

This latest Claymore provocation is not an isolated incident in an otherwise calm sea. Jamie Jamieson was raising his doubts about the Claymore safety regime in public at OILC meetings in Glasgow as long ago as March 15. He was concerned that since the government introduced the new safety legislation offshore, the Claymore safety committee had met only once. He was himself NRB'd (not required back) after he had raised questions about helicopters flying in bad weather. Along with two other workers he had nearly been blown off the heli deck on one occasion. Intervention by John Kydd a full time AEU official had resulted in his reinstatement Mr Grant McCormick, a credential AEU shop steward onboard Claymore, has just been de-recognised by AOC.

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

The first sign 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 two 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 Willie Gibson of the MSF union and Mr Bob Eadie of the EETPU 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 spokeswoman says that they never used the term "sabotage".

OCCIDENTAL- WE NEVER SAID "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 spokeswoman 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 spokeswoman as saying, "We have been very careful to ensure we have not impinged on 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 spokeswoman 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 stains on this toilet paper, their inch high headline read "SABOTAGE BID BY RIG MANIAC" and continued with "A madman with a grudge 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, ballbearings 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 a Peterhead engineering company, earned Oxy little credibility either off or on shore

Management & Staff
of the
CRITERION BAR
(Crossroads of
the Oil Industry)
wish
Blowout & the OILC
"every success
for the future"
Blowout is now
available in the Bar



Gavin Clelland shakes hands with Neil Kinnock at this year's Scottish Labour Party Conference. An OILC delegation spoke to Mr Kinnock about the NRB (not required back) practices offshore, and the recent disturbing incidents on Amoco's Montrose.

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BLOWOUT
NEWS DESK
041-423 0461

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%. A wise move we think, considering the poor pay and conditions in the offshore drilling industry at present.

Although we know of another Sedco rig with a strong membership of the NUS we would be very interested to hear, via Blowout, from any Sedco employees that have union membership, - preferably with the percentage of the crew on their rig that are in the union. - I am sure that this matter would be kept confidential by the staff at Blowout.

I was very surprised by the enthusiasm of our crew to join the union, and the professional response and organisation shown by the NUS towards our cause.

Pay and conditions in the offshore drilling industry have deteriorated rapidly over the years. Now that day rates and rig utilisation rates have risen dramatically, we feel that the drilling companies should reward their employees by giving them what they deserve.

The cash is there. Give us our share.

An NUS member.

A HARD LIE

I feel compelled to write to highlight the disgraceful manner in which Shell treat contract staff on the Brent Charlie.

On February 19, the gangway connecting the "Charlie" to the "Safe Gothia" floater lifted automatically, just minutes after 65 contract staff had refused to cross because of genuine fears for their own safety. The wind speed that morning was gusting 60-65 knots on average and the highest gust recorded was 80 knots. Pleas to the OIM to close the bridge fell on deaf ears. The end result was 65 men doing a "hard lie". For the uninitiated, that's what you do when you're overnight away from your normal accommodation.

As usual you don't get a bed. You get a sleeping bag and a bit of floor. It would be too bloody easy to allocate night-shift beds to the men. Shell allocated the cinema, the TV lounge, the coffee lounge and the pool room. You can't even get a seat in these places normally so how the **** are you supposed to bed down 65 men. Bedding was dished out by 8 o'clock but the film didn't finish till 11, and it was after that before the TV went off. After all, the Shell men wanted to watch Sky. And so (eventually) to bed.

"Hoi, that's ma pilla ya cejit."

"Get yer fit aff ma heid."

"Get the light aff."

"Watch wher ye'r gaan"

"**** this fur a gem o' sodjers"

I could tell I was in for a fun packed night. Have you ever tried to sleep in a room packed with farting, coughing and spluttering "bears". I mean apart from that time at Glasgow airport when the Spanish air traffic controllers were on strike. I'd just got to sleep when I was woken up by a night shift

worker wanting to watch TV at 3 o'clock in the morning. He couldn't have seen the telly where we told him to stick it.

But there was worse to come. At four the OIM decided to have a muster drill but only for the "hard lie" men. Who's kidding who. Just ignore it and go back to sleep. Eventually at seven in the morning, the OIM in a fit of pique, has another muster drill. The drawback was that he hadn't allocated new muster points when the bridge went up, so chaos followed as men milled around looking for a likely looking muster station. At that point the OIM realising he'd made a **** of himself decided to abandon the drill.

After scrounging something to eat because I'd missed breakfast, I'm supposed to do a full shift after lying on the floor all night listening to a gurgling fish tank and slamming doors. Is this what Shell mean when they say that "safety is the first priority"?

Shell have had shuttling and "hard lies" for twelve years, and it's about time they got organised and began to treat contractors with a bit of respect and consideration. They could easily allocate unoccupied beds and supply camp-beds for the rest. Make sure we get a little bit of privacy and have a proper rest period.

A knackered contractor.

WHY WE NEED AN AGREEMENT

I would first of all like to congratulate the unions, AEU, GMB, EETPU and MSF for refusing to sign the Offshore Construction Agreement and the Southern Waters Agreement. They took long enough but better late than never I suppose.

I was one of the spokesmen on the Ninian Central during last year's dispute. For this I became one of the casualties courtesy of an SGB manager Dave Davidson.

My last employment was on Marathon's Brae "A" (November '89). On there I was voted in as steward for the scaffolders. On hearing this, I was sent for by the construction super Les Pringle who wasn't too happy that a steward had been voted in to represent the men. He said he would have to contact Marathon Aberdeen, and he would send for me. Later that same night he did send for me and my foreman, and he told me that there would be no spokesman and no steward and that every individual worker would have to speak for himself.

He and Marathon have a short memory. Who do they think built their Brae "A" and "B" platforms? It was the "bears", and it was under a union agreement. It's the same old story. When they want their new rigs built (the hook-up), they're all too happy to use us and the union to have it done with a set rate and conditions under an agreement. But when the rig is built and the oil is flowing the agreement disappears and so do the fixed rates of pay and any union agreement.

Two days after my conversation with Les Pringle on the Brae "A", my foreman told me that our manager Peter Kydd had an 11.00 am meeting that day with Marathon Oil in Aberdeen concerning why his men had voted in a steward. The conclusion was a telex at 9.00 pm that same Friday night informing me that I was down-manned and that I was on a 7.15 am check in the next morning. (Only two other men and myself were on the helicopter next morning). Since then I have had no contact from my employer "Deborah" except my wages cheque and P45. No explanation whatsoever about my down-manning or why I was paid off.

Jimmy the Scaff

FLARE OFF YOUR LETTERS

PROTECTION FROM RATS

I have just read the December 1989 (3) issue of your newspaper. Until this I was unaware of your existence.

I am employed on the UK sector of the North sea and I have been for the past number of years.

I read your article, "Record Men Report Crap Shock". Perhaps Mr McWhinnie is being unfairly criticised, as he like many others on-shore is unaware of the climate, (and I don't mean the weather), out here. If he reads this letter he'll have a better idea of the situation.

At the present time I'm employed on board a civilised installation, where the toolpusher and manager treat you like human beings. Prior to this I was working for a couple of years under such conditions as you described in your article. I won't mention the name of the company but I'll give you a clue. Both toolpusher and bargemaster were ex-pats. They treated us, (I was not alone), like shite. We were constantly being threatened with the sack or being "run off". We were called all sorts of things, "nigger", and "motherf*****", and they were forever trying to "take the piss", especially at safety meetings.

A couple of the drillers joined in in the fun!!! Aye and they were British guys. The medic also had a go with the phoney telex saying you were bumped from chopper flights, and he was British or I should say Scottish. All part of the fun at our expense. The final straw for me was when the pusher walked into the smoko shack and told one of the guys, in front of everybody, about his daughter's private life. Like the rest of the men I accepted this at the time as I had a mortgage and young family, and I thought that this was life offshore. The end came during the slump when we were all paid off. Everyone then said that all the hassle that they'd been taking, (and that's being too kind to them), had been for nothing.

During my home leave my wife and family suffered through these b*****, and I maintain that I would "do time inside" rather than go through that again. I am not against all forms of discipline, and I'm not for very strong unions as I proved in 1972, 1974 and 1986, but I would like some sort of protection to keep these rats in their place.

I'll pop into your office for a "cuppa" and introduce myself.
Born Again.

A REPLY

With reference to a letter in your February issue entitled "Three Wecker".

I and my fellow workmates most strongly disagree with the insinuation that APG regular workers are continuously doing "Three weckers". Occasionally personnel are requested to do "Three Weckers", but these are mostly one-off situations such as major shutdowns etc, and are not a regular occurrence as was intimated by your correspondent. I should also like to add that this situation applies, and is also accepted, by the other companies. It is implemented and accepted on a purely voluntary basis.

We are disappointed at APG having been singled out for what appears to be criticism, and feel that offshore personnel should be concentrating their efforts in pulling together in an effort to secure the working terms and conditions that we are all looking for.

W. Gallacher APG
Ninian Southern

SICK FED UP

I feel I have to write to get something off my chest that has annoyed me for years.

Why is it that oil companies think that night shift shuttlers are on permanent standby for shuttle flights? I am sick fed-up at being wakened from my sleep at ridiculous times in the afternoon, to be told that, "you're shuttling early tonight". Trying to sleep during the day is hard enough with all the goings-on around the "flotel", people coming and going at all times, Tannoy messages, beach flights etc. So to be wakened from a badly needed sleep to shuttle early does not put anyone in the proper frame of mind for working on an offshore installation. So why do the powers that be let this practice continue? The oil companies say that, "safety is a priority" but are shooting themselves in the foot when they put a tired and disgruntled workforce on shift.

Exhausted Shuttler
Safe Gothia (Brent Field)



The most important pages by far in Blowout are the letters pages. Frankly without them there is little need for a paper at all. If the North Sea is to be safe, and we are to achieve any dignity, then the monopoly that the oil and contracting companies have kept on information has to be broken. The only people who can do that is the offshore workforce, and that is what the letters pages are for.

The editor will not alter the content of letters. But in order that attention is not distracted from the content, he does check spelling and grammar. Not with overwhelming success, (as regular readers will have noticed), but we will get better. Please include your name and address and if possible a phone no. They will be withheld if you ask.

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 30 men, was never recovered.

I was reading an article in the Daily Record. It is terrible that men still working out there can't sleep.

Do the government want another Piper Alpha? If they keep going the way they are there will be. It had to take so many men's lives first before they would do anything. Now there's plenty talk but nothing being done. I am only speaking my mind. It makes me mad to think other men are at risk. Their wives must worry. All these men killed because of negligence on Oxy's behalf - Greedy Bastards. It makes me very bitter against the government and the oil companies.

No amount of compensation will make up for my husband's death. I don't know how he died and I will never know.

It's so sad to think of all those men out working hard to get a living and then killed because of greed. If only Oxy had checked their rig when they should have, our men would be here today. Our men and the men who are still working out there are classed as just a number. As long as they are making money bugger the safety. No health and safety have been stepped up. What a load of rubbish.

Also I'm sick and tired of hearing that now we're millionaires. We have lost our loved ones and no amount of money will make up for them. I would love if my husband was with me and my little girls. I think about how happy we would be, just like before. Life would be much easier, it's very hard without him. I miss him so much. We were a very happy family until Oxy destroyed it. It will take a long time to get back to normal, but I'll always remember the good times we had together.

E. Scott

A DINOSAUR IN COWBOY BOOTS

The Southern sector's different. For a start it's mostly jack-ups that work down here, and it's gas we dig for. The chopper rides are shorter, 40 minutes tops, and the temperature's usually a degree or so smarter than it is up north. And oh yes! the local hands down here all talk funny..... no kidding, you could do the usual milk round of rigs and platforms and never hear the cultivated tones of a "FitLiker". The "Neeps Gazette" is unheard of and the bears just don't grizzle like they do back up North.

Some things don't change though..... Toolpushers for instance. Don't you just love 'em. North or South. Far too often it's still a case of plastic Yanks, Ayatollahs and "Spot the brain cell". And if you think that's a bit on the brutal side, you want to check out the way that most of them can dish out the verbal. You'd never believe that they were once baby roustabouts themselves.

Of course it's funny, or it would be if it wasn't so serious. The bottom line is that our lives are, to a large extent, dependent on their drilling decisions. OK somebody has to take the decisions, but it'd be nice if they would lace them with a bit of common sense and responsibility now and again. Quite frankly a witch doctor with a bag of chicken bones could come up with more sensible responses than I've seen from some pushers.

Now! If you don't believe that there's a strong cowboy element struttin' it's stuff in this here oilpatch, bo', you ain't been wildcattin' in the North Sea my son. No siree. OK! so the cowboy boot stage was just a laugh, and the accents were a drag, but you soon got used to them. I could just about handle the chewing tobacco, but the legacy of gung-ho that the Yanks have left behind is an altogether more serious affair.

There can be little doubt that macho behaviour has permeated the drilling side of the industry to a great extent. I for one

wonder, when I see the shenanigans that pass for co-operation, whether the industry will ever be able to get it's act together and start acting responsibly.

The whole set up is fueled by the big rewards (for some), and by the even bigger egos of those who have managed to claw themselves to the top of the heap. The promotional structure on most rigs perpetuates the set up, and there can be little doubt that toolpushers use promotion to manipulate crews and maintain the status quo and their own power. New hands learn very quickly that you don't make waves.

And yet..... I haven't given up hope altogether for the drilling industry. Certainly there's a lot of people gotta lot of growing up to do, but the pusher's power is nowhere as omnipotent as it once was. The industrial tribunals, flawed as they are, put an end to the hanging judge type who felt he had to run off somebody once a trip to satisfy some deep seated bullshit complex. Believe me they existed, but they're thin on the ground now.

Unions have made very slow but still steady progress. It's possible now on some rigs to mention that you're a union member. It might be laughable but this is a big step forward. The aftermath of Piper and the sit-ins last year undoubtedly bump started a few more brains into gear, (including mine), and now the new safety committees, (which are creating a lot of interest on my rig), have been set up. They may only have milk teeth but they can only get stronger.

The point is that these dinosaurs of the drill floor have had it all their own way for too long. They don't like the new safety committees because they don't like change. We all know that the dinosaurs went down the tubes because they couldn't adapt, and as the man said, "You don't need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind's blowing."

Bill the Drill.

AGREEMENT IS TOP PRIORITY

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

At 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 long last the unions themselves are working together. A fact evident in the co-operation of the NUS and TGWU. Between them they now represent the majority of the catering crews. This is a 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's 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 (recently shown again with the crane operators on the Beryl). Management can cut wages as well as increase them. Once we have won our agreement then we can re-examine cash claims.

Martin McGarvey
NUS shop steward
Brent Delta

OIL WORKERS STRIKE IN TRINIDAD

Oilfield Workers' Trade Union
99a Circular Road
San Fernando, Trinidad W I
212/90

Dear Brother,

Our Union has received the issue of "BLOWOUT" which you so generously sent us. We hope you keep us on your mailing list for BLOWOUT which is presently lodged 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 (5) years.

In spite of 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 generator of revenue for the Government so the strike was not allowed to last and all demands were met.

Our struggle continues to defend our members' standard of living, job security etc. We consider our international affiliations and solidarity as vitally important and would therefore appreciate maintaining contact with you.

We have added you to the mailing list for our Union's Newspaper "VANGUARD".

Yours faithfully
Donna Coombs-Montrose (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's been needing to be filled for years. It allows communication between rig workers. I'd like to add that I'll be fully supporting you in your fund raising etc.

However, I'm not so sure about this 'ere union lark that keeps creeping in. I've been a member of three unions over the years and I've been crapped on by two of them. The third one I had to join to get a job. As it turned out I didn't get the job so I left. I've had some personal experiences, and so have some of my friends, that best remain untold, 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 we see something is wrong we'll say so. Thousands of us downed tools in last years strikes because we believed it to be right to do so, not because we were in the "Big Bear North Sea Union."

We are all different as people. Some are "bears", some are "tigers", some are "kittens", and some are even "snakes". We certainly didn't want to be one of a flock going over a cliff following the rest. I could give "for instances" but what would that solve? So unions, please leave us free people free.

Crazy Bob (still crazy after all these years)
A grafter for free thought
Ninian 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, bar Universal Catering Services, have now received 16%. Universal have only been given a final offer of a 7.7% rise.

On one installation, a crew that made further enquiries was threatened with instant replacement and black balling out of the offshore industry.

Apart from being strung along with promissory letters, the whole incident is hinging on the fact, we were led to believe we were being paid COTA rates. Who is COTA? Where can they be found? Extensive enquiries revealed nothing. Can you help? Do you think this is fair?

A disgusted catering 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 Chilean workers back in '78-'79.

I don't think that very much of what the employers do offshore is "fair". They give us little in the way of wages and conditions and even safety, as they think they can get away with. On the other hand there are certain times when they are forced to retreat in front of the justified demands of the workers in the industry. This would appear to be one of these times. The challenge however, is to ensure that improvements affect everybody, and that they are protected so that they can't just be stripped away during the next downturn.

With regard to who COTA are, and what they do, contact Norrie McVicar (NUS) at 3 Commerce Street, phone 0224-582 688 or John Taylor (T&GWU) at 44 King Street, phone 0224-645 271. Both Aberdeen Ed.

WOMEN OFF-SHORE

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS

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 did wonder why they wanted to go offshore at all. It's bad enough for men let alone women. According to some of women I've spoken to it's because the catering trade ashore 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 shop 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 monotonous regularity, offshore? The TGWU/NUS are raising the issue with the catering companies and UKOOA. 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 chef and stewards just have to use the "bear pits". No offence to the bears meant.) Stewardesses said that they couldn't even use the toilets in the cabins. Because the cabins are split nights/days, they're never empty. I was also told that if a steward doesn't turn up and one of the women volunteers to work over to cover, they have to shuttle or cross the bridge to the



barge because she can't share with a man obviously, and Shell reckon 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 shuttlers if they get caught by bad weather and can't get back. Even the shuttle pack that she'd get to provide basic toiletries is designed for men. Designed is maybe a bit complimentary 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.

"WEE 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, toiletries 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 binned any stray copies, and 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 in their regular "Other People's Lives" column. But having said that, when a 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 but nobody would demand that "Me" attempt an in depth analysis of the offshore life and a women'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" after she's "prepared a special report for example." Yes we know that's not what you meant but will "Me's" readers realise that the amazingly "twee" 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 plain stupid" to wear a skirt, and that men who forget that she's there swear and then "get terribly embarrassed and can't apologise enough." I personally was much enlightened that, "things like" getting presented with "a giant birthday cake iced with 'wee pet lamb'", stops her from getting homesick, and that her, "two skirt wearing weeks in Glasgow fly by", and she "really look(s) forward to getting back to the office."

I suppose it's all par 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 tasteless 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 that 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 heeled hacks of the women's glossies.

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 overtime - 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.

TRAINING FOR SAFETY REPS. RGIT -WELLTRAIN COURSE

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 Keppelstone Mansion 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, (I got paid 8 hours a day for it), rather than being allowed time off the rig without loss of pay as laid down in the regulations. So, slightly peeved, 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 (SI971). 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 committees 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 there is 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 arses". 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 Treesbank House. But I wouldn't bet much on the chances of the employers agreeing to that one. As for the question of whether it was all worthwhile. I suppose it was, despite the little choice I had. Mind you 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 Viv for the end of course pint.

THE TRADE-UNION ALTERNATIVE?

Offshore trade unionists surely had the right to expect that the trade union movement would get its act together and provide an alternative to "in house" safety training.

Blowout was proud to carry an advertisement for a series of courses to be run by the STUC. It seems 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 "representational 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 surely have a repeat of the carnage that was Piper Alpha. (Ocean Odyssey and the Motrose gas leak 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 eclipse all other emotions on the North Sea.



DONT HANG ABOUT

by
Dave Paterson

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 aboard oil platforms. The reason is obvious - a couple of men, and a harness 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 "rappelling", is a technique borrowed from mountaineering. Climbers use it as a means of descending sheer or awkward rock faces. The climber wears a harness, and slides down the rope by means of a "figure of eight" or descender. This device looks exactly as it's name suggests - a palm sized piece of metal, shaped like the figure eight. One end of the eight 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 aboard North Sea rigs. There have been many abseiling accidents, not just to novices, but to experienced climbers. Tom Patey, 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. Belays come adrift, clips come undone or the user becomes confused and disorganised - 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 a fire or explosion? What happens if those above are disabled? Who volunteers to learn this new technique? Is it the usual 10p 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
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ARBITRATION PANELS

Unlike workers in the drilling side of the industry, most workers in construction/engineering offshore, are protected to some extent from being run off and blacked, (they call it NRB'd - Not Required Back). "Arbitration Panels" are available to most "Bears"

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 1976 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 membership and even the popularity of the dismissed men. But nowhere in these criteria will you see "justice" mentioned. The reality is that strength, not merit, was the crucial factor and cases failed that should have won and other more dubious ones 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 rep 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 employee had passed the "Qualifying Service" hurdle. (You have to be 2 years with the company before you are eligible for a tribunal - Ed)

MERIT

1976 saw the introduction of the so called "Hook-Up" agreement (the Offshore Construction Agreement), for some categories of offshore workers. And with it appeared the "Arbitration Panel". It is to the credit of those who were responsible for the Arbitration Panels that in the 14 years that have passed they have never needed to be altered. Merit now became the number one factor for deciding in a case of dismissal. Union 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 1989 the construction/engineering employers gave their employees an increase in their hourly rate. And those companies that were members of the Offshore Contractors Association also widened the access to Arbitration Panels to all of their employees, not just those working on "Hook-Ups". These concessions were, according to the employers, given purely out of the goodness of their hearts and had nothing to do with disruption of work throughout the North sea during the Summer of '89. You, like me, will no doubt agree with their assertion.

But never mind how we got it, get it we did, and anyone on the construction side of the industry, who is now NRB'd 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 harangued into taking a "transfer" to a 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 6.2.4 may request suspension without pay pending the decision of an Arbitration panel. Any such 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 Chairman who will have a casting vote.

"The Panel will be conducted informally as follows:-

(i) Considers 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 communication.

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

URGENT.....

During December and January a number of men refused "alternative", "sub standard" accommodation aboard Amoco'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
52 Gull Street
Aberdeen
0224-210 118

LAUGH OR CRY

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

Well well! Just who do these 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 dismissing), 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 debacle that is taking place in Eastern Europe.

Is this a threat against an innocent man? Could it be that the tireless work of an enterprising journalist could be a legitimate reason for denying a man the right to earn a crust? What are they going to do if the whole

sordid affair appears in the next edition of Blowout? Sack him again, but this time with the "good" reason that they told him to keep quiet when they "let him off last time"?

That would actually be a better reason than is usually given by employers who still "run 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 blacken their names any more than they are already.

At least the panel differentiated between "the press" and Blowout. We're proud somebody has noticed the difference.

With virtually no exceptions the press, and we can expand 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 adverts.

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 an old Blowout as a front page lead in their so called Northern Edition on the very day that the OILC was calling on the government to shut down Amoco's Montrose platform.

And it fell to BBC Scotland's Kirsty Wark to ask her majesty, Mrs Thatcher the questions we'd all like to hear her answer, during her recent state visit to Scotland. Only Miss Wark didn't manage to get in any of the questions that 40,000 oil workers would like answered about health and safety offshore and the Department of Energy's fitness to police it. This is despite the fact that the industry underpins the entire British economy and had the previous week come within a whisker of rerunning the Piper disaster on Amoco's Montrose.

Only the much maligned, (and rightly so), Sky Television covered Gavin Clelland and an OILC delegation who took the Piper Banner when they met Neil Kinnoch at the Scottish Labour Party Conference in Dunoon. They were there to make sure that he knew what was what about health and safety on the North Sea.

A VIEW FROM HOME

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

My hubby worked in Flotta in 1976, (he is a rigger). It was 6 weeks away 10 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 marriage fell apart. At that time it was three weeks on and two off. No drink on the rig but did he 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 that time, and his drinking was worse.

My father died that March 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 stayed sober till the funeral was over that morning, but he was away again at the reception.

PERFECT HOUSE

April we got word of another house in an overspill area; front and back door. I liked the house but I was still very grief stricken over my father's sudden death. But 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 10 minutes from me and each other. I would be among strangers in the new place. It didn't happen. I kept hoping things would get better. No Luck!

Things came to a head four years ago. We had five children by then (my choice) I was lucky to get £50 wages a week, so I told him to leave. He quit the job as the social security would have made him pay me and the kids decent money, so I as getting state benefit from then on. He was idle for two years but got casual work. He would come to visit and expect to stay and get fed etc. And he was always skint till the next casual job or giro was due. I felt sorry for him, and for the kids' sake never said much about the life I'd had when he was earning big money

THE CHILDREN

He missed the children growing up from when they were babies. I had to take them on their first day at school etc. He missed a lot as far as they were concerned. He started on the rigs again last year. We are still separated although he spends a lot of time here with me and the children when he's on leave. He is good to them and me but still drinks a lot. The children are teenagers now and say we should get back together for 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 every week. North Sea "tigers" and "bears"? More like drunkards as far as myself, and a lot of wives who have been through it, are concerned.

A MORAL TALE

The moral of this story is like the Billy Fraser story in your last edition. We could have had a great life. This house could have been bought twice over by this time. The children and I have never been abroad 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 a paper round to help with the expenses. Hubby 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, washing done etc. I would like to say I'm looking forward to the next six weeks till Easter. Hubby said he was off the drink for Lent. Hope springs eternal/as the saying goes, and I'm an optimist at all times so maybe this time. When asked what hubby works at and I reply that, "he is on the rigs", people think you've no money worries, must own a lovely home, car, and have good holidays. Little do they know the struggle a lot of the tigers and bears' mates gave just to survive physically and mentally.

11.7% RISE FOR SOME

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 in any claim for more money. Even on Amoco's Arbroath "hook-up" where a rise was due from January 1st, little urgency was apparent.

Wood Group chairman, Bill Carr's statement that this is just, "another major step in improving our employees remuneration package" takes a bit of believing.

His company was amongst the leaders when it came to handing out the wage cuts 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 Northern North Sea). And this takes no account of any recommendations that Lord Cullen 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 organising around the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee.

With the "Open Market" of 1992 getting closer, many offshore workers now realise that the new money is in itself not enough. The only insurance that wages and conditions will not plummet under the weight of an influx of cheap labour, (or indeed 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 employees 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 resentment offshore which began to surface after Piper.

There is no doubt that the government is putting on pressure to ensure that the employers resist any move towards workers

organisation offshore. Having spent millions on subduing 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 Deeside mansions. It can't be much fun either for the young hardcases who thought that they'd be able to go on handing out the abuse and throwing their weight around as usual.

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

QUESTION

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

Why is a 9% wage increase negotiated by teachers newsworthy 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?

AN AGREEMENT FOR ALL

An 11.7% increase in wages and a package of enhanced conditions can't be had surely? Specially 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 hiding 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 because the employers know that in the future they will want to take the money away again in exactly the same way, - without discussion. Offshore oil workers had no say when they were cutting wages

and throwing men on the beach during the downturn in '86. Without firm rules that will be the story again soon.

It is with this firmly in mind that the OILC have pressured the unions into drawing up a draft "Continental Shelf Agreement". If it is accepted by the offshore workforce, this document will provide the basis for negotiations with the employers.

The agreement would ensure regular and fairly negotiated wage increases, improved conditions, and grievance procedures to end arbitrary "running off" and the NRB. And it would be applicable not for this or that section of the workforce but for all. For construction, catering and drilling. On semis, jack-ups and platforms alike.

And lastly but certainly not least - A Continental Shelf Agreement will put the North sea workforce firmly at the centre of events offshore. This is essential to ensure that the kind of meaningful changes in the safety regime that are necessary to prevent a repeat of the Piper atrocity.

On Wednesday 18 th April, National Officers of the 4 traditional signatories of the now 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

Please find enclosed a copy of the letter we have sent to the editor of the Glasgow Herald. We also enclose the offending article for your perusal.

Has Mr Lafferty become "oil union leader" overnight? Or is it due to your prolific activities that make him, and others like him, aware that there are trade unionists out here?

Perhaps the Herald quoted the statement, albeit erroneously, in good faith. It may have been contractors management who have gilded the lily. Nevertheless it is facts that we want to see published. More power to your elbow.

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 Graeme Smith to account for his statement - "An 11.7% increase providing an annual salary of more than £22,000", which was published March 3rd 1990.

Our working week is based on 84 hours and our rota is 2 weeks on 2 weeks off.
So $168 \times £8.04 = £ 1,350.72$
Plus total leave pay of £ 187.60
Gives a four week total of £ 1,538.32
Multiplied by 13 = An annual total of £19,998.16

Perhaps Mr Smith can inform our employers 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 body 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 AEU official, 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 OILC. They had gone to London to discuss Amoco's fitness to manage its operations in the light of a number of serious safety breaches. They culminated in the near disastrous gas leak on the Montrose platform on 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 operation. They said that they weren't prepared to, but assured the delegation that there was no need anyway. Before the Montrose production recommenced, their officials would be meeting with senior Amoco personnel to discuss the oil company's activities, their philosophy and health and safety policies.

Little did the D of E know that Amoco had already begun production from one of the Montrose wells even before they had made their assurances to the visiting delegation.

It would seem that the only difference between Amoco's attitude to the offshore worker and to the Department of Energy is that they expect the offshore workers to get upset when they are lied to, and treated like mushrooms.

You could be forgiven for thinking that, having come under close scrutiny over the last six months, Amoco would be watching their step. Not so! Angry construction workers on an Amoco platform, 49/27 Charlie, in the Southern Sector are currently up in arms about their treatment. Reports reaching Blowout say that they've been billeted in portacabins on a wooden helldeck right above the wellheads area. Are Amoco still at it?

The whole rotten relationship that exists between the D of E and Amoco was exposed in an answer given by the oil minister Peter Morrison to questions asked in parliament by Frank Doran MP. When asked what steps he would take to ensure a safe start up on the Montrose Mr Morrison said, "In particular my inspectors have required the operator (Amoco) to institute an immediate programme of instructing all platform personnel on work permit procedures." Seventeen years later and the D of E discover Amoco can't run a permit to work system.

Amoco deny that the portacabins, rated A60 are above the wellhead area.

AROUND THE NORTH SEA.....

-OVERTIME

If you've got mixed feelings about giving up overtime working read on. You should be paid a living wage for a 12 hour shift, and even that's giving them 4 hours of premium time for sweets. But if your life style is based on a fifteen hour day then you're going to feel a cold wind blowing through the industry soon. Here's a message from the Alwyn North operators Total, entitled **Hours Worked**

"Personnel should be aware of a recent Department of Energy Safety Notice (No 1/90) which states that:-

"Persons should not normally work more than 12 hours in any one day" and "only in exceptional circumstances should be asked to work 16 hours without a break for sleep. Such occasions should be subject to the approval of the Installation Manager....." and

"Any period of work more than 12 hours should be followed by a break for sleep of at least 8 hours."

"The above requirements have been established as a rule for Alwyn North by the issue of General Platform Standing Instruction No 4 (Rev. 2)."

"Failure to observe the requirements of Standing Instruction and Safety Notice will be treated as a serious misdemeanour."

Better get an agreement that'll ensure a decent wage for 12 hours.



-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 Bates Junior was feeling.

In a document addressed to "All persons on board Sedco Forex installations", and on the subject of "Possession and use of narcotics, drugs, alcohol and weapons", he said amongst other things

"With immediate effect, all personnel, contracted or otherwise, on board SEDCO FOREX Installations will be subject to searches and/or urinalysis screening by SEDCO FOREX. These searches may include the person, (strip searching? ... internal body search? Ed.), his or her personal effects, lockers, desks, offices and worksites, as well as crewchange vehicles, aircraft and boats. 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 a search and/or urinalysis screening will also result in removal from the installation

A number of questions spring to mind Does Sedco have a drugs or drink problem on their offshore installations?

What sort of weapons do Sedco imagine that they will find on the average semi-submersible in their fleet?

Who is going to carry out these searches?

And who the hell does Mister Bates think he is?

-CHINOOK

Going to the Norwegian sector? You'll no doubt be delighted to know that the dreaded "Chinook" is back. They're flying from the new Sola heliport in Stavanger to Philips' Ekofisk field.

The "Flying brick" seemed to have gone from 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 users 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" - loose glands and missing labels

According to experienced electrical technicians, labels aren't some sort of optional extra or luxury item in hazardous areas. If a box containing live circuits has 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.

-PRESS ZIEG HEIL!

From a Mr Ironside, the Senior Labour Officer to a Press Offshore pipefitter.

"I am informed that on the evenings of 6th November and 4th December in the reception area of the Summerhill Lodge Hotel, you announced to all and sundry your dis-satisfaction with the standard of accommodation being provided to you by Press Offshore" (Nice court-room style Ed), "While I agree that the facilities at the Hotel are not 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), "that in future the Company will not provide you with accommodation and you will, if necessary", (now I wonder what that means), "fund your own accommodation and you may claim expenses, as per Section 4.5 of your Terms and Conditions of Employment, to a maximum of £16.50 provided the claim is supported by receipts."

I wonder if Press Offshore bug the rooms or bribe the barmen.

REVIEWS.....

ALBUMS.....

SPIRIT

Twelve Dreams of Doctor Sardonius
Edsel Records ED 313

BONNIE RAITT
Nick of Time
Capitol Records



Reviewed by
John Rowlinson

Two real treats after the dearth of last month, "Twelve Dreams of Doctor Sardonius" 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 knew or knows Spirit, the news of this re-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 on replaying it last week, I was astonished that 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" is the latest in a long line in fine albums she has 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 assumed LPs and CDs

would follow) to come into my possession and to the others it compares more than 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 prominent. With a nice range of moods and styles, from "Nobody's Girl", an acoustic number reminiscent of Lowell George and Little Feat, to the bawdy ballys rocker, "Real Man" you get eleven songs of evenly high quality played by a performer at a nice peak in a career that's been full of them.

Bonnie Raitt has obvious influences in most of her music. Those of you who saw her in session with John Lee Hooker on the watchable Rock Steady, Tuesday, Channel 4, will have seen how much she has made the blues her own. "The Road's My Middle Name", "Love Letter" and "Will Not Be Denied" are the kind of blues songs that Clapton would relish, performed with real panache. Developing out of this is her second home, rock 'n roll, of Chuck Berry, Jerry-Lee vintage, and she is so good at it. Listen to "Thing Called Love" or "Real Man", you want to chew gum and dance.

Her main strength, however, lies in her selection of material. Only two of the songs on the album are self-penned, the title track and the blues 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 sleepy cabaret jazz. 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 my mood, makes me feel good and what higher recommendation than that can I give an album other than to say that any lady who hires a trumpet section called The Heart Attack Horns and backing singers called Sir Harry Bowens, Sweet Pea Atkinson and Arnold McCuller must have something going for her.

Yes, sir, two real treats this month.

VIDEO.....

"Dead Poets Society"

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

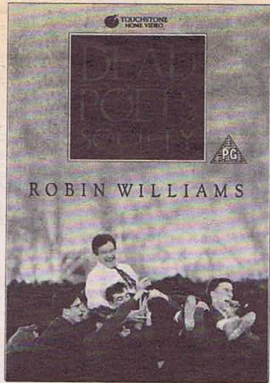
"Married to the Mob"

Directed by Jonathan Demme.
Starring Michelle Pfeiffer,
Matthew Modine, Dean Stockwell.

Reviewed by George Whittaker

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 perhaps the best of the Indiana Jones trilogy and *Lethal Weapon 2* offers more of the violent spills and thrills that made the first film so popular.

Against that lot you'd hardly think that a movie championing the cause of poetry of all things would hope to compete but *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 methods heroically 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 misty autumnal fields, stony quadrangles, gleaming banisters and dusty trophy cabinets and you've got the kind of stuff that Michael Palin used to make a living out of.

But the film is much more than a ripping tale of Fifties schoolfolk. John Keating (Robin Williams), the young-ish new English teacher at Welton Academy in New England, is passionately driven by the need to open the eyes of his pupils to the untapped potential of their lives and to force them to gather all the rosebuds they can while there's still time. "Seize the day," he urges them, "suck the marrow out of life," graphically hammering home his point by inviting them to consider the uncomfortable fact that the former pupils who gaze out with such youthful vitality from the old black and white photographs on the wall are now "fertilising the daffodils". Initially the boys are a little bemused but before long they are shouting inspirational lines of poetry to fire themselves up at football practice, ripping out boring pages from their books and secretly reforming 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' attempts to think and act for themselves for the first time in their lives is funny, moving and hugely entertaining. The story focuses on two boys in particular - one suffering from unrequited love, the other nursing an ambition to tread the boards 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 bursts of improvisation but 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 flawless impersonations of Marlon Brando and John Wayne in front of his class - do we get a glimpse of the awesome power of his comic gifts.

The film is not without its flaws - it's a shade gooey in places and somewhat schematic (the humourless, tyrannical, unimaginative father, for instance, is so obviously the antithesis of Keating) but you'd have to have a hole in your sole 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, farce and oddball weirdness, and is very funny indeed.

Michelle Pfeiffer (bewigged and bimbo-ish but still oozing enough sensuality to make you weep) plays Angela, married to Mafia hitman Frank DeMarco but cheesed off with social duties expected of a Mob wife, alarmed at the penchant for swindling her son has apparently inherited from his 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.

Fate plays her a fortunate hand, however, when Frank gets caught messing with his boss Tony's mistress and gets blown away for his trouble. Angela sells up and moves with her son into a seedy apartment New York's Lower East Side, turning her back on Tony's offers of help and spurning him when he makes an unexpected pass at her. Tony, however, is seriously smitten and tracks her down to her insalubrious 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 puts her flat under surveillance.

The plot then thickens deliciously. Mike too falls for Angela. Tony's feisty wife begins to suspect she's being cheated on and Angela is blackmailed by the Feds to set Tony up. Throughout, the actors play it for real so that everything comes out twice as funny, while director Jonathan Demme's sense of pace and eye for oddities of character and situation are 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 Bloomsberry
(£14.95 hardback)

Paul "Red" Adair's name is synonymous with the oil industry the world over, and despite the fact that he has been lauded and fictionalised 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 both himself and Adair, plenty of time to put down our hero's exploits.

As the book opens in July 1988, Red is pissed off. He's stomping round his luxury condominium, "bored and grouchy". And the reason? Why, he's out of work. The down turn in the oil industry of the mid eighties 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 fire-fighting.

Dr Hammer, the Occidental Chief executive calls Red personally and asks him to sort out Piper Alpha. Red agrees and over he comes to Aberdeen. No mention of a fee, so all these nasty rumours that abounded in July 1988, that Red held Occidental ransom for \$3 million before he would mobilise men and equipment, are totally untrue. Red did it all because it was for his pals, and anyway he's a millionaire many times over according to Singerman.

We are treated to a rags to riches story, and we learn of Red's early days of poverty in Houston, his days in the army as a bomb-disposal squaddie, followed by his introduction to well fire-fighting by his "mentor", if that's the appropriate word, M.M. Kinley, and then his marriage to Kimmie Lou.

In 1959, Red broke out on his own and the legend of Red Adair began. With his assistants, Boots Hansen and Coots Mathews, he traveled the world, Kuwait, Algeria, Indonesia, Mexico, the North Sea and America, putting out well fires. Singerman details the split between Adair and his two assistants in the mid seventies. Both men were getting enough of the action, but were not getting, as they thought, enough of the gravy. So they approached Red for a bigger share of the money. Red takes offence. He is insulted, and boots, (and coots) them out of the company.

If you want to read of Red's exploits, of the Devil's Cigarette Lighter, of Carlsbad, of Ekofisk, of Bay Marchand and of course about Piper Alpha and how 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 scorched from standing too close to oil fires, (well it would be 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 stocks of the highly technical service companies, and that therefore neither the oil companies nor the service companies are in any way responsible for well fires and blowouts. It is always "human error", according to Red, i.e. some poor sucker on the drill floor. No! the oil companies, says Red, are honest, caring institutions who wouldn't put at risk, any man or woman working for them. So no mention is made in Mr Singerman's book of unsafe drilling practices, short-cuts, bullying toolpushers and company reps. Which is what you'd expect: the oil companies do, after all, pay his wages. And if anything, Red is pretty astute, and not likely to bite the hand that feeds him.

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

I have no doubt that the book will be read across a wide section of society, but whatever impression the reader gleams from it, it should be remembered that Red Adair and his ilk only work when something goes wrong, and usually in a big way, with oil workers dead and injured. To make a hero out of a man, and a very rich one at that, who lives off the backs of the ordinary rig worker, seems to me to be the height of indecency.

I read the book to review it. I wouldn't have read it otherwise.

NEWS FROM THE OILC

Offshore workers are stepping up there 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.

Meetings now cover the country and put nearly every offshore worker within reach of at least one during his leave. (See the advert this page)

At the centre of the discussion has been the "Continental Shelf Agreement". It is aimed at providing a framework within which the wages, conditions and the rights of all 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 semis alike around the time this edition of Blowout is in your hands.

The inspiration for our activities has in large part come from the Norwegian Sector where the multinationals were brought round the table long ago. So why not here? We produce the same oil for the same oil companies and its sold for the same price on the same markets. We have a right to the same conditions and we'll get them. But only if we fight for them.

The Offshore Information Centre is busier than ever dealing with the problems of work offshore, giving advice on such subjects as industrial accidents and NRBs.

It plays another important role, that of watchdog. Files are kept on every installation, operator and contractor, and interesting reading it makes too. Many offshore workers will have followed the media attention given recently to Amoco and Rigblast. Dont worry they'll all be given their share. Rigblast in particular feel aggrieved about the attention they have received and have indicated their intention to rehabilitate their reputation. For a company with their record they have a lot of ground to make up. But good luck to them. Everyone hopes they will pull it off. Certainly the Offshore Information Centre will encourage them in every way it can.

RIG YARDS

According to Shell, "A maximum of up to 700 construction jobs will be created" (whatever that means) in the near future.

Costain Engineering Ltd start on a major expansion of facilities at the Shell/Esso plant at Mossmorran in Fife this June. The contract is worth £10 million to Costain in an overall project that is going to cost £100 million.

McDermotts at Ardersier came close to strike action last month. After a 60-40 vote in favour of strike action by the 1300 men at the yard. The action was called off when management climbed down and agreed to re-hire a former shop steward. It seems however that part of the agreement was that the man should not become a steward. Maybe he didn't want to be one, but it still sounds as if McDermotts from now on are going to have a say over who the men choose to represent them.

With the completion of the work for Shell's Sole Pit field, around 1000 workers were made redundant at HiFab's Nigg yard. We are so used to the "peaks and troughs" in this particular arm of the industry that the statistics tend to hide the real human cost. Some men who went out the gate were going for the tenth time. Maybe somebody'll write to Blowout with the inside story of working in rig construction. Not the glitzy PR side of the industry but the human story.

Blowout has heard about the strike at Press' yard on Tyneside. We believe that it's over the sacking of six shop stewards who had the temerity to inform a client of management's incompetence. You can be sacked for almost anything these days. If Blowout's reaching these parts maybe somebody will give us the true story.

SMASHING NIGHT

On the 16th of March, Oil workers and their partners from all over Britain took over the Logie Baird Suite in Glasgows prestigious Central Hotel. The occasion was a buffet dance, organised on behalf of the OILC by Alex Balfour, an EETPU pipefitter on the Claymore.

Installations throughout the North sea were represented as well as sizeable (and boisterous) contingents from Wytch Farm and Geordieland. The night was a great success not least because offshore workers and their families showed themselves able to share the good times as well as the bad.

Bobby McNair, (ex-Stadive) is now claiming that he didn't invite us all to be his guest next month aboard The Waverly, the world's last sea going paddle steamer. Never mind Bob it'll be all right on the night.

Talking about steaming, Ronnie McDonald would like it stressed that he was on his way to the dance when he "totalled" his hired car. Thankfully neither he nor his passenger Mrs Agnes Fleming were seriously hurt. They did however, like most others, look a little unsteady on their feet at 3am on the Saturday morning.

Details of those firms who generously donated the excellent prizes for the raffle will be listed in our next edition. We may even have a photograph if the photographer is feeling better by then.

AROUND THE NORTH SEA

Continued from Page 8

-LOFFLANDS

Lofflands' men can be seen on the drilling packages of various offshore platforms. They are likely to be even more visible in the near future. This excerpt from "Loffland Brothers North Sea Inc - Safety Programme 1990 and Onwards", should explain why.

"The following steps are being taken: (one of which is) Introduction of an individual annual safety award of, for 1989, a pair of short sleeved coveralls with 'Commitment to Excellence' badge on the back, 'For Safety' badge with year on right hand breast and the individual's name embroidered just below the Loffland logo on the left hand breast."

The connection between the afore mentioned coveralls and safety is not immediately obvious.

There are, as yet unconfirmed, rumours of a TV safety campaign featuring Loffland employees dressed in their new coveralls. It is believed that they will be performing a song and dance routine based on the slogan "You won't get safer than a Loffland's roughneck" and sung to a tune made famous by a firm of car exhaust replacement specialists.

But if the coveralls are ludicrous the "Pledge to Employees" is downright criminal. It is to:

"Provide a safe Workplace"

"Provide regular Safety Training"

"Any employee, with an accident free record, whom the company has to make redundant will receive double statutory redundancy pay. Employees, with an accident free record, will be preferred for retention, before others in their classification, should redundancy occur."

This garbage seeks to blame the workers for accidents and punish them if they dare report them. It'll do wonders for the statistics. But nothing for safety.

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 around £75,000, but it has been a slow process and they desperately need to raise the £25,000 shortfall quickly.

Everything from the artist/sculptress to the foundations and granite has already been arranged.

The artist, Sue Jane Taylor, has already completed many sketches and a model of the the three figures depicting "the oilmen". Now she's ready to begin on the sculpture. Now that the committee have seen the models they're more determined than ever that the work should go ahead and that they should see the memorial in place at Hazlehead.

-ULTRAMAR

The first edition of Blowout last July, told the tale of an explosive release of gas aboard the Santa Fe Monarch. The explosion blew one man 15 feet across the deck and equipment into the sea, during well testing operations.

In response Mr Ian A Ross, a senior operations engineer for the oil company Ultramar, while calling the claims "exaggerated" did admit that there had been a mechanical problem, "which did unfortunately result in a release of gas".

Blowout's version of events which originated from reliable sources on the rig claimed, at the time, that the rig had been "engulfed" in gas. Also that a "steam exchanger" had been destroyed in the explosion which had resulted from a fault in Ultramar's test design. A fault that the Department of Energy "experts" had missed.

By November last year, "Ocean Industry" - The magazine for offshore business" was carrying a major article by the same Mr Ross. Oozing self congratulation, he had, amongst other things, this to say:

"To ensure the wells needed are safely drilled/tested and the fields successfully developed, industry cooperation and open discussion is required. To this end, Ultramar is pleased to document the planning drilling and testing of the deep 29/5b well."

Mr Ross' idea of "open discussion" doesn't it seems stretch as far as telling the truth. Not one solitary word does he mention about a potentially disastrous incident that arose directly from Ultramar's shortcomings. Mind you, in his defence we must point out that nowhere in the article does he consider the offshore worker as fit to join in this cooperation and exchange of information. And to be fair everybody he mentions knew about the incident hours after it happened anyway.

The Department of Energy's investigation must have been amusing.

-BRENT BRAVO

Tuesday March 13 saw a gas leak on Shell's Brent Bravo platform. Coastguard and RAF helicopters were scrambled during the alert when 217 personnel on board were mustered to emergency stations.

Brian Donald fell to his death on board Atlantic Drilling's semi submersible, the Ben Reoch on March 5. Mr Donald was a roughneck and had been with Atlantic Drilling for 11 years. Blowout sends its condolences to his family.

At the beginning of February a charity disco was held at Chambers Nightclub in Aberdeen. It was a great success and raised over £4000. Further events will be organised, but these take time to organise and the money is needed now.

Collection boxes are now on their way to many installations. And the Piper Memorial Committee had these words for the offshore workforce when they wrote to Blowout.

"We ask for your support and hope that you may find it in your hearts to make a donation to the fund that will help us to achieve our aim of a permanent memorial to our loved ones and your colleagues."

Occidental, the operators of Piper, say that they will not be contributing to the memorial. They have produced a book of remembrance that is lodged in St. Nicholas' Kirk in Aberdeen.

Gavin Clelland (see front page photo) informs Blowout that Glasgow District Council General Purposes Committee has approved in principle his request that they erect a memorial for the victims of Piper. The nature and location of the memorial is still to be decided.

Blowout Subscription Rates

100 papers : £25.00
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FOR ALL OFFSHORE WORKERS

MEETINGS

GLASGOW : AEU HALLS
WEST REGENT STREET
EVERY THURSDAY 11.00am

ABERDEEN : TRADES
COUNCIL CLUB
EVERY TUESDAY 11.00am

NEWCASTLE : AEU HALLS
HIGH ST GATESHEAD
EVERY WEDNESDAY 7.00pm

MIDDLESBOROUGH : AEU
HALLS BOROUGH RD
EVERY WEDNESDAY 11.30am

LIVERPOOL
GT YARMOUTH
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