**OCCIDENTAL ALLEGATION**

"STUPID & IRRESPONSIBLE"

**CLAYMORE WORKERS STRIKE**

WE WILL NOT TOLERATE THIS BEHAVIOUR

Contract workers aboard the Claymore spontaneously walked off the job on Friday March 30.

They struck after Jamie Jamieson, a mechanical technician employed by AOC, was escorted ashore by Grampian Police detectives.

He was cautioned, detained in the cells, and questioned by police amidst allegations of sabotage by Occidental, operators of the Claymore.

On Wednesday March 28th a large bolt was found inside a hollow coupling shaft, between the power turbine and gear box in the gas compression unit, in Cmod.

The shaft had been taken apart earlier and was being worked on that day.

The first signs that Oxy were treating the incident as attempted sabotage was when Occidental’s OIM raised the issue at a specially convened meeting on board the rig that evening. Oxy’s allegations were repeated both on the rig, and by their spokesperson ashore over the next few days.

And even before police arrived on the installation to investigate.

Mr Jamieson, who had visited the site of the incident in his capacity as safety representative, had volunteered information which contradicted the sabotage theory. He was singled out by the police and flown ashore on the Friday afternoon still dressed in his work clothes. He was released later that evening.

OILC solicitor Sandy Kemp and Labour MP Frank Doran are monitoring the situation closely.

Mr Jamieson (still on full pay) has since returned home to his wife and two young children. Senior figures from both AOC and Occidental visited the rig to talk to the striking workers.

Mr Willo Gibson of the MSF union and Mr Bob Ebdell of the EETU who visited the platform and spoke to the workforce, refuted Oxy’s sabotage theory. Mr Gibson said that “it is more likely that the bolt was left in that position by accident rather than design...”.

Mr Jamieson told Blowout that he and his family “had been deeply shocked by the whole experience” and that he wanted a “full and public apology”, Occidental’s spokesperson says that they never used the term “sabotage”.

On the day after the Claymore bolt incident, and long before police had been able to complete their enquiries, Occidental had begun to spew out comment.

In Friday’s Scotsman, Frank Urquhart was quoting an Occidental spokesman as saying: “It could have been potentially serious.” She said that police had flown out to the platform to investigate, “a potential malicious act involving the discovery of a foreign object in one of the gas compressor trains.” This appears to be a stupid, irresponsible act which suggests the presence of someone on board the platform who has no respect for the safety of his fellow workers. We will not tolerate this behaviour,” and that, “It would appear to have been a deliberate act ...”.

By the Saturday Mr Urquhart was reporting Oxy’s spokesman as saying, “We have been very careful to ensure we have not implicated the police investigation and, with that in mind, our statement was approved by the police.”

What would Oxy have said if they had not been mindful?

By the Monday, after Mr Jamieson, (still on full pay), had been released without being charged, the Occidental spokesman informed Blowout that they had never alleged “sabotage”.

Certainly Peter Steele of the Daily Record managed to pick up Oxy’s message loud and clear. In an article completely in line with the usual slants on this toilet paper, their inch high headline read “SABOTAGE BID BY BIG MANIAC”. And continued with “A madman with a grade could be stalking a North Sea oil rig bent on sabotage.” They had no doubt about what their friends Oxy were really saying.

**FINGERING WORKERS NOT NEW FOR OXY**

The insinuation that workers aboard an Occidental installation have attempted to sabotage the platform is not new.

An allegation surfaced during the early stages of the Lord Cullen enquiry into the disaster on Claymore’s sister platform Piper Alpha.

It was claimed that in an incident in 1987, Sulbears had been put into a part of the gas compression system on Piper.

The allegation received little press attention at the time and offshore it was treated with open scepticism.

Later in the enquiry, an attempt to lay the blame for the disaster on two engineers (one who died in the disaster), from Petrelhead engineering company, earned Oxy little credibility either off or onshore.

**INSIDE**

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BLOWOUT
NEWS DESK
041-423 0461

Good Ceilidh dances tandis with Neil Kinmont at this year’s Scottish Labour Party Conference. An OILC delegation spoke to Kinmont about the NAB Campbellston back pay action, and the recent standing orders on energy UK.
ORGANISING SEDCO

I am working on a SEDCO drilling rig in the North Sea. Over the past six months we have increased our membership of the National Union of Seamen to 80%. This success is due in large part to the hard work of the SEDCO workers themselves, but also to the support of the NUJ and the unions of the offshore industry.

Many of the workers we have met have expressed a desire to join the NUJ. They are impressed by the union's commitment to improving working conditions and fighting for fair pay. We have also heard from workers who have been denied the opportunity to join the union because of the obstacles put in place by the employers.

As a result of this, we have decided to hold a series of meetings to educate workers about their rights and the benefits of union membership. We hope to establish a strong local section of the NUJ in the North Sea region.

A HARD LIE

I am writing in response to an article that appeared in your newspaper recently. The article made unfounded and inflammatory claims about the conditions on our offshore drilling rig.

The article stated that we have been given a hard time by the employers, who have imposed a series of unreasonable demands on us. This is not true. We have negotiated in good faith with the employers, and we have made progress towards resolving our differences.

The article also claimed that we have not been allowed to form a union or vote on our working conditions. This is simply not the case. We have been able to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the employers, and we are working to implement its provisions.

I urge you to consider these facts before drawing any conclusions about our situation. We are committed to working for a better future for all workers, and we are confident that we can achieve this through continued dialogue and mutual respect.

A LETTER TO YOUR EDITOR

I am writing to express my concern about the recent article in your newspaper. The article made several unfounded and misleading claims about the conditions on our offshore drilling rig.

The article stated that we have been given a hard time by the employers, who have imposed a series of unreasonable demands on us. This is not true. We have negotiated in good faith with the employers, and we have made progress towards resolving our differences.

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A PROTECTION FROM RATS

I am writing to express my concern about the recent article in your newspaper. The article made several unfounded and misleading claims about the conditions on our offshore drilling rig.

The article stated that we have been given a hard time by the employers, who have imposed a series of unreasonable demands on us. This is not true. We have negotiated in good faith with the employers, and we have made progress towards resolving our differences.

The article also claimed that we have not been allowed to form a union or vote on our working conditions. This is simply not the case. We have been able to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the employers, and we are working to implement its provisions.

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SICK FED UP

I am writing to express my concern about the recent article in your newspaper. The article made several unfounded and misleading claims about the conditions on our offshore drilling rig.

The article stated that we have been given a hard time by the employers, who have imposed a series of unreasonable demands on us. This is not true. We have negotiated in good faith with the employers, and we have made progress towards resolving our differences.

The article also claimed that we have not been allowed to form a union or vote on our working conditions. This is simply not the case. We have been able to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the employers, and we are working to implement its provisions.

I urge you to consider these facts before drawing any conclusions about our situation. We are committed to working for a better future for all workers, and we are confident that we can achieve this through continued dialogue and mutual respect.
I MISS HIM SO MUCH

I am writing this letter as I think this is a very good paper.

My husband was killed on Piper Alpha, and his body, along with those of another 20 men, was never recovered.

I was reading an article in the Daily Record. It is very true. It is all they can do until they know what they are doing.

I don’t have any idea what he was doing, but I do know that they were working to make the world better. They were changing the world.

They were changing the world.

I don’t know how long ago I died and I will never know.

E. Scott

AGREEMENT IS TOP PRIORITY

While attending the recent OILC meetings in Glasgow, on the 22nd of February and 1st of March, I was dismayed to hear some criticism directed at the standing committee.

As the present time we, the offshore workers, should give both them and our full time delegates, 100% support. In the past they’ve always given us sound advice.

At least we can work together. A fact evident in the cooperation of the NUS and TUV. Between them they show respect for the crew. This is a real direct result of recruitment campaigns by them both.

Last but not least, remember, our top priority must be an industrial agreement before 1992. This is a necessary base from which we can negotiate in the future. It is especially important as we become part of the European Market in 1992. We must strive to get an agreement this summer.

Money is an important issue, but without an industrial agreement it can only be a short-term answer, as shown before by the recent high rates of unemployment and the lack of respect from both employers and the unions.

Our struggle continues to defend our conditions, our job security, our rights and our quality of life. We must fight for a better future.

Martin McGarvey
NUS shop steward
Brent Delta

OIL WORKERS STRIKE IN TRINIDAD

Oilfield Workers’ Trade Union
99 Circular Road
San Fernando, Trinidad W 1
21/2/90

Dear Brother,

Our Union has received the news of the “LWQUIT” which you so generously sent us. We hope you take part in your mailing list for BLOWOUT which is presently led by me in our library for wider readership.

The current political and economic environment in which our Union is operating has resulted in severe hardship for the entire country. The IMF has imposed retrenchment, the introduction of VALUE-ADDED TAX (VAT), devaluation of our currency etc, causing widespread retrenchment affecting tens of thousands over the last five years.

In spite of all this our Union participated successfully in a One-Day General Strike (March 6, 1989) when the whole country came to a standstill. This was followed by a General Strike in Oil in September/October, 1989. Oil continues to be the main source of revenue for the Government and the strike was not allowed to last long.

Our struggle continues to defend our members’ rights. We demand an international affiliation and solidarity as vitally important and we should therefore encourage all our fellow workers.

We have added you to your mailing list for our Union’s newspaper “VANGUARD”.

Yours faithfully,
Dorina Tombs-Mestroux (Mrs)
Librarian

FREE AS A BIRD

I thought it was about time that I wrote and expressed my humble opinion; which is that Blowout is an excellent newspaper. It fills a gap that has been needing to be filled for years. It allows communication between rig workers. I’d like to add that I fully support you in your fight against unfairness.

However, I’m not sure about this “gumman law” that keeps creeping in. I’ve been a member of this union for over ten years and I’ve been dropped on by two of them. The third one had to join to get a job. As I turned out I didn’t do the job so he left. I’ve had some personal experiences, and so I have some of my friends, that best I can’t understand, and I must express the opinion that I and many others like me don’t want to be in a union. We are survivors and when something is wrong we say so. Thousands of us have joined in the last year because we believed it was right to do so, not because we were in the “Big Bear North Sea Union.”

We are all different as people. Some are “beau”, some are “tigers”, some are “kittens” and some are even “snakes”. We certainly didn’t want to be one of a flock going to a cliff following the rust. We could give for “instances” but what would that solve? So union, please leave us free people free.

Crazy Bob (still crazy all these years) A grumpier for free thought

Nissan Central

PS Can we have a “Readers’ Wives” section?

COTA?

Regarding an article in the Press and Journal about COTA rates. Each and every catering company, but Universal Catering Services Ltd, have only been given a final offer of a percentage of 7.77%.

On one installation, a crew that made further enquiries was presented with instant replacement and blank bailing out of the offshore industry. Apart from being swung along with promises, letters, the whole incident is a huge and we were being paid COTA rates. Who is in control of such a situation? Exclusive enquiries revealed nothing. Can you help me with the facts? My interest is fair.

A disgruntled crew.

I wouldn’t be very surprised at anything that Universal were up to having had first hand experience of the way they treated their Chlors workers back in 1978.

I don’t think that very much of the employees do off shore is “fair”. They give us all in the way of wages and conditions and even safety, as they think they can get away with. On the other hand they are certain times when they forced to retreat in front of the justified demands of the workers in the industry. This would appear to be one of those times. The challenge however is to see that this affects everybody and that they are protected so that they can’t just be strung out during the down turn.

With regards to COTA are we and what they are, contact Minta McCreary (NUS) at 5 Courtown Street, phons 0224-352-688 or John Taylor (TUV) 44 King Street, phons 0224-465-271. Both Aberdeen E50.
SACKED FOR GETTING PREGNANT

An article by Derek McGillivray

Having come from the hotel trade, (before I worked offshore), I've worked alongside a lot of women. We always had equal status then, so I get annoyed now when I hear complaints about the lack of facilities for women offshore. It's not on that they should be discriminated against and even sexually harassed.

It's only in the last three or four years that women have begun to go offshore in any numbers. I welcome them getting the chance. They've as much right to work out here as I have, though I'd wonder why they wanted to go offshore at all. It's bad enough for men let alone women. According to someone I've spoken to it's because the catering trade aboard is very woman orientated and very low paid. I couldn't argue with that.

Last summer a new problem arose. A young stewardess on a Shell platform, doing her third trip on her first job offshore, discovered that she was six weeks pregnant. She went to her ship steward to ask for advice. Could she still work offshore? He didn't know but said he would get advice from the union. But before he knew what had happened, the stewardess had been removed from the platform.

The catering company claimed that she was no good at her job. This is a lie. But even worse was Shell's response. They claimed that they didn't have the facilities to deal with a miscarriage. How the hell then were they going to deal with any of the serious injuries that occur, with more than a reasonable regularity, offshore? The TGWUNUS are raising the issue with the catering companies and UKOOGA. But without much progress as yet. I'll keep you informed.

When I was talking to Stewardesses from Shell platforms they complained that there were no separate toilet facilities for women. (In fact there were no separate catering toilet and that's against the hygiene regulations. The chief stewardess just has the "bathroom"). Not to mention the bear mounts.) Stewardesses said that they couldn't even use the toilets in the cabins. Because the cabins are split night and day, they're never empty. I was also told that if a steward doesn't turn up or one of the women volunteers to work over to cover, they have to hustle across the bridge to the barge because she can't share with a man obviously, and Shell reckons it's a waste of space to put her in a four berth cabin on her own. Just imagine her sleeping in the TV room with the rest of the clubbers if they get caught by bad weather and can't get back. Even the shuttle pack that she gets to provide basic toilet facilities is designed for men. Designed in maybe a bit of sympathy but they certainly don't meet the toilet needs of women.

The more I talked to the women the more I realised that the oil companies treat them with little consideration. I got a lot more information about life offshore for women, some that I think would shock you. I'm gathering more information and getting advice about women's rights, but the best way to get the whole situation out in the open is for the women offshore to write to Blowout and tell it like it is. Forty percent of the workforce in the Norwegian sector are women. They're miles ahead of us. And it must be pointed out that oil companies operating in both sectors treat women workers better in the Norwegian than they do in the British sector. Maybe somebody could explain why?

THE QUESTION OF WOMEN OFFSHORE IS IMPORTANT.

They say that you can tell a lot about a society by the way women are treated.

We will learn a lot about our own industry, if women in both the British and Norwegian sectors tell their story.

"WE PET LAMB!"
A GLOSSY LOOK AT HUTTON TLP

"Me" is a women's magazine. Much like all the other women's magazines as far as I can tell.

It sells fashion wear, children's books, toasters and breakfast cereals, and in between squeezes articles about love, travel, food and gardening.

Nothing wrong with that I'm sure.

It is according to my sources a magazine read by "ordinary women". So I suppose if you'd bothered to look last trip home, you'd have maybe found the March 19 edition in your own house. And with the still small but growing number of women working offshore these days, you never know you might just find it lying about in the recreation room.

I doubt however if it's worth your while searching Conoco's Hutton TLP for a copy of the edition in question if that's where you happen to be working these days, because I'm pretty sure that Jackie Spence will have boned any stray copies, with some justification.

It certainly wouldn't be part of Blowout's intention to embarrass Jackie or any other offshore worker for that matter.

And to be fair to her she was probably unaware of what the editors of "Me" had in mind when they asked her permission to do a story on offshore "Other People's Lives." column. But having said that, when widely read women's magazine speaks to tens of thousands of women about our industry we have the right to reply and expose the utter garbage that it is.

Nobody had to ask us to tell them that "Me" attempt an in-depth analysis of the offshore life and a woman's place in it. You may as well ask Peter Morrison to look after the safety of offshore workers. It's just not in the nature of the beast. A light hearted look at a woman's life offshore is a perfectly valid subject for a magazine article, but this is not even that.

Jackie does, it must be said, point out that she is one of only four women on an installation with about 200 men. "Most of the men," it seems, "will bring her a bar of chocolate as a thank-you present" whereas she's "prepared a special report for example." Yes we know that's not what you meant but will "Me" readers realise that the amazingly "tame" description of a woman's life on an offshore oil rig that's presented here is equally false.

Thousands of women will by now know that, "High heels are forbidden," it would be a stupid idea to wear a skirt, and that men who forget the fridge and the freezer go hungry and then "get terribly embarrassed and can't apologise enough." I personally was much enlightened that, "things have changed" presented with "a giant birthday cake (iced with 'we pet lambs')" since her from getting homesick, and that her, "two skirt wearing weeks in Glasgow fly by" and she "really looks forward to getting back to the office."

I suppose it's all part for the course in the world of the woman's magazine; but it's a far cry from the realities of offshore life that most of us know. What makes it particularly nauseous is that this tripe appears not alongside serious articles that expose the realities of offshore life good and bad, but instead of them. In the 25 year history of our industry you could count on one hand the informative articles about the way we live that have appeared in the media. And I imagine the other article on this page is the first time anyone has attempted to deal with some of the real problems faced by women workers in our industry. A task that 'll be avoided like the plague by the well heded hacks of the woman's glossy.

Maybe Blowout will be privileged to print the realities of offshore life as seen by the women themselves. I don't know but I've a feeling that they'll bear little resemblance to this nonsense.

I don't mind overtones - it's not as if I'm going anywhere!" Miss Spence is quoted in the headline to this story. Well it takes all kinds. But if it is true that she's on a two and two rota, and 12 hour shifts for the princely sum of £12,000 a year then she's being severely ripped off. Maybe she should ask the guys who are buying her bars of chocolate what they're on.
A Review by
Jerry Chambers

We can't always get what we want, when we want it! So the saying goes. That probably reflects fairly accurately my feelings of resignation before agreeing to attend the RGIT-Welltrain “Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regulations Course” at Keppel House in Aberdeen.

If the truth be told, our safety committee had for some time been fruitlessly requesting information regarding the availability and content of different courses. It appeared to be RGIT, take it or leave it. I wasn’t happy either that I had to attend the course in my own time. If I got 6 hours a day for it, rather than being allowed time off the rig without loss of pay or laid down in the regulations. So, slightly peevish, but keeping an open mind, I duly turned up on the Monday morning.

The first shock I got was, that of the nine guys on the course that week, I was the only one that had been elected in line with the regulations (SD71). The others had either been appointed by their employers or were supervisors, sent to familiarise themselves with the legislation. This would have been bad enough but it turns out that the same had applied to the three preceding courses. It seemed to me that the main reason behind their appointment onto the committee and their attendance at the course was to stop the “lower ranks” from participating.

The course itself consisted of five main sections; Safety Legislation, Communication Skills, Accident Prevention/Investigation and Inspection, The Functions of Management, and Safety Training. It was directed in a very professional manner by Mr. Viv Jenkins, a charming man who, although no stranger to offshore training, seemed surprised by what really goes on offshore, and therefore about the effectiveness of the legislation. Mr. Dan Kirkwood gave an entertaining and practical lecture on communication skills, and a Conoco supervisor detailed how effectively their committee on the Murchison was working.

With such a wide range of subject matter the topics which came up for discussion were varied. It was admitted openly that safety reps offshore have far less protection under the 1989 regulations than onshore reps have under the 1977 regulations because of their no formal role for the trade unions offshore. In fact it was noticed that this would largely explain the reluctance of people to take on the job of safety rep and leads to companies “appointing” reps so as to appear to be in compliance with the regulations. The discussion also challenged the notion that the mountain of paperwork that was generated really enhanced safety or simply allowed the companies to “cover their asses.” And this drew a suggestion (and not from me either) that every installation should have a representative from an independent body who would oversee safety and ensure that the legislation was being enforced. I liked that one. The industrial relations part of the course would certainly have benefited from some STUC or ACAS participation. Maybe reps should do a top-up course at the STUC’s Teesbank House: Bar could not put too much on the chances of the employers agreeing to that line. As for the question of whether it was all worthwhile, I suppose it was, despite the little choice had. Mind your there are still a lot of questions to be asked about the effectiveness of the 1989 legislation. And given that the employers will only ever spend enough on safety to meet the minimum requirements, maybe we should be asking the government to put back into safety training, some of the huge revenues that they take out of the industry.

Thanks to RGIT-Welltrain for their hospitality, and to Mark for his excellent lunches and to Viva for the end of course pint.

THE TRADE-UNION ALTERNATIVE?

Offshore trade unions usually had the right to expect that the trade union movement would get its act together and provide an alternative to “in house” safety training.

Aigues-mort were proud to carry an advertisement for a series of courses to be run by the STUC. It seemed however that they will no longer take place.

Even more disturbing is that none of the offshore unions have even registered with the “Offshore Industry Training Board” to provide training under the legislation.

The STUC is planning to run short “top-up” courses on the “representative role” of safety delegates. A function which even the legislation admits only the trade union movement are suited to do.

If safety training and safety committees are to be largely cosmetic, and the old regime remains intact, then we will merely have a repeat of the carnage that was Piper Alpha (Ocean Odyssey and the Motrose gas field point to the ever present possibility).

Last time the emotions that surfaced offshore were deep shock and sorrow. If there is a next time, anger will cut all other emotions on the North Sea.

What’s orange and blue, wet and cold, and hangs from the end of a rope? The answer might well be you.

Service companies are pushing abseiling or “direct access” as an alternative to scaffolding around oil platforms. The reason is obvious – a couple of men, and harnesses and a rope are a lot cheaper than the construction of a proper working platform for awkward inspection and maintenance jobs. But what is abseiling and why is it so dangerous?

Abseiling or “trappelling,” is a technique borrowed from mountain climbing. Climbers use it as a means of descending sheer or awkward rock faces. A doubled rope is secured at the top as a belay, a fixed point. The climber wears a harness, and slides down the rope by means of a “figure of eight” or descender. This device looks exactly as its name suggests - a palm sized piece of metal, shaped like the figure eight, one end of the figure is clipped to the harness, and the rope is threaded through the “figure of eight.” The climber speeds up or slows down his rate of descent by varying the friction on the rope as it slides through the loops of the “eight.” Used safely and correctly, abseiling is a useful technique and has saved the lives of many mountaineers trapped in exposed places by sudden storms.

There are serious questions though about the use of abseiling abroad North Sea rigs. There have been many abseiling accidents, not just to novices, but to experienced climbers. Tom Purdy, one of the most able of Scottish mountaineers was killed while abseiling from a sea stack in the North of Scotland. There have been hundreds of abseiling fatalities throughout the world. Will this pattern of tragedy be repeated in the North Sea?

Anyone who has abseiled in winter will know the difference between training and reality. A technique which looks simple in a warm well-lit hall with ropes and gear carefully laid out, can become a hazardous nightmare in freezing conditions and gathering darkness, with rope and harness in a wet tangle. Belay lines come adrift, clips come undone or the user becomes confused and disorientated - even to the extent of misjudging the limit of the descent and sliding off the end of the rope!

There are special hazards in the North Sea. What happens if the worker down the rope suffers a hand or head injury, or simply becomes too cold to haul himself up? What about the effects of the harness on circulation? Climbers usually spend only a few minutes sliding down the rope, not half an hour inspecting a weld.

What happens if there is fire or explosion? What happens if those above are disabled? Who volunteers to learn this new technique? Is it the usual 10pm an hour extra if you volunteer, run off if you don’t.

The introduction of abseiling on the North Sea is happening piecemeal, with scant regard to safety. It’s introduction should be halted immediately till the risks and dangers are properly assessed. Good design and forward planning can eliminate the need for such a hazardous practice.

As part of a sport or a rescue technique, abseiling is valuable. As a means of getting to your workplace it’s an unnecessary and risky business. As a means of saving the company a bob or two, it’s totally unacceptable.

GOING FOR A NEW JOB? NEED A NEW C.V. OR THE OLD ONE UPDATED?

YOU NEED

THE WORD PROCESS
(CO-OPERATIVE)
GRANITEHILL ENTERPRISE CENTRE
GRANITEHILL ROAD
ABERDEEN
TEL 0224 698545

HIGH QUALITY C.Vs post us the details we’ll process and print and return by post or call in anytime for quick and personal service
ARBITRATION PANELS

Unlike workers in the drilling side of the industry, most workers in construction engineering officers, are protected to some extent from being run off and blacked, (they call it NRB’s: Not Required Back). "Arbitration Panels" are available to sort "Beers.

A trade union official with over 30 years’ experience in the construction industry wrote to Blowout to explain the history of the Arbitration Panel and how it works.

HIT THE STREETS

Until 1979, there was only one way to combat the many occasions when the employers either dismissed a man unfairly, or selected him for redundancy "out of turn." And that was hit the street. The success of such action, (and there were many) depended on a number of factors. Some of these were union backing, job importance, the number of men involved, the strength of the management and the solidarity of the dismissed men. But nowhere in these criteria will you find "justice" listed. The reality is that tough, not on the crucial factors and cases failed that should have won and were the pages turner cases were successful.

The labour government introduced Industrial Tribunals and they did help. But they didn’t apply to everybody and they left the decision to a panel consisting of one union representative, one company representative and a lawyer. This was a great deal better but still cases were not decided on merit. Now success or failure depended on who was on the tribunal, who presented your case and all this only after the employer had passed the "Qualifying Service" hurdle. (You have to be 2 years with the company before you are eligible for a tribunal. - Ed)

MERT

1976 saw the introduction of the so-called "Hook-Up" agreement (the Offshore Construction Agreement), for some categories of offshore workers. And with the appearance of the "Arbitration Panel", this is the credit of those who were responsible for the "Arbitration Panel".

The "Arbitration Panel" ha in the 14 years that they have passed have never been had to be altered. (Ed) now became the number one factor for deciding in a case of dismissed. Unions and management having an equal input in determining the decision eventually arrived at. There was still a flaw, as to have access to the Panel you had to be working under the terms of the "Hook-Up" agreement. Then in September 1980, the construction/electrical employers gave their employees an increase in their hourly rates. And those companies that were members of the Offshore Contractors Association also widened the access to Arbitration Panel to all of their employees, not just those working on "Hook-Ups". These concessions were, according to the employers, given partly out of the goodness of their hearts and had nothing to do with dissemination of work throughout the North East during the Summer of ’89. You, like me, will no doubt agree with their assertion.

But never mind how we got it, get it did, and anyone on the construction side of the industry, who is now NRB’s for whatever reason, should avail themselves of the opportunity to take their case to the Arbitration Panel. It’s for you to use if you’re taken out of turn for redundancy or even hanged into a "Hook-Up" to platform where there is little work left.

Here’s an extract about the Arbitration Panel from the agreement.

"An operative wishing to challenge his dismissal under section 6.2 may request suspension without pay pending the decision of an Arbitration panel. Such an application shall be made within 10 working days of his returning to the employer’s onshore base. A panel will comprise two Employee Representatives and two Employer’s Representatives, from the Companies on the Offshore Register, none of whom will be parties concerned in the case. The panel will elect its own Chairmen who will have a casting vote.

The panel will be conducted informally as follows:

.(i) Consider available written evidence;
(ii) The Employer or his Representative presents the case for dismissal calling witnesses as necessary;
(iii) The dismissed man’s Representative presents the case for reinstatement or re-employment as appropriate and calls witnesses as necessary;
(iv) Panel calls for further evidence and re-examines witnesses as necessary;
(v) Panel considers its decision in private;
(vi) Panel gives its formal decision to both parties and issues written communiqué.

The decision of the panel is binding on both parties."

URGENT

During December and January a number of men refused "alternative", "aid standard" accommodation abroad Arno’s Montrose platform. The AEU urgently needs to contact anyone who was put in this position. They are currently preparing the defence of one of their members who lost his job in similar circumstances.

Contact
Offshore Information Centre 32 Gold Street Aberdeen 0224-210 118

LAUGH OR CRY

We have, on the very best authority, heard a telling story about one offshore platform. Seemingly when the men of wisdom were handing down their judgement on some of their number accused of that they didn’t want to see the details appearing in the press or in Blowout.

Well! Now just who do the people think they are? If a man has been unfairly dismissed, because of misjudgement or sheer badness, and an arbitration panel finds this to be the case, what right has anyone to insist that the culprits, the employers who did the wrongfull dismissal, should be shielded from the gaze of interested parties.

You get the impression that people who can still talk like this have managed to miss the entire debate that is taking place in Eastern Europe.

Is this a threat against an innocent man? Could it be that the lessers work of an enterprising journalist could be the snare and reason for denying a man the right to earn a crust? What sense they going to do if the whole soild affair appears in the next edition of Blowout? Back, again, but this time with the “good” reasons they told them to keep quiet when they “let him off last time.”

That would actually be a better reason than is usually given by employing officers who “let him off” and NRB men at will. If you’re caught playing God with a man’s life, then you’ll just have to live with the reputation you get. Blowout couldn’t be back on their knees any more than they are already.

At the least panel differentiated between “the press” and Blowout. We’ve probably somebody has noticed the difference.

With virtually no exceptions the press, and we can call upon this definition to cover the entire media, think that the offshore worker is there to be ignored or at best used to provide a story in their circulation battles, and to fill a space between advert stories.

The incomparably bad Daily Record kept up its hundred percent record of trivialising and falsifying what actually goes on out here by running a months old story taken from as old Blowout as a front page lead in their so-called Northern Edition on the very day that the ORC was calling on the government to shut down Arno’s Montrose platform.

And it fell to BBC Scotland’s Kenny Watt to ask a benignly, Mrs. Thatcher the questions we’ll all be hearing her answer, during her most recent visit up to Scotland. Only Miss Warh didn’t manage to get in any of the questions that 40,000 oil workers would like answered about health and safety offshore the Department of Energy’s fitness to police it. This is despite the fact that the industry yanks the entire British economy and had the previous week come within a whisker of reopening the Piper disaster on Arno’s Montrose platform.

Only the most maligned, (and rightly so), Sky television covered Gavin Clelland and an OILC delegation abroad the Piper Banner when they met Neil Kinziek at the Scottish Labour Party Conference in Aberdeen. They were the only got back to work for the good but I don’t think I could go through it all again. I learned to be independent although what I get off Social Security is a pittance compared to what I should have got off him. But at least I know the benefit money is forthcoming even when the seas “tigers” and “beams”.

More like drunkenness as far as myself, and a lot of wives who have been through it all concerned.

A MORAAL TALE

The moral of this story is the like the Billy Frayer story in your last edition. We could have had a great story. This house could have been bought twice over by this time. The children and I have never been a bout together. I managed to pay for my eldest daughter’s trip to Germany with the school a couple of years ago off my benefit money. She took her brother to help with the expenses. Hobby knew about the trip. He handed our daughter £10 spending money. He had nearly a year’s notice of it but he still drank his money while coming here getting fed, washout done etc. I would say to my in-law something to the next six weeks till Easter. Hubby said he was off the drink and doing well. Things seemed on the up and I was an optimist at all times or maybe this time. When asked what hobby works at and reply that “They have the big rigs”, people think you’re some money worries, own a lovely home, car, and have good holidays. Little do they know the struggle of a lot of the tigers and beams" makes just as much, survive physically and mentally.

A VIEW FROM HOME

The victims of the the North Sea are not only those offshore workers killed or made ill at work. A wife speaks out in our regular column.

My hobby worked in Flotta 1976. (He's dead). It was 6 weeks away 35 days leave. The money was good, we had three children at that time. However, during the 10 months he worked there, he never came home sober, and there was a social club there on the island, in the work camp. When he was home on leave I hardly saw him. When I did he was drunk except for the day he was to leave. This went on for 10 months then he quit because of the drink. It was worth it doing without the good money as long as he kept sober.

THE RIGS

He started on the rigs, January 78 and that was when my partner went with him. At that time it was three weeks on and two off. No drink on the rig but he did make up for it on leave. A repeat of the Flotta days only worse. The money was good but I wasn’t getting much. We had four children by then, and his drinking was worse.

My father died that May and he was contacted. When he got to my mother’s he was drunk and this carried on throughout the days leading up to the funeral. He passed away sober till the funeral was over that morning, but he was away again at the reception.

PERFECT HOUSSE

April we had work on another house in an overgrown area, front and back door. I liked the house but I was still very grief ridden over my father’s sudden death. It was the perfect house and had room for the children. We moved in May and hubby promised he would cut down on his drinking and spend more time with his family as I was leaving my mother and sisters who all lived in town to come and help me. I would be among strangers in the new place. It didn’t happen. I kept hoping things would get better.

Things came to a head four years ago. We had five children by then (my choice). I was lucky to get £50 a week, so I had to leave. He quit the job as the social security would have made him pay me for the drugs money. So I was getting state benefit from then on. He did work for 2 years but got casual work. He would come to visit and go off and get fed etc. And he was always skin till the job. The children are teenagers now and I am on my own. After all these years, I can’t say I know the life I’d had when he was earning big money.

THE CHILDREN

He missed the children growing up as they were from when they were babies. I had to take them on their first day at school etc. He was apart from them so far as they they can be 2 years with the company before you are eligible for a tribunal - Ed)
The announcement on March 6 that some contract workers on BP and Shell installations were to get an 11.7% wage increase and “improved benefits” came as a bit of a surprise.

No one on the North Sea had actually put up in any claim for more money. Even on Amoco’s Abroadth “hook-up” where a rise was due from January 1st, little urgency was apparent.

Wood Group chairman, Bill Carr, thought it was just “another major step in improving employee remuneration packages” takes a bit of believing.

His company was amongst the leaders when it came to handing out the wage packet in the wake of the ’86 downturn. Even this 11.7% does not claw back what was stolen from the men then. We’d have to look somewhat further than generosity for an explanation to these bizarre events.

There are a number of circumstances existing on the North Sea this year which could possibly throw some light on the situation.

For a kick off there’s a lot of work to be done. Not just the usual summer shut downs to allow annual maintenance programmes to go ahead, but a host of new projects and some major renovation to the FLAGS pipeline system (It takes the oil and gas ashore from the North North Sea). And this takes no account of any recommendations that Lord Callen might make.

Then there’s the shortage of skilled men to actually carry out the work. If you’ve tried to get your kids into an apprenticeship over the last 10 years or so you’ll recognise one of the reasons why.

But possibly the least palatable circumstance facing the employers is that since last years strikes, the offshore workforce has quietly spent the winter organizing and the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee.

With the “Open Market” of 1992 getting closer, many offshore workers now realize that the new money is in itself not enough. The only assurance that wages and conditions will plummet under the weight of an influx of cheap labour (or instead another downturn), is to get agreements in place now. A Continental Shelf Agreement that will regulate the greed of the employers and protect all offshore workers.

All does not seem to be well with the employers. Days before the “New Deal” was to be implemented there was still no assurance that contractors employed on all installations other than Shell and BP would be included. And of course catering workers and drill crews have been passed over again. The employers seem to be split in the face of a growing movement offshore which began to surface after Piper.

There is no doubt that the government is putting pressure to ensure that the employers resist any move towards worker organization offshore. Having spent millions on ushering the miners they don’t want any challenge to their authority in this strategically and financially important industry.

All this of course must be deeply upsetting for those employers who want to enjoy the new boom and live quietly in their Dendee mansions. It can’t be much fun either for the young businessmen who thought that they’d be able to go on heading out the abuse and throwing their weight around as usual.

Ah well! Time, and the determination of the offshore workforce will tell.

An 11.7% increase in wages and a package of enhanced conditions can’t be bad surely? Especially if you’re an offshore construction engineering worker, and it means that your hourly rate has gone up to £8.04.

It could mean that you’ve had a rise of over 60% since this time last year when some men were on £5.00 an hour, (before the OILC stepped into the North Sea equation).

But that 11.7% is holding another statistic. Despite it, wage levels are still nowhere near back to pre-1986 levels. If wages had kept pace with inflation since 1981, then that same engineering/construction worker should be on between £9.00 and £10.00 an hour today. This trend is reflected in catering and drilling.

And this is exactly the point that has come up time and time again in OILC meetings throughout the country. If the employers are determined to stuff money in the pay packets today, it’s because they have no choice.

The 11.7% is for one section of workers only. There is to be no discussion of other workers. There is to be no discussion of all categories of workers. There is to be no discussion of the safety of workers. The OILC is to be no discussion of the safety of offshore.

On Wednesday 18th April, National Officers of the 4 traditional signatories of the new defunct Offshore Construction Agreement, plus National Officers of the T&GWU and NUS, will meet in Glasgow to discuss the draft “Continental Shelf Agreement”.

A LETTER FROM THE TERN

QUESTION

Why did a claim for 8.5% of virtually nothing bring the Ambulancemen under the Tory hammer for 6 months?

What is a 9% wage increase negotiated by teachers necessarily as an example of greed that can only increase inflation and lower the quality of life in general?

Why has an increase in wages of over 50% in the last year for some offshore workers not had Tory politicians foaming at the mouth? Or has it?

Sir

We are regular readers of the Herald, and during the disputes over the years, concerning offshore wages and conditions, you have published the facts. So with this in mind, we challenge George Smith to account for his statement - “An 11.7% increase providing an annual salary of more than £23,800”, which was published March 3rd 1990.

Our working week is based on 84 hours and our rate is £2.153 a week.

Perhaps Mr Smith can inform us how this deficit can be implemented.

Further! Our grievances are not solely of a monetary nature. We want union involvement in all negotiations concerning payment and conditions for all offshore contractors. The recent increment precluded union involvement yet again. During the “eighties” our wages and conditions were suspended, eroded and ignored, with no grievance procedure with which to complain. The NRB (not required back) was, and indeed still is, a menacing threat.

These facts, plus an offshore safety, who’s main aim is the production of the oilfields, (i.e. the Department of Energy), is the crux of our problem.

Disgruntled Offshore Contractors

Tern “A”

Mr Smith lifted the figure £22,000 straight from the employers press release. When challenged by an ANL, the employers admitted that to earn that figure you would have had to do overtime. So much for “safety comes first”. Even the Department of Energy are going to ban regular overtime (eventually) on the grounds of safety. - Ed.
AMOCO and the D of E

It’s not only the North Sea worker that Amoco treats with contempt. It looks very much as though the Department of Energy has to endure it as well.

On the 12th of March members of the Operations and Inspection Branch of the Department of Energy met a delegation from the trade unions and the UOLC. They had gone to London to discuss Amoco’s response to government proposals for a new safety inspection system. They culminated in the near disastrous gas leak on the Monstrose platform in February 14.

At the end of extensive, and what at first seemed like productive discussions, the Department of Energy were asked to shut down Amoco’s operations. They said that they weren’t prepared to do so, but that they had decided to examine the situation very carefully. At the end of the meetings, they had agreed to meet again on the same topic on the 29th of March.

Never in the history of the oil industry has there been such an outpouring of malice and vitriol. Amoco were accused of all sorts of things: breeding a culture of fear, lack of proper training, inadequate equipment, lack of proper safety systems, and so on.

Amoco denied that the statements were true, but the union representatives felt that the company had been completely disingenuous.

A number of questions spring to mind. Does Sedco have a drugs or drink problem with their offshore installations? What sort of systems do Sedco imagine that they will find on the average semi-submersible in their fleet? Who is going to carry out these inspections? And who is going to pay the charts and the hulls that they eventually produce?

BONNIE RAITT

Nick of Time

Capital Records

REVIEWS

SCHILLING

Twelve Dreams of Doctor Sardonicus

Edsel Records ED 313

The man who worked more overtime to pay for a new TV.

TCHOW

Going to the Norwegian sector. You’ll get no chance to know that the dreaded “Chinook” is back. They’re flying from the new Sola base in Stavanger to Phillips’ Eschol field. The “Flying brick” seemed to have gone to the North Sea forever, and it’s surprising that the normally safety conscious Norwegian workers have allowed it to make a comeback. In fact there is a rumour going about that some military units of the Chinook have downgraded it from carrying troops to carrying freight only.

CORMORANT

A recent survey of “explosion-proof” electrical fittings on Shell’s Cormorant Alpha found many defects. Eyebrows were raised at some of the comments emanating from Shell. Most of the defects were passed off as “minor” by some engineers and minorlabel mix-up.

According to experienced electrical technicians, labels aren’t some sort of optional extra or vanity in hazardous areas. If a best containing live circuits but no label a wrong circuit could possibly be isolated before a job was commenced. A combination of live open circuits and gas leaks could result in explosions.

SEDCO

How were you feeling on the first of January? Maybe you’d rather forget the experience.

It’s pretty clear how Sedco’s general manager, the impressively named Thomas R Bums, was feeling. In a document addressed to “All persons on board Sedco Four installations“, and on the subject of “Purification and control of narcotics, drugs, alcohol and weapons”, he said amongst other things:

“With immediate effect, all personnel, contracted for or otherwise, officers, Sedco FOREX Inspectors will be subject to searches and/or urine analysis by Sedco FOREX. These searches may include the person, (strip searching), personal belongings, and a random selection of urine samples. Should any prohibited items be discovered, such items will be taken into custody and the individual will be reported to their employer and/or the police.”

“Refusal by any individual to agree to such searches and/or urine analysis screening will result in immediate dismissal from the installation.”

PRESS

ZIEG HEIL!

From a Mr Bonfante, the Senior Labour Officer to a Press Offshore pipeline.

“I am informed that in the evenings of 6th November and 4th December in the reception area of the Summerrich Lodge Hotel, you announced a deal and said you’re dissatisfied with the standard of accommodation being provided to you by Press Offshore” (Nicole, a well-spoken girl).” While I agree that the facilities at the Hotel are not up to 4 or 5 star standard nevertheless they are considered adequate for the purpose of providing a bed for the night and a hot meal prior to departure offshore.”

“In view of your comments, it has been decided, (by God no doubt), to do what is necessary to ensure that your stay in this area is as comfortable as possible. Therefore, we have decided to offer you complimentary accommodation at the Hotel. In addition, we will be providing a meal for you each day.”

“I repeat.”

BONNIE RAITT

“Nick of Time”

Two real treats after the death of last month, “Twelve Dreams of Doctor Sardonicus” is a formerly deleted CBS album, enterprisingly re-released by Edsel, from 1970, while “Nick of Time” is the latest release from that most durable and enduring lady, Bonnie Raitt, currently at number one in the American album chart.

I’ll be brief with Spirit. For some reason, always a cult band from their beginnings in 1967, they released four albums of unusual quality, “Twelve Dreams” being the fourth and very much the most satisfying. For anyone who knows or knows Spirit, the news of this release will be a pure delight. For those who didn’t or don’t, I can only say that, for me, this is one of the very finest of albums. I last heard it in 1976 when my copy was stolen, and re-releasing it last week, I was astonished at its freshness, inventiveness and sheer musical quality could have been produced twenty years ago. Do yourselves a big favour and buy this album.

To Bonnie Raitt, “Nick of Time” on the latest in a long line of CBS albums she’s produced by the year dating back very nearly to the time of Spirit. This is the fifth album of hers (by the way, I could only get it on cassette but was assured LPs and CDs...
would follow) to come into my possession and to the others it compares more favourably.

Truth to tell, I think she’s wonderful and “Nick of Time” shows her ripening all the time. Her voice seems huskier and more relaxed here and her guitar playing, particularly slide and acoustic finger-pick, more confident and more in the moment. With a nice range of moods and styles, from “Nobody’s Girl”, an acoustic number reminiscent of Lowell George and Little Feat’s Mark of the holy ballyho rock. “Real Man” you get eleven songs of evently high quality played by a performer at a nice peak in a career that’s been full of them.

Connie Raitt has obvious influences in her selection of material. Only two of the songs on the album are self-penned, the title track and the opening number “The Road’s My Middle Name”, the others being a collection of numbers as various as “Have a Heart”, a reggae song basically, and “Too Soon To Tell” which is just another fun jive. You get the feeling that enjoyment determines her choice. It comes across that she enjoys her material, and this is infectious. Listening to it lightens your mood, makes me feel good and well recommendation than that can give an album other than to say that any lady who has a trumpet section called Sir Harry Bowens, Sweet Pea-Akinosi and Arnold McCallister must have something going for her.

Yes, sir, two real treat this month.

"Dead Poets Society"
Directed by Peter Weir.
Starring Robin Williams, Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawke, Josh Charles.

"Married to the Mob"
Directed by Jonathan Demme.
Starring Michelle Pfeiffer, Matthew Modine, Dean Stockwell.

Reviewed by George Whitaker.

Some good stuff around at the moment. Field of Dreams is a stunning, magical film that nobody should miss. Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade is performed by the Indiana Jones trilogy and Lethal Weapon 2 offers more of the violent spats and thrillers that made the first film so popular.

Against that you’d hardly think that any movie championing the cause of poetry, all of which I would hope to compete hot Dead Poets Society not only cleaned up in spectacular fashion at the box office but has been nominated for no less than four Academy awards.

On the face of it much of it is old hat. You know the kind of thing: new teacher with progressive ideas, raises consciousness of pupils, shakes up stuffiness at school, then falls foul of the authorities when things get out of hand. Add some period detail, pack it with lovingly photographed shots of tattooed seminal figures, some graphically gruesome hangmans and distasteful trophy cabinets and you’ve got the kind of stuff that Michael Pfau’s used to making a living out of.

But the film is much more than a ripping tale of Flight school death. John Keating (Robin Williams), the young-ish English teacher at Welton Academy in New England, is passionately driven by the need to open the eyes of his pupils to the unexplored potential of their lives and to force them to gather all the resources they can while there’s still time. “Seize the day,” he urges them, “fuck the narrow talk of lout, graphically hammer home his point by inviting them to consider the uncomfortable fact that the former pupils who go out with such youthful vitality from the old black and white photographs on the wall are now fomenting the deficit.” Initially the boys are a little bemused but before long they are shooting inspirational lines of poetry to fire themselves up at football practice, ripping out briefing pages from their books and recently refusing the Dead Poets Society (founded by Keating in his own school days, in the Academy) in a nearby cave. There they recite verse, piss about, and discuss life’s profundities.

The boys’ attempt to think and act for themselves for the first time in their lives is funny, moving and logically entertaining. The story focuses on two boys in particular - one suffering from unrequited love, the other an aspiring impresario of a band for a living, in defiance of his authoritarian father. As the pressures mount the boys become increasingly desperate, with unfortunately tragic results.

Robin Williams is well known for the near-genius level of his manic burs of improvisation he plays it pretty low key, creating the sympathetic character of Keating with considerable restraint. Only occasionally - such as when he drops into brief but rare throwaway impersonations of Marlon Brando and John Wayne in front of his class - do we get a glimpse of the awesome power of his comic gift.

The film is not without its flaws - it’s a shade goopy in places and somewhat schmaltzy (the howlurous, tyrannical, unhuggable father, for instance, is so obviously the antithesis of Keating that you’d have to have a hole in your side not to be moved by it.

Although a very different kind of film, Married to the Mob is nevertheless also away from the Hollywood mainstream - it’s a quirky combination of black humour, force and oddball weirdness, and is very funny indeed.

Michelle Pfeiffer (bewigged and bunsh-oil but still sounding enough sensuality to make you want to) moves Angela, married to Mafia luminary Frank DeMarco but chuffed off with social duties expected of a Mob wife, alarmed at the possibility of swindling her has apparently inherited from her old man and unable to forget that everything in her plush home “fell off the back of a truck”. She wants out, but since divorcing one of the mob is simply not on, she looks stuck.

Fun plays her a fortunate hand, however, when Frank gets caught messing with this boss Tony’s mistress and gets blown away for his trouble. Angela sells up and moves with her son into a spotty apartment in New York’s Lower East Side, turning her back on Tony’s offers of help and servicing him when he makes an unexpected pass at her. Tony, however, is seriously miffed and tracks her down to her inauspicious surroundings, as does FBI agent Mike Downey (Matthew Modine) who hopes to nail Tony for Frank’s murder. He moves into Angela’s block and poses her flat, gaining her trust and surveillance.

She plans it thickly delicious. Mike too falls for Angela. Tony’s fiancée, begins to suspect she’s been cheating on and Angela is blackmailed by the FBI to set Tony up. Throughout, the actors play it real to see that everything comes out twice as funny, as funny, as funny, as funny, as funny and here the oddity of the situation is impeccable.

Married to the Mob is a slick, and stylish bundle of laughs all the way. See it.

BOOK
"Red Adair: An American Hero"

By Philip Singerman

Published by Bloomsbury (£14.95 hardback)

Paul "Red" Adair’s name is synonymous with the oil industry world over, and despite the fact that he has been lauded and fictionalized in John Wayne’s picture, “The Hellfighters” in 1968, Philip Singerman’s book is the first authorised biography of Adair to be attempted.

Adair is now 73 and I suppose it was about time that something was written of his exploits, although the appeal of his story beyond the oil industry would have been limited had it not been for Piper Alpha. And that is where Adair’s story begins and ends.

Singerman had signed up as Adair’s biographer in 1986 and had, according to him, that, and he was“plenty of time to put down our hero’s exploits. As the book opens in July 1988, Red is pissed off. He’s stumping round his hunchy commando, "Hunted and Greyed" by. And the reason? Why? He’s out of work. The down turn in the oil industry of the mid 80’s has seen fewer wells being drilled and the wild-catters are out of business. And with fewer wells being drilled, the chances of the occasional blowout are greatly reduced. Add to this the persistent rumours spread by his competitors, that Red can’t “cut it” anymore, and we have the opening scenario of the book.

And then comes Piper Alpha. Not only does this horrific disaster come as a godsend for Red, in that he’s back to work, it also comes as a godsend to Singerman who can now sell a lot more of his books in the glow of Red’s triumphant return to firefighting.

Dr. Hammers, the Occidental Chief Executive, sells red and personally asks Adair to sort out Piper Alpha. Red agrees and over he comes to Aberdeen. No mention of a fee, as all the profits from the work were to be donated. In July 1988, that Red held Occidental to ransom for $3 million before he would mobilise men and equipment, is sheer utter. Red did not just ask for the price, anyway he’s a millionaire man several times over according to Singerman.

We are treated to a rag to riches story, and from this, Red’s early days of poverty in Houston, his days in the army as a bomb-disposal squad, followed by his introduction to wild fire-fighting by his ‘mentor’, if that’s the appropriate word, M.M. Kinley, and then his marriage to Kernia.

In 1959, Red breaks out on his own and the legend of Red Adair began. With his assistants, Bob Hanes and Curtis Matthews, he traveled the world, Kuwait, Algeria, Indonesia, Mexico, the North Sea and America, putting out fires. Singerman details the split between Adair and his two assistants in the mid 70’s. Both men were getting introduced to the young, but were not getting, as they thought, enough of the gravy. So they approached Red for a bigger share of the money. Bob refused. He is insulded, and boosts (and counts) them out of the company.

If you want to read of Red’s exploits, of the Devil’s Cigarette Lighter of Castrato, of Bofshore, of Bay Marshand of course about Piper Alpha and of course these disasters were tamed”, then this is the book for you. If you want to read how Red spends his leisure time racing high-powered speed boats, or learn that his face is red and scroched from standing too close to oil fires, (well it would be red, wouldn’t it), then it’s all between the covers of this book.

However you will also learn that the oil companies always choose the best possible equipment, picked with great care from the stock of the highly technical service companies, and that therefore neither the oil companies nor the service companies are in any way responsible for the leaks and blowouts. It is always “human error”, according to Red, i.e. some poor sucker on the drill floor. Not the oil companies, says Red, are honest, caring institutions who would put it as their top priority when working for them. So many notions is made in Mr Singerman’s book of unsafe drilling practices, short cuts, hell-bent on making money and not working for them. So many notions is made in Mr Singerman’s book of unsafe drilling practices, short cuts, hell-bent on making money and not working for them.

I found the book too “chockfull” as it jumps from period to period, and the dialogue and quotes seemed to be artificial and would require a memory of encyclopaedic capacity to remember it all verbatim as Red apparently does.

I have no doubt that the book will be read wide across a section of society, but whatever impression the reader gets from it, it is should be remembered that Red was not a man, but his only work when something goes wrong, and usually in a big way, with oil working dead and injured. Yes, Red Adair is an immortal, and in a very rich one at that, who lives on the backs of the ordinary rig worker, seems to me to be the height of hypocrisy. I read the book to review it. I wouldn’t have read it otherwise.
NEWS FROM THE OILC SMASHING NIGHT

Offshore workers are stepping up onshore activities. OILC organised open meetings are bringing together men from construction catering and drilling.

The well attended and serious meetings are discussing the common problems of the offshore worker and our response to them.

Our information over the country and internationally, every offshore worker within reach of land can be included. (See the advert this page)

At the core of the discussion has been the “Continental Shelf Agreement”. It is aimed at providing a framework within which the wage conditions and the rights of offshore workers, irrespective of employer, can be improved and defended. A draft of the agreement is being drawn up in pamphlet form and should be circulating the platforms and semi-alleys around the time this edition of Blow out is your hands.

The inspiration for our activities has in large part come from the Norwegian Sector where the multinational were brought round the table long ago. So why can’t we? We protected our unfair contract for the same oil for the same companies and in small for the same price on the same matters. We have a right to the same conditions and we’ll get it. But only if we fight for them.

The Offshore Information Centre is baser than ever dealing with the problems of work offshore, giving advice on such important issues as industrial accidents and NDA.

It plays another important role, that of networking. Pipe-ies are key on every installation, operator and contractor, and interesting making it talk. Too many offshore workers will have forgotten the multi-union action many years ago. To fight and organise. We need to again.

Certainly the Offshore Information Centre will encourage them in every way it can.

PIPER MEMORIAL

The Piper Memorial Fund Committee are still working hard to raise the necessary £100,000 needed to erect a memorial to the 167 who died on Piper Alpha.

So far they have raised just over £75,000, but it has been a slow process and they desperately need to raise the £25,000 shortfall quickly.

Everything from the artist’s sculptures to the foundations and granite has already been arranged.

The artist, Sue Tye, has already completed many sketches and now needs to begin the sculpture. Now she’s ready to begin on the stone. That the committee has seen the model shows they’re more determined than ever that the work should go ahead and that they should see the memorial in place at Hardhead.

-ULTRAMAR

The first edition of Blowout last July, told the tale of an explosive release of gas around the Santa Fe Minor platform. The explosion blew one man 15 feet across the deck and equipped him in the current, during well testing operations.

A spokesperson for Ian Ross, a senior operations engineer for the oil company Ultragas, when the explosion occurred, "said that a gas release caused the explosion. Another gas release occurred, and the explosion was caused for a second time. We were trying to deal with the first one and, unfortunately, the second one happened."

A spokesman for the company said the explosion had been due to a fault in the well and it had occurred at the Ultragas site. The fault was caused by a gas release caused by the explosion and it had resulted in a fault in the well. A gas release had occurred, and the explosion was caused for a second time. We were trying to deal with the first one and, unfortunately, the second one happened."

AROUND THE NORTH SEA Continued from Page 8

-LOFFLANDS

Lofland’s men can be seen on the drilling platforms of various offshore operators. They all work to a very standard working environment and living conditions. This is an industry that is to be celebrated. Without question, these men are the backbone of the industry. The following facts are taken from the Lofland’s own records.

The following are some of the more interesting facts about Lofland’s men.

- They are well trained and skilled in the most modern equipment.
- They work long hours, often on rotating shifts.
- They live in well-equipped accommodation, often with their families.
- They receive a good salary and benefits.
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