

OPINION

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We've Been Slicked by Big Oil

Paying the price of deregulation

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

Suddenly, we're relearning the painful lesson that when technological solutions combine with corporate promises, we often get a toxic mix.

This lesson is literally oozing over us in the form of the Gulf of Mexico's disastrous oil slick, brought to us by the deep well drilling schemes of Big Oil profiteers. This particular well,



belonging to BP, has been drilled beneath mile-deep water, and it plunges some four miles into the Gulf floor—presenting beaucoup possibilities for technological glitches.

BP and other oil giants, however, assured regulatory authorities and the general public that they were experts—so not to worry.

There's a one-in-a-million chance of anything going wrong, they claimed, promising that if anything did happen, they had the technology in place to handle it. Perfectly safe,

they said; trust us. Indeed, BP had installed a steel-framed stack of valves, rams, tanks, and tubes called a blow-out-

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preventer (BOP) at the base of the well to seal it instantly if things went badly.

Things did, and it didn't. The

BOP didn't work and...well, you know the awful price that thousands of people and the whole Gulf ecology are paying

technology is extremely difficult and dicey to deal with, so don't expect a quick fix to stop the catastrophic gusher. "This is like doing open-heart surgery at 5,000 feet in the dark," exclaimed BP's chairman.

Once again, we're paying the price of years of deregulatory, laissez-faire ideology pushed down our throats by corporate lobbyists and whorish politicians. "Get the government off our backs," demanded Big Oil—and now we've got their crude slick all over us.

Jim Hightower is a radio commentator, writer, and public speaker

Letters to the Editor

Advance Police Reforms

Although there has been much discussion concerning police reform since Chief Mark Kroeker's time running the Portland Police Bureau, nothing has been mentioned regarding the role of the police chaplain in this equation. I bring this up because of recent displays of "road rage" by two prominent police officers.

The duty of the chaplain is to deal with the emotional and psychological stress inherent with police work—stresses that affect not only the officers' personal and family lives, but also the way they react with the public they serve.

Oregonian columnist Andy Parker reported Feb. 22 that police officers are four times more likely to be involved in domestic violence than the general public. He quoted former Police Chief Penny Harrington as saying, "From my experience it's still hidden away."

Was the Police Commissioner aware of the importance of the police chaplain and whether he per-

formed his job effectively? I never heard his name mentioned. Former Chaplain Ed Stelle, I understand, is now serving with the Multnomah County Sheriff's Department.

The Albina Ministerial Alliance recently published its five-point program for police reform. One of its goals is a change in state law to limit the authority of police officers to use deadly force.

In this regard, Rev. Renee Ward of the Vancouver Avenue Baptist Church, has formed the "Committee of Everyday People" to draft "Campbell's Law" to be submitted to the 2011 Oregon Legislature by Sen. Chip Shields, who represents northeast Portland.

Former Portland Police Association Scott Westerman conceded in the Feb. 4 Oregonian that "Basically, we shot an unarmed black guy running away from us."

Pastor Ward personally conferred with Gov. Ted Kulongoski to obtain his support as a positive final act of his eight-year career

as governor. She expects to gather 1,000 supporters at the opening legislative session in January to lobby for the measure.

Committee members also supported a new chief of police, a new police commissioner, and a new district attorney who will serve the public, rather than the police bureaucracy.

As the Copwatch editor wrote this month, "(District Attorney) Schunk's team clearly leads the juries around by the nose (and as the saying goes, could indict a ham sandwich if he wanted to)."

Another issue to be resolved is to require all police officers to be residents of Portland. The Portland Office of Human Resources reported to me on April 29 that of the 707 officers currently on the police force, 535 of them are not residents of the city.

The City Council should force police officers to be residents of this city or the public should elect council members who will.

Charles E. Long
Northeast Portland

End Homelessness

To not have food, shelter or money you are considered homeless. As a resident of Portland you are able to see the effect of these three things. You see homeless people living on the cold concrete with their blankets and a shopping cart full of their most valuable things.

Homeless people weren't born to be homeless. Some of the reasons why people are homeless may be because they have no income, no support, no shelter, or addictions, sometimes it is the case that people have injuries that prevent them from doing the kind of work they're trained to do, or perhaps they lose a job because of cutbacks. Working hard doesn't always guarantee financial security.

We must find the solution that can prevent and solve homelessness. The government has a huge role to play. Neighborhood communities cannot raise enough money to build homes for homeless, but with government help things should move faster and further along.

If we as people in the community come together to support this issue, our voices will be heard, and the government would help out more to end homelessness in the community.

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