ODYSSEY DEATH ENQUIRY AT LAST

THE FATAL accident inquiry into the death of a North Sea radio operator will take place at the Exhibition Centre in Aberdeen on May 21, an unprecedented 20 months after his death.

Timothy Williams died aboard the DECCO semi-submersible Ocean Odyssey when the hole she was drilling for Arco blew out.

The crew were forced to abandon the rig. Most escaped by lifeboat, seven by jumping into the sea.

Blowouts avoidable

The chain of events that led to Mr Williams’ death did not start with the blowout. It started a long time before that, in the course of drilling the well. The official line from the Department of Energy and the oil companies is that blowouts are entirely avoidable. They cannot occur if you follow established safe procedures for drilling a well and, once the inevitable warning signs have been detected, control the kick. It is only likely that the enquiry will recognize that and afford us a real explanation of how our colleague died.

This enquiry could also be important for other reasons. The flames of the Ocean Odyssey may illuminate better the oil company and Department of Energy attitudes to safety prevailing in the industry at the time of the Piper disaster

by Garry Forbes

When the Odyssey went up on September 22 1999, the entire offshore workforce was killed in the blast. Only 3 months earlier Piper had exploded and killed 167 men. National politicians had been up in Aberdeen exhibiting their grief in public.

The oil and contracting companies were reviewing safety. Everyone was on red alert. Or at least that was the public perception.

Drilling practices

Perhaps the enquiry will confirm a different reality. Instead of maximum vigilance, the first report from the rig were of a reckless disregard for established safe drilling practices, and of improperly functioning equipment. If it does emerge at the enquiry that procedures were followed that jeopardized the safety of the men, then possibly some attention should be paid to those who through their silence condoned such practices. Shell, the major shareholder in the well, must have been monitoring the progress to prevent investment. Possibly the other shareholders as well.

Surely the fitness of the D of E to regulate safety on the North Sea will come up for discussion again. Their inspector, who visited the rig only days before the disaster, must have thought he was experiencing deja vu when he heard of the explosion. He must have heard of the prison inspector remarks on a visit to Stranraer just days before it was exploded.

The D of E temporarily downgraded all 15,000 cut ROP courts on the North Sea soon after the disaster. This created the impression throughout the industry that equipment failure had been the main problem. It will be interesting to hear what their investigation eventually came up with as the real cause of the disaster.

Hopefully we will get some explanation for the delay in convening the enquiry. It must be a great strain on his relatives, to wait 20 months for an explanation of how Timothy died. We can only have sympathy for them as they have to relive the whole experience so long after the sad event. It also means that any lessons that may emerge from the inquiry have had to go unused dating that time.

UNIONS DISCUSS CSA

NATIONAL officers of all the trade unions with an interest in the North Sea met in Glasgow on April 18.

There they discussed, and adopted in principle, the death “United Kingdom Continental Shelf Agreement”.

Present were representatives from the AEU, EETPU, GMBATU, MSF, TONU and NSF.

Here, for the first time in the 25 year history of Britain’s offshore oil industry, was a united approach by all the unions towards confronting the problems of the whole North Sea workforce. It marks the end of a remarkable 12 months and the beginning of a summer which will, one way or the other, leave the North Sea a very different place.

Earlier this year, under intense pressure from the unofficial Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC), the four union signatories to the Offshore Construction Agreement (OCA), united it. This was the culmination of a strategy begun by the Ten shop stewards in June 1989.

The OCA was an agreement which only covered between 5 and 10% of the offshore workforce (all in construction). It was in effect a policing agreement which allowed the employers industrial peace when they were at their most vulnerable, during the construction of the production platforms and the bringing on stream of the oil. When it went it took with it the last real obstacle to unity amongst all offshore workers.

But removing obstacles to unity is not the same as creating unity. And this is the significance of the Continental Shelf Agreement that the April 18 meeting endorsed. It is an attempt to do just that, to unite the entire offshore workforce as a first step to transforming the North Sea.

The day after the unions met, Bill Morris, the deputy general secretary of the giant Transport and General Workers’ Union, attended the regular weekly OILC open meeting in Glasgow. His union, along with the National Union of Seamen, had participated in joint talks at national level with the other offshore unions for the first time. His message was clear. The T&GWWU along with the other unions, stood absolutely firm in support of the offshore workforce.

Organised round the OILC and with the engineering/construction “hears” out in front, the offshore workforce have created this situation. Now all that remains to be seen is their verdict on the draft Continental Shelf Agreement. “It’s not perfect and it’s not carved on tablets of stone,” said Ronnie McDonald OILC chairman, “but it is a necessary first step if we are to meet the challenge of 1992, and also place ourselves as a workforce at the centre of our industry.”

Union signatories to the claim will meet in London on May 8 to further consider their position.

See Page Five
EDITORIAL

OCCIDENTAL AND THE PRESS

JAMIE JAIMESSO, a mechanical technician and safety representative on the Claymore, spoke publically about the situation he had seen. By doing so he had severely exploded a campaign of misinformation about safety. The crewman had originated in the Oxy rig on the rig, and had spread like wildfire to the beach.

Ultimately he had diverted Oxy's poisonous smears from the entire workforce and onto his own back. For his troubles he was hounded, shunned and distracted by the police.

His colleagues caught immediately. He was released without being charged. Occidental said he was welcome back on Claymore anytime, and his employment, AOC, advised him to return to work at his earliest convenience.

A number of house-end anti-rig workers however, Oxy had yet to respond to his announcement of his intentions. Their spokesperson had spoken of "a potentially malodorous act," and "a stupid irresponsible act" which suggested the presence on the rig of a person with "no respect for the safety of his fellow workers."

Had Mr. Jamieiro left Oxy and this filthy insurrection might just have stuck to the entire offshore workforce. Certainly if Peter Steele of the Daily Record had had his way it would. He faithfully repeated Oxy's fifth and final defense to the text, "Subsidize Big By Rig Missile," "Cops Chopper Dash After Giraffe Stare," and "A MADMAM with a grenade could be planting a North Sea oil rig...be prepared to sabotage."

Peter Steele can refer to his notebook and say that all he did was write what Oxy told him. Likely, and of course he would be telling the truth. But that in no way excuses him. He repudiated without question, the paltry wooden fantasies of an oil company held in deep suspicion by many offshore workers. It was on Oxy's platform that 627 of our people died that night nearly two years ago. Piper Alpha was enormous, long before it blew up.

Peter Steele would have done better to speak to the offshore workforce before digging his pen in slime. Now I fear it's too late. He and the paper he writes for are beyond the pale.

Jamie Jaimeiro says his own is a debt of gratitude to his colleagues who moved so quickly in his defense. Undoubtedly, but the real debt of gratitude must be from us to him for subduing this filthy smear attempt.

"PRESS"

If Oas Moran says that "Press" NRK didn't do from the Daily Express collection worthy of Blowout then that is exactly what happened. No doubt Press employees will make up their own minds about the accuracy or otherwise of John Innes's details.

But now it's in the best interest that Press have broken as fighting entrepreneurs from the Dartford office have recently had to have a word in the ear of the gaff entrepreneurs from the Aberdeen office.

Blessed as the saying holds up, the practice swings and start welding the club in earnest.

AMYCO 49/27 CHARLIE

Congratulations yet again on another splendid edition of "Blowout." If only more people both in and out of the industry had access to it our struggle would be that much easier.

I was particularly pleased with your mention of Amyco's 49/27 Charlie platform in the Southern Sector. However I was increased that Amyco denied that the perturbations were above the wellhead area. I was living in one of them and other workers have been living in it for two years! Another two perturbations were to be delivered a couple of weeks ago. I enclose a plan which verifies this.

The irony of this latest algo side is one that the contract we are working on (AOA) in called; "TED valves safety project" (October for the tideland suspension). Keep up the good work.

Yours in Comradeship

Nomes withhold by Blowout

SADLY FAMILIAR

I read with interest "A View From Home," Although I am the ex-wife of an offshore worker I still have connections with the oil industry, and reading "A View From Home," was sadly very familiar.

Being an "offshore wife" brings its own specific difficulties. My ex-husband worked in the southern sector in the early 70's before bringing me to Aberdeen. In those days the money was good, but unfortunately as my husband was a contract worker, I never knew how long it would last.

He had always been a heavy drinker, so our drinking period was open "relaxing" with his daily bottle of gin and a dozce can of special brew. The "Kids" friends used to ask, "why has your dad always got a can in his hand?" The kids because he's at work making excuses as I did.

During some trips onshore I felt like the check in day would never come. When it did a feeling of absolute relief came with it. Put two weeks we could lead a normal life.

I think I was always a single parent. It seemed as though I already had total responsibility for making decisions and dealing with the children's problems. When he was offshore there was no choice about this. The frustration came when he arrived home and needed "time to unwind," then spent the rest of the family period too drunk to think clearly. I came to the point where I resented him interfering in my independence. My marriage failed, not entirely due to the abnormal lifestyle, but it certainly contributed.

CONTRACT BLOWOUT
52 GUILD STREET
ABERDEEN AB1 2NB
TELEPHONE 0224-210 118 FAX 0224-210 095
NEWSDESK 041-423 0461

RULES MADE BY IDIOTS

I read the Blowout with interest. Most wives don't get told by their husbands what goes on because they don't want to worry them. Your paper gives us an insight into the risks and dangers our husbands work under.

You keep on about safety aspects and I have always thought that safety is the first priority on the job. Offshore men who have been working night shift suddenly get put on day shift half way through their trip. So if a man is working nights his system becomes geared, and so to change his shift half way through doesn't make sense. The men get disoriented.

Concerned wife of a zombie

EXCELLENT

I have worked offshore for many a year now, on the carring side, and Blowout is the first of its kind to help the workers. It is excellent and straight to the point. There is no pussy-footing about it. There are many people starting to take notice of Blowout, and realize that it means business.

Keep up the good work and let the workers have a say, always.

Jambo
PRESS ON THE BRENT

I would like to take the opportunity of sounding a word of warning about the new terms and conditions of employment implied by, amongst them, Press Officers. I’m doing this by relating my recent personal experience.

During my last visit on the Brent Charlie, which ended on 12/9/00, a meeting of Press nightshift personnel was called (not by me). At the meeting, dissatisfaction was expressed at Press’ Dickinson industrial relations policy. Specifically people were concerned that meetings on the last day of their leave under threat of dismissal for non-attendance, was not widely appropriate. Nor was the imposition of the “agreement” without consultation with the workforce or their representatives. The subsequent meeting noted out by supervisors who had been expressly instructed to give the beers a hard time didn’t go down well either.

It was proposed (not by me), and seconded (again not by me), that we should exercise our right under the new terms and conditions, and work only 12 hourly shifts. It was stressed that this did not mean entering into a dispute, but merely allowing one of our very many rights under the company’s contract.

A motion was put out on and carried with only one dissension.

It was decided, whilst it was not necessary because we were not in dispute, that we should nevertheless inform the management of this decision at a meeting of the country. It was voted that I should do this honour, and I together with a representative of the black macros informed of the whole of the men’s decision. We were very careful to emphasise that we were not in dispute and refused, despite several requests, to go any further.

It was finally accepted by him that we were not in dispute and were perfectly within our rights to take such a decision, he asked about the general mood of the men. He then refused the subject that had come up at the meeting — instead they were “not grievances”, but perhaps entitled him with regards to his expressed wish to know the feelings of the men.

Two days before I was due to go back offshore, I received a telephone call from an anonymous “Manul” (I know nothing), informing me that I had been down a strain. Three days after this I received a letter explaining that this was due to redundancies in the company’s terms and conditions, written by them, for them and imposed by them without input from the men themselves, it states:

“The method for selecting employees for redundancy shall be based on the service with the company and the need of the company to retain particular skills. It is recognised that this shall be the agreed method within the terms of section 99 of the Employment Protection Act 1975.”

But I know from speaking to colleagues who were not down, and who haven’t lost their service time that, this procedure has not been followed. I decided to enquire as to how this “method” had been made. The sequence of events was as follows. I phoned Paul Charles’s office. He was told I would phone him back.

I phoned again. He was told I would phone back again.

I phoned again and insisted on hanging up. I was ignored for 20 minutes.

I re-dialed. The switchboard could not answer from his office.

I re-dialed again and was put through to his secretary who hung up without saying a word.

I re-dialed once more and left a message on the switchboard operator to the effect that any further communication would be via my trade union, and that this incident would be reported in the Brent.

I hope this makes your position perfectly clear. You have no rights. The company may not be able to abide by the rules that they otherwise have written. The need for a continental shelf agreement in vain. Only then will you have any rights. The rest is window dressing.

Read and discuss the draft document. If you think amendments are needed contact the GULC. Go first.

The companies are lying when they say they want a skilled and motivated workforce. They want bluebeards who’ll turn up, not you. What’s it? I’m betting on their getting yours by the end.

Phil Ex Brent

STRANGE(WAYS) BEHAVIOUR

I am writing this letter in the hope that through the paper I can make my point to contractors personnel on the Ninian field. We are all very feeble as worthy of an 11.7% rise as our brothers on BP and Shell platforms.

Why should Britain have the luxury of our special skills and experience on the cheap?! Especially when we hear of the rates that are being paid on the board.

How can this situation help them in “MEDICINE MAN, SAFETY CHALLENGE”. Morale is at all time low. Perhaps they should examine the high turnover of labour and the increased incidence of “first line” new recruits offshore. It’s no wonder that the deck basher is now replaced with an input of anger and frustration.

Roll on the summer. I hope we get the chance to take action along with the GULC in support of a decent agreement for everyone currently.

If I read the words on the job, we must stand up, we mustn’t slink across the roof in fear.

Long term inmate

A WIFE’S SUPPORT

Having just read your latest edition, and absorbed a few points made by other offshore wives, I have this great urge to make my views known, whatever they are worth. I have been a grass widow to an offshore worker for thirteen years, and believe sex is a very lonely thing. & if you are wondering why, "if it’s that hard", I haven’t put my feet down and insisted my husband works where, it’s simple. My husband loves his job, and there’s no way I’d ask him to give it up. At the moment he’s on a cruise to improve safety and conditions for himself and his colleagues offshore. I say “tireless crusader” but I realise now that’s not really true. There are a lot of guys out there doing the same, it just feels as if it’s the only one.

My biggest fear at the moment is that in his efforts to improve things he might just ruin a few hopefuls finding himself alone. I’m sure that there’s a lot you out there who think that sex feels like, Oh yes...

These big oil companies have ways and means of getting you up, having said that, I realise my husband is as determined to comply with the company’s contract to retain particular skills. It is recognised that this shall be the agreed method within the terms of section 99 of the Employment Protection Act 1975.

But I know from speaking to colleagues who were not down, and who haven’t lost their service time that, this procedure has not been followed. I decided to enquire as to how this “method” had been made. The sequence of events was as follows. I phoned Paul Charles’s office. He was told I would phone him back.

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Read and discuss the draft document. If you think amendments are needed contact the GULC. Go first.

The companies are lying when they say they want a skilled and motivated workforce. They want bluebeards who’ll turn up, not you. What’s it? I’m betting on their getting yours by the end.

Phil Ex Brent

TROUBLED WATERS

I recently came across the February issue of your paper “Blowout”. If this is a typical example I would like a regular copy. Please send me a subscription and, as I spend more time offshore than at home, please send it to the address given below.

I look forward to your review of David Hulch’s documentary in the next edition. Unfortunately, television reception on board was such that we were unable to fully appreciate what seems to have been an extremely interesting programme. (will it be possible to obtain a video copy?)

The “Ocean Odyssey” incidents and forthcoming inquiry are obviously of particular interest.

Hopefully, the story progresses, offshore employers will take the opportunity to reply to some of the points raised through “blowout” rather than selected (or even selective) media channels.

John M. Morrisson

OUTRAGEOUS ATTACK ON PHILIPPINOS

While working for ACO, myself and several other workers were contracted to work on the Amethyst hookup off Hampshires. The hook up was done by Crew from France.

On arrival, I found to my dismay, that the Philippinos on board the vessel were being paid the following rates. Storms were on £8.00 a day buck, £1.00 to £1.50, prime and prime mates on £12, and welders on £13.

I decided to go over and speak to the Philippinos, they were shocked and amazed that they would lose their jobs. In fact they sometimes went out of their way to keep clear of us.

The Dutch came around the Philippinos like dogs, and they were not afraid of them. It was obvious that they were afraid of them.

NELSON ROBERTSON WEBER

FLY TO WICK

My husband works offshore, so when he comes home I look forward to seeing him, but I never thought it would be so long before my next visit! It’s been at least 12 years since my last visit. I have to admit, I’ve been looking forward to this trip with great anticipation. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen my husband face to face. It’s been a long time since I’ve heard his voice. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen his smile.

On the day of my trip, I left my home at 5am and travelled down to the airport. It was a long journey, but I was excited to see my husband again. I was looking forward to spending the day together and catching up on all the things we’ve missed.

As I arrived at the airport, I was greeted by a smiling staff member who showed me to the waiting area. I sat down and started looking through some magazines while I waited for my flight to arrive. Time passed quickly and soon enough, it was time for my flight to take off.

The flight was a short one, and before I knew it, I was back in my husband’s arms. It was a beautiful moment. We hugged each other tightly and I felt like all the world’s problems had disappeared.

We spent the day together, catching up on each other’s lives and enjoying each other’s company. It was a wonderful day! I’m so grateful for the opportunity to see my husband again. It’s been a long time since we’ve been together, but I’m excited to keep up with our lives and continue to love each other as we always have.

Karen MAHAR

ENTHUSIASM ON THE TLP

Please accept this letter as an expression of my enthusiasm for the upcoming TLP meeting. I am excited about the prospect of seeing everyone on the trade floor and hearing of your recent success. I would like to express my support and encouragement for the TLP and its members.

I believe that the TLP is a vital organization that represents the interests of workers in this industry. It is important that we continue to support and participate in the TLP as it works towards achieving better conditions and pay for workers.

I hope that the meeting will be successful and that the TLP will continue to advocate for the rights of workers in this industry. It is important that we remain united and strong in order to achieve our goals.

Sincerely,

John Doe
THE OVERTIME QUESTION

"PERSONS SHOULD NOT NORMALLY WORK FOR MORE THAN 12 HOURS IN ANY ONE DAY" - Department of Energy

FIFTEEN hour shifts and "three weeks" are out of order. Even if employers and workers were working together on the best of terms, these hours would not be justifiable. As it is, with the draft Continental Shelf Agreement on the table, we're in dispute. And it's on the overtime question that the fight has begun.

Everybody offshore, even the Department of Energy, knows that long shifts are a killer. Excessive hours has been identified as a direct contributory cause in two of four recent disasters (Zeebrugge and Clapham). And in another two it was a factor. It's got to come to an end.

The D&E safety notice (PEDS 1/90) noted that people should be told that overtime is over, overtime will end as surely as night follows day.

However, the oil companies have a dilemma and quite frankly a safety, as far as they are concerned, is going to have to take its usual place, a high profile in the press handout, and the rubbish bin on the rig. They want to end it and will, "the hard way". But only once they've led it to get themselves out of the mess they're in.

The oil companies, and Shell and Chevron in particular, have a load of work to do this summer, work that will severely disrupt oil production. But they cannot do this without working the crews 15 hours a day. If they want the work done they need the goodwill of the "beams". Well the way to get the goodwill of the offshore workforce would be to immediately sit down with our representatives and negotiate an agreement that will give us permanence.

It's becoming clearer by the day that without protective agreements in place in the near future any financial gains made by the workforce since last years strikes, is going to be bashed back off at the first opportunity. 1992 offers the employers the prospect of a massive influx of cheap labour. This summer provides us with the opportunity to forestall this attack on organising now.

The latest 11.7 wage increases were handed out, quite typically toky, and applied to men from going back the whole bag of an agreement. However it has had the effect of putting into effect the wages to a level that we do not have to rely on overtime to get by.

Last summer saw the first shots fired as Piper showed us all what our future would be if it was left in the hands of the oil companies. The winter has seen the building up of the resources necessary to challenge the employers. The offshore workforce have collected massive amounts of money and have equipped the Information Centre in Aberdeen with resources to challenge those that the companies themselves have.

The threat has been made and now quite frankly in the time to deprive the employers of the money they so desperately need. Before we can force the oil and construction companies to work with us, we have to demonstrate our self respect. Working 15 hour shifts and nine workers is not showing self respect. We have the right to work to our contracts of employment. A 12 hour shift for fourteen days is enough for any man.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
SAFETY NOTICE, PEDS 196 EXTRACT

"...PERSONNEL cannot be expected to work responsibly, reliably and therefore safely when they have been deprived of sleep for excessive periods. Oil companies, owners of offshore installations and employers alike should set limits on the hours to be worked without a break for sleep. Persons should not normally work for more than 12 hours in any one day. Any period of work of more than 11 hours should be followed by a break for sleep of at least 8 hours."

NORTH SEASPEAK

THE ENGLISH language is very subtle. Everybody knows that things don't always mean what they sound as if they mean.

Politicians in particular have always had the facility to make small sound though you were about to experience something unimaginably nice, when in fact they have just said you are living in a kick in the trough.

"North Seaspeak" has its own subtleties, and no doubt you have your favourite expressions. A current favourite amongst general formers is "the hams' guaranteed". Notice how even at a first hearing you get the impression that something is deeply desirable. As you've been told for ages, and has just been granted and will be yours for ever.

However when looking up the "North Seaspeak" Plain Speaking" dictionary we find that the translation, of "The hams' guaranteed", is "Overtime's compulsory". That leaves us with a less comfortable if more honest feeling.

There are still a constant stream of offshore workers being disciplined because they heard, "the hams' guaranteed" and it stirred up some deeply held ideas about choice, and they didn't have access to the right dictionary.

STRESS

STRESS is a problem long recognised, (as will be discussed, to be associated with the disputed lifestyle of oil workers. You don't have to be a thick cyclist to know that the conditions of offshore life and the treatment meted out by the employers is damaging. Letters from 'offshore wives' and our regular correspondent to the "View From Home" column describe some of that damage, and how it is transmitted to our families.

Certainly in Norway, and even with companies like Shell UK, the effects of "two and two" have been recognised to be destructive to the individual and to his family. It's likely that relationships are placed under strain when couples are continuously meeting at the same stage of a woman's menstrual cycle. At it's simplest level it can be deeply distressing to couples attempting to have a family. Even a straight run on two off leaves the offshore worker spending the biggest half of his life either travelling to and from work. Those workers are crazy. They can only damage your health and that of your family. And the same goes for the fifteen hour shifts that men are regularly expected to do. Yes we know the executives somewhere put in even longer hours, and they have no leave period in which to recover. But it's obvious everybody that many of them are off their nuts. I'm looking forward to the first letter from an oil or service company manager's wife. Then we should get a real insight into damaged behaviour.

There's been little study of the damaging effects of our way of life on us and our families for obvious reasons. You'd have to be a pretty tame doctor before you got past the oil companies and into the rig's. What little I've seen has been full of jargon. Obviously it wasn't written to give an idea of what's happening to us. It doesn't do offshore anyway. Maybe some of the experts will read this and write a series of articles for us in plain English. In the meantime I suppose we carry on referring to the "supreme" that's 'handed out', and get this Continental Shelf Agreement together, as a start in creating an offshore environment that's fit for human beings.

OILC STATEMENT

SUCCESSIVE meetings of the OILC standing committee have discussed and agreed to the end of the practice of routine overtime working.

We call on all offshore workers to meet offshore, discuss this decision, and immediately begin to work to the OILC contract of employment.

MOVEMENT ON THE NORTHERN NORTH SEA

KCA DRILL CREWS

FOR SOME TIME now there have been grievances aired by KCA drill crews on the Cormorant Alpha.

No overtime was being paid for shuttling and hard lies, and the men reckoned that they were due in the region of £5,000 a man in "monies not forthcoming".

Central to their grievances was the recognition that safety was being jeopardised by a huge turnover in men, due to the low pay and the caused by this situation.

When a couple of guys came ashore and contacted the trade unions, they took back offshore enough forms to recruit into the T&G and NUS, all four crews on both the Cormorant Alpha and the Tern. The unions then wrote to KCA asking them to recognise the new shop stewards.

KCA's response was immediate. They imposed a 13% wage increase, a sick pay scheme giving men half pay for the first 6 months, and are now paying shuttling money.

TERN MEETING

ON TUESDAY the 24th of April a mass meeting of contractors took place on the Tern.

Not only were the construction/engineering workers present but also CCG caterers and KCA drill crews.

The outcome of the meeting was that the men decided to follow OILC recommendations during the campaign to win the Continental Shelf Agreement.

The question of working to the contract of employment was raised and agreed to. The men are working normally to give other instalments an opportunity to meet and take their decisions.

By the time Blowout went to press, boards and meetings were scheduled widely throughout the Shell Field to discuss the position of compulsory overtime.
CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT

compiled by Martin Hind

A RAID that the fear of boredom would have you, "out-chasing the lure"! This I am told is what you rough tough bears call doing overtime. I thought that you might appreciate a few moments of gentle contemplative activity. Brawling and combining belligerently over the pros and cons of the draft Continental Shelf Agreement might fill the void for some of you but there are others I'm sure of a more sensitive and didactic disposition. I do hope to be pitting my wits against yours on a regular basis from now on, so please write with any suggestions. And if you're interested in running origami or shifts then you want some help to compile them I'll be glad to help. At a price of course.

So here we go... You'll find the answers on page 9.

(1) What is the name of Norway's North Sea oil corporation?
(2) Through which three capital cities does the river Danube flow?
(3) What was invented and first sold in 1935 by Charles Darrow?
(4) Who was the first monarch to be known by a number?
(5) With what is sole vernacular garnished?
(7) On November 21st 1924 which British newspaper became the first to publish a comic strip?
(8) Which film of the 1960s took more money at the box office?
(9) How many gold discs did Elvis Presley earn?
(10) In which television series did the following families appear? (i) The Drummonds, (ii) The Lentons, (iii) The Inglés, (iv) The Tates.
(11) What is the formal name for joined up handwriting?
(12) In which year was the BBC established?
(13) Outside the Soviet Union which eastern European nation produces most coal?
(14) What are the seven deadly sins?
(15) What is the singular of bacteria?
(16) Who was the first British footballer to be sold for £1 million twice?
(17) What are the state capitals of Texas, Wyoming, Arkansas, Virginia, California and Pennsylvania?
YOUR SACKED

On arrival at the office today, the 1st June 1990 we are in receipt of a telex report from the BP Marine Representative Mr R. J. Ralston & Mr R. McClelland that there is no evidence of the ship from the Safe Felicia. We quote the following contents of the telex for your information:

1) Refused to stay on overnight concern for non-appearance of back pay.
2) Refused to provide meal cover for remaining members of the helo crew.
3) Indicated that he was being suborned if it resulted in a P&SS (dismissal) - unquote.

Both your senior HLO’s on the Safe Felicia, Baster and R. McClelland have stated that although you are a good worker you have an uncooperative attitude towards the supervision on board and unable to accept that as a HLO you were responsible to the HLO and subject to Installation Company Discipline.

After lengthy discussion with Roger Reigh our Managing Director, re the above facts it is with regret that under the terms of your current contract we must terminate your contract effective two weeks from the above date.

Yours Sincerely,

J W Whitworth
Logistics Manager
Channel Offshore Services Limited

A WIFE'S TALE OF WOE

Men listen to my tale of woe. Listen to it well.

Within these words I’ve got to say there’s quite a tale to tell. My position worked for “Channel”, contract given by “BP”. Just like you were trained them and worked on the North Sea.

Ends he took and passed all you could trust him too.

But please read on for the end this does happen to you.

“Those the ones for HDA’s and such you awaited patiently. But in the end when it paid you couldn’t show much grief.

Your hourly rate was not too bad but overtime was bad.

What plott is it I wonder? Just your lot I guess.

Cause if you start to question why

Ashore they’ll tell you that and reply.

“There’s plenty in here who’ll do the job a pair of hands like you.”

Now I’m angry ‘cause suffer I must.

Because of the man with the power just

The man who sits on the office chair.

Thinking they light the oil fire.

The only thing they’ll fear is you.

If you don’t do what they tell you to.

What do they know of lonely nights

Of storms or gales or bloody frights.

They sit there with their continual heating.

Having such an important meeting.

Writing and dining on your sweet and blood.

Caring not about, man, beast or food.

My husband worked for Channel Offshore but he was promptly shown the door.

At New Year his relief was late.

He wouldn’t stay on so they opened the gate.

They never asked why he was so upset.

Just opened the door and said out you get.

His work they said was very good.

But didn’t like his attitude.

If he had stayed off sick in bed.

For Xmas crew change but no instead

Went back to work with a “surgical collar”

And relieved the chap who caused some of the bother.

When the chap he later didn’t get the sack.

Because his face fits he got back.

My man had done his work although himself.

And at home I was looking like a skell.

The day he was due home a letter he’d read.

That it’d been told to a hospital bed.

But because he felt a private grief.

He didn’t tell the allegedly chief.

He phoned the office before he got the boot.

But I’m afraid that courtesy didn’t suit.

He’d deprived his fifteen hundred.

But they said the contract included mine.

Contract! That’s a new one on me.

Cause at the time there wasn’t one you see.

On my husband they sent to town.

To such an extent he had a nervous breakdown.

All this I’m telling cause it could be you.

Will he next to lose their mind and home too.

All you boys who work offshore could make companies like Channel exist no more.

They need your skill. Without your training.

They would be the ones complaining

Without trained HLO and HDA.

How could you ever earn your pay.

Men of the Felicia: About your back pay.

Did you ever find out how they worked it that way.

You all knew yourselves it should have been more.

Are you frightened to ask cause they’ll open that door.

Because of this victimisation and now I don’t know what will happen to us now.

But when my husband’s healthy to work once more I won’t be for cows like Channel Offshore.

I WAS NEVER IN YOUR EMPLOY

Along with my poem I’m writing this to include my candidacy to all the trained men who work offshore and have to suffer the indignity of being treated as having no intelligence. And also to the helicopter pilots who rely on the men on deck being trained properly and not underemployed. God be with you all.

I for one certainly hope BP will look into the integrity of companies before they give them contracts. You know the cheapest way can turn out to be more expensive in the end, both in money and lives.

I am but one wife, how many more women feel as I do wonder. May I say my poem in its true form is a fact of what has happened to my husband. It was written without malice. Probably because I have had the door open my month before the party will not work on the North sea again.

But one thing I am sure of is that the will be by my side, and safe.

I also hope that those involved in this disgraceful treatment of a good seaman have many sleepless nights. Gods works and mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

You can’t sick me or mighty chief, if I was never in your employ. I am only turning back to health the results of your method of treatment of employees.

By the way where are all his mates now? You all know where to go to join the unions.

Stand up and be counted to make your future secure.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A ROUGHNECK?

What do roughnecks do anyway? I’ve heard them described as the most unskilled tradies in the world, but then that was from a Yankee pusher who once verbally lashed me for asking for a torch (“I’ma flashlight you wadacthers are for burnin’ niggers with”, we can kick that one into touch right away, probably on the look out for some rough trade, A Alarcon in his book, “North Sea Journeys”, transientized the roughnecks on the rig he was based on “South gaffers grappling with one in the same...” Oh Quiet! Maybe I’ve just been working on the wrong rig huh.

On one particularly rainy henge where I did a couple of hitches, probably did them a world of good. A couple of hitchets, the nice little pusher the pusher could bring himself to call me, “wet”. But that was only after we had won his confidence.

And while we’re in it, just put paid to the idea that some of the crew would send their roughnecks to finishing school to round off those ragged edges... that all stopped during the Stinger ’86.

So apart from what they tactically pay you do, which is in context the lengths of drill pipe to drill wrong and see it round out of the hole as the amount of speed up the sound (the sonic youth’s called, the drillers dream),

the roughneck is really the drilling industry’s scarecrow. If you’ve done more than a shift on the drill floor you will know that scarecrows are an necessity as drilling mud to keep the bit tumbling. Roughnecks are the whining boy in the storyman don’t speak back lest the last got paid of dirt, the mighty DO-LLAR gets angry.

So discipline on the drill floor is harsh. It’s no coincidence that the drill floor resembles a cross between a Medieval iron chamber and an industrial dentist’s surgery. You’ve signed sleeve articles for a start, and they’ve hardly changed since the days of the Bounty. Escape that the beggars have conceded the ruin rations.

Punishment is still mild. Most rigs being conservative institutions by nature still prefer to stick to the traditional use of the “cat” to home their blisters on their skins. It may be, however, concentrate the mind.

It’s said that some of the newer proprietary companies here have done away with keelheading altogether and that some prisoners are even offered to sail a certain number of weeks as a whipping. All this liberal talk might sound good to some roughneck, but for the long-term planning of the industry is bound to break down. “Then we’ll have a dynamite and the unions and before you know it, ‘spot price per bushel’, ‘they’ll be hewing the wakie back to straighten out and show whatoko’s done all over again.”

But the potential of this new form of punishment is there. Sometimes not so nasty as I’ve promised them it can get away, and this usually happens when we’re gonna making half straighten.

When this happens they change the bit. If this doesn’t work the Dillinger Superintendent assumes. He’s in constant touch with all manner of agents, medicine men and other expert of the local tribes where the choo choo say they can depopulate the sea of rich cuts horses while Bradford.

Anyway, any of these roguey might decide that DO-LLAR is in need of appeasement. And when this happen blood is the only answer, and a roughneck blood at that. When the fatal Timmy message goes out the spirit of the whole occasion can tend to be spoiled by the appearance of the entire crew, and means that the sacrificial roughneck has to be chosen in his absence. The Armes considered it a great honour to be chosen, but so many because reasons manage don’t go down a bundle on the rug floor these days.

When the chosen one is finally tracked down and stopped across the rotary table it may appear horrific in the uninitiated. But the most squirmish hours reading this can be re-assured that it is all done most humanly. There is a standard drilling code of practice which the DO-LLAR is adhered to strictly and the Footpusher is there to see that all goes according to the book. They are usually very dark and the far superficial days when the crew was raped from a live victim and tossed down the hole are thankfully long behind us.

And lest the words tally could be issue. It’s a well known fact that the Department of Energy don’t like the practice but for the hands by card a certain energy minister who literally squeaks in his breathing bowl when the DO-LLAR nuked. They quietly accept the practice... the permanent is god must be satisfied.

Of course (I’ve happened all this a bit.) I was lying about the energy minister wearing Kohiblins, more like bashed creeps.

Dye’s still wanna be a roughneck?

AROUN D THE OILFIELDS - ARROB ATH

WHEN THE unions pulled out of the OCA, (Offshore Construction Agreement), the contractors administered it themselves on the Arbroath “hook up”. The men should have been due a rest on its revision date of January 1st. They eventually got a rise on March 1st. It was not backdated. Three weeks after this, as the first oil flowed, the workforce had their rate cut.

After this succession of kicks by management the men did register their complaints, but the agreement they’d come to left other contractors around the North Sea Receipt, and some of the men on the platform “beelting”.

A compensation (not quite fully) for the money that’s been removed from them, they’ve agreed to an extra hour a day in the new normal shift (14 to 15 hours a day. (CONT. NEXT PAGE)
**QUICK ANSWERS**


**REVIEWERS**

**JOHN ROWLINSON**

**IN A MONTH OF major releases, I’m afraid I found little to write about in this edition’s review.**

The extremely popular Susan Vega has a new album out which, given her last album went double platinum, should make a lot of people happy.

Then there’s a new Fleetwood Mac album which doubtless went into the chart at number one making any comment of mine superfluous (I found it predictable and distinctly ordinary).
A QUESTION OF RESPECT

NINE MONTHS ago Thomas Wood, an SGB scabbard, was killed along with two workmates, Peter Thompson and Matt Dunlop. They were on their way home from Chevron’s Ninian North.

Today his widow, Mrs V Wood is still being prevented from settling on with her life being up her daughter.

The insurance settlement (reduced because he was off the rig) has not been paid in full by Crusader. More disturbing is the distress caused by SGB insist on confirmation from the Procurement Fiscal that no drink was involved in the crash.

To raise this all this time in the case of a man who was a passenger in a car is outrageous. The Procurement Fiscal has informed the company that there was no drink involved and the policy will now be paid out promptly.

However Mr Dobinson, of SGB was completely unable to address himself to why this question should be asked at all about a passenger in a car crash. This has all caused extra hurt to a woman who has suffered enough.

Mrs Wood would like to take this opportunity to thank all those of her husband’s workmates who gave sympathy and financial support when her husband Thomas (Toey) died.

-SEDCO WEIRD

BLOWOUT was interested to hear that a forklift truck lost over the side of the Sedco 701 recently, had been recovered. The story did seem strange to us. It’s not the sort of thing that usually happens over the side of a rig. Not like scrubbing brushes and paint brushes and the like.

It was when we were being a bit cautious in believing the story because it was there because we have a couple of rather unbelievable stories coming from Sedco installations of late. Dave McEwen, Sedco’s personnel manager, recently took some pains to squelch the rumour that a number of incidences of drug using had been uncovered on this same rig.

Regular readers of Blownout will remember a story in our December edition that’s sent us an outrageous article in the Daily Record on the subject of a “drugs raid” that had taken place onboard the Sedco 701. Blowout are pleased to report Mr McEwen when he says that no one Sedco crew member tested was found to be positive.

Stronger still is the rumour that the Sedco 701 has now got caught on the books and four lifelines instead of two (instead of one, if you don’t count the one that had the hole in it).

-MOBIL’S HELPLINE

MOIL are striving hard to get their lifeboat in order. They know all about how stressed up they’ve managed to get to. So they’re going to make the advice of lawyers, barristers, psychologists and financial advisors available to us around the clock.

They’ll excuse us if we take their concern for our mental well-being with a pinch of salt. Sitting on the Beryl II after the Piper disaster wasn’t a healing experience. While Aberdeen was held up to a wall of the St Nicholas Kirk memorial meeting, we worked on as usual with no opportunity to express our grief. Our Field Manager McSmith could see no reason to get upset at this.

Maybe a helpline’s not such a bad idea after all.

FOR ALL OFFSHORE WORKERS

MEETINGS

GLASGOW: AEU HALLS WEST REGENT STREET EVERY THURSDAY 11.00am

ABERDEEN: TRADES CLUB EUBY STREET EVERY TUESDAY 11.00am

DUNDEE: TRADES CLUB 1A RATTRAY STREET EVERY WEDNESDAY 7.00pm

NEWCASTLE: AEU HALLS HIGH ST GATESHEAD EVERY WEDNESDAY 7.00pm

MIDDLESBROUGH: CENTRAL HOTEL 43 CORPORATION ROAD EVERY WEDNESDAY 11.00am

LIVERPOOL: MERSYSIDE T.J. RESOURCE CENTRE HARDMAN STREET 10th, 24th MAY 7th, 21st JUNE 7.00pm

HULL: G.M.B. OFFICES 62 RUSSELL STREET 11th, 24th MAY 8th, 22nd JUNE

GT YARMOUTH contact OFFSHORE INFORMATION CENTRE ABERDEEN 0224-210 118