilling riot tactics. These displays - plus the police announcing that they are due to visit - are clear attempts to provoke and draw out the eviction for pained effect. Then Wednesday saw police raid with the aid of three CRS vans - arresting five Africans - but as yet no eviction of Africa House.

Activists on camp think it could happen any time this week and urge people to come and show support. The Cronstadt Hangar (a squatted No Borders activist space) has been shut down recently, however alternative accommodation has been secured. Updates soon.

* See <http://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com>



INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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FOR WHO'S BENEFIT?

Next Wednesday (16th) sees the first national day of action against the previous government's flagship scheme to attack the unemployed, the Flexible New Deal (FND). Another word for this is 'workfare' – working for your benefits. Everyone on the scheme after six months has to work one month for their benefits – forcing them to do over thirty hours a week at a maximum of £1.60 an hour (less than a third of the minimum wage), without normal labour rights. Workfare schemes like the FND don't create new jobs (apart from in the companies that run it!), they bring down wages and attack working conditions.

This was part of the first phase of FND with the second phase due to be rolled out in October – but now the Tories are in that's all going to phased out and something very similar called 'work programme' brought in. FND will still run until next summer, and be piloted for six months in some areas. The 'work programme' is sure to involve workfare and will no doubt involve most of the same companies like A4E, Seetec, Serco and Working Links bidding for the contracts.

Groups all over the country involved in the No to Welfare Abolition network will be taking action on June 16th against the private companies who run this scheme to let them know that they will have a hard time making money from the FND and whatever replaces it. There will be demos in Brighton, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and Sunderland amongst others.

Recently Brighton Benefits Campaign have organised successful pickets outside the offices of the companies profiting from the FND in Brighton (see SchNEWS 715): Maximus, Skills Training UK and Careers Development Group. Unsurprisingly they don't like the negative publicity this attracts because they know how fragile their operating margins are and what a shit service they provide. With payments based on performance these companies are vulnerable to attack. In Brighton meet 11am on June 16th outside Boots, Clocktower.

* See www.defendwelfare.org and <http://brightonbenefitscampaign.wordpress.com>

CHILLI RECEPTION

A caravan of international human rights activists was ambushed this week as it headed into the besieged region of San Juan Copala in Mexico. The caravan, consisting of members from Finland, Germany, Italy and Belgium as well as Mexican indigenous rights groups and worker's unions, was forced to turn back after the paramilitary group Ubisort blockaded the path of the vehicles.

The San Juan Copala municipality declared itself autonomous from the Mexican state in 2006 and is home to some 16,000 indigenous Trique indians. Since the declaration of independence, paramilitary groups linked to the state ruling party PRI have kept the area under siege, preventing the inhabitants from accessing basic food supplies, electricity and travelling freely in and out of the region. Activists claim shots have been heard ringing out in the community on a daily basis.

This latest ambush follows a brutal attack on a previous caravan that was bringing supplies to the area in April. A twenty-minute hail of bullets was fired at the group of around 30 international activists, killing two people while the wounded others fled into the mountains where they trekked, some for days, to find safety. The government at the time refused to respond with any search or rescue effort. One of the survivors of this violence has now called for a larger international caravan to return to show support for the community.

* See <http://upsidedownworld.org>

HELL AND HIGH WATER

The sole remaining ship of the ill-fated Freedom Flotilla (see SchNEWS 725), the *MV Rachel Corrie*, was stormed by Israeli commandos last Saturday (5th). With the peace activists on board detained, the ship was towed to the Israeli port of Ashdod. Four times, the crew on board had refused to accede to Israeli demands to divert to Ashdod and the ship was just a day's sailing away from Gaza when it was hijacked. With the world watching, this time commandos refrained from the sort of all-out assault that left nine on the *Mavi Marmara* dead and no one was harmed. On Sunday (6th), five Irish activists were released and returned home.

On Saturday (5th), 20,000 people marched through central London in protest against Israel's brutal attack on the Flotilla and the continuing siege of Gaza. Over the last week there have been local demonstrations around the country, with hundreds marching in Bradford, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Nottingham, Cambridge and Brighton. On Wednesday, around 30 people blockaded financiers of the occupation Lloyds Bank in Broadmead Shopping Centre in Bristol, shutting it down. The group then moved off and established a blockade at the bottom of the M32 motorway. The crowd were then attacked by police and one person was arrested.

Further Bristolian reaction had been seen last Monday in the form of a rage-fuelled rampage targeting financial supporters of the occupation for some extreme redevelopment. An estate agents, Tory office, Territorial Army HQ and an HSBC all had windows smashed, while the HSBC also had some interior design work, with red paint liberally sloshed about.

* See www.palestinecampaign.org www.freegaza.org

STRIKING BLOW

Earlier this year around 70 women detainees at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre went on hunger strike in protest against their treatment at the hands of the immigration authorities and their contracted minions. The strike ended after 40 days, during which time the women were subjected to brutal and humiliating treatment and many were removed to Holloway prison (see SchNEWS 709). Of the 25 women who are still in contact with migrant rights groups, 13 have now been released. However, seven remain in detention – four of them in prison – and two of the key hunger strikers, who had pending civil claims against the Yarl's Wood authorities and were instrumental in preventing the removal of other women, have been deported. You can hear the full story of these valiant women's struggle for basic human rights at Women's Hunger Strike – Louder than Words, June 29th, committee Room 8, House of Commons, London.

* See <http://womensgrid.freecharity.org.uk/?p=5325>

BLOWING A RASPBERRY

Over 200 people took to Midsummer Common, Cambridge last Saturday (5th), in defiance of the Cambridgeshire Police's party pooping wrangling that led to the cancellation of Strawberry Fair (see SchNEWS 715).

The turnout was much less than Strawberry's usual numbers but the event was a jolly and peaceful affair, even with the provoking presence of the bluecoats on board. The revellers (as spotted by the cops) were getting involved in some raucous action such as hoolahooping, plate spinning, juggling and, wait for it, dancing! Well spotted Mr Bobby! Manpower deployed for the event broke out at about the same rate as if they had let the event go on unhindered. Tax payers money well spent then.

* For pics see www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/cambridge/2010/06/453084.html

PARTY & PROTEST

For events listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

GAS-TLY BUSINESS

26 years after the Bhopal gas tragedy (see SchNEWS 702), which killed 3,000 immediately and over 35,000 in its aftermath, seven officials of Union Carbide India Ltd, including the former chairman, were convicted and sentenced last week to a maximum of two years imprisonment, and then all released on bail. The most guilty continue to evade justice – Union Carbide, Dow Chemicals, former group chairman Warren Anderson and Union Carbide Eastern. For the full article see www.schnews.org.uk/archive/news7269.php

EDL OFFSIDE IN CARDIFF

After a total shambles in South Wales last autumn (see SchNEWS 696), the English Defence League attempted to hold a demo in Cardiff last Saturday (5th). Called under the "Welsh Defence League" name and heavily promoted by the mentally unstable nutjob Jeff Marsh*, the event was being talked up as a show of strength from the WDL who had predicted that they would be adding Cardiff City's notorious Soul Crew hooligans to the ranks of their followers.

As has been the case in other parts of the UK the UAF took it upon themselves to prop up the ailing careers of Labour MPs and confuse anti-EDL efforts by calling a march on the other side of the city. Militant anti-fascists (largely from local Anarchist groups) gathered at the EDL appointed protest pen before their arrival. After a few hours Police managed to get militants away from the area and force them into the UAF rally that had gathered two blocks away to listen to speeches. UAF stewards welcomed their arrival by declaring them "as bad as the WDL" for aiming for confrontation.

However these stewards got increasingly worried when a number of other groups arrived, first a group of skinheads who were verbally abused for being "nazis" before the crowd spotted their S.H.A.R.P. (SkinHeads Against Racial Prejudice) insignia. Then another large group of men, this lot in their mid-30s in designer gear led by a well known local hooligan. As some sections of the crowd moved away, a minibus decked out in England flags drove passed and stopped at a red light. At this point all the recent arrivals showed that you don't need a purple placard to "smash the EDL", just some well placed fists.

Over the next few hours the £250,000 police operation was stretched to its fullest to get the EDL out of the city alive, with several organised groups attacking their mobile police pen from all sides. The distinct inability to get more than a dozen Welsh people on their demo of about 120 meant most of the EDL were displaying England flags and singing anti-welsh songs, repeatedly singing that we were "not English anymore" (I wasn't aware we ever were). With that attitude they were never going to get much of a positive reaction on a rugby international day!

There were four arrests, all of militant anti-fascists (some of whom have bail restrictions to not to associate with the UAF - as if!!!). In the aftermath of the day a number of Cardiff City footy fans (who the EDL have now "declared war" on) have started a Cardiff ANTIFA group see www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=123227311047223

* For an insight into the minds of the 'opposition', and a piss-yerself laugh, see Jeff Marsh's account of the day at <http://casualsunited.webs.com/cardiffdemo.htm>

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all far-right nutcases - give it up, face it you haven't got the support. Honest.

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