

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

The Bulletin of  — The offshore energy branch of 

A spark from disaster

On Sunday 25th March the “G4” well on the Total UK operated Elgin Platform began spewing out gas at a rate of approximately seven tonnes an hour. As this edition of EiE was going to press the volumes of gas are reducing and members report they anticipate a return to the platform.

The Elgin incident is an unprecedented event in the North Sea, because the gas is flowing freely with no physical way of stopping it by normal means such as closing in a subsea or deck level valve or using an emergency shutdown system. It is suspected the gas is entering the outer casings of the well several thousand feet below the sea bed and is flowing up these outer casings to the platform. As our Regional Organiser Jake Molloy put it to the press; “The last time we had the potential for a fuelled fire like this was Piper Alpha or Ocean Odyssey in 1988 and these events were also the last time we had a complete abandonment situation.”

As the gas began leaking just below the Christmas Tree the rest of the platform was immediately shut down and the OIM began an evacuation. In little over 3.5 hours, using RAF and Norwegian sourced helicopters, over 200 workers were taken to a place of safety. The OIM and Total are to be commended for their rapid reactions and every one of our members involved in this event has praised the OIM for the way he handled the emergency.

However we still have some concerns about the period leading up to this event. Total have confirmed that irregular pressure ‘spikes’ were being recorded in the “annuli” (gaps between the outer casings) from mid February. After several attempts to ‘manage’ these increasing pressures had failed, a decision was taken to “kill” the well. It was during this process that the pressure spikes increased dramatically and subsequently gas began leaking from the casings immediately below the well head.

Workers tell us the OIM had briefed the Safety Reps on the well problems they were experiencing and the obvious question was asked - ‘what happens if the well fails, will we get gas on the platform?’ The OIM apparently sought the advice of the Technical Authorities on this question and the response we are told was - ‘if the well fails it will happen several thousand feet below the seabed because there is a fail safe system designed into the well.’ Clearly somebody got it badly wrong, so were the Safety reps and the OIM given the wrong information? Or did the “fail safe” itself fail? These

The obvious question was asked - ‘what happens if the well fails, will we get gas on the platform?’

are just a couple of the many questions which remain to be answered about how the problem occurred, how it was ‘managed’ and what information was passed to the safety reps and management onboard the installation.

If we assume the information received by members from their Safety Reps is accurate, we would expect to see the Health and Safety Executive reflect on these issues in their investigations into this incident. We feel this is crucial as this may yet be another example of how the offshore workforce is ‘disengaged’ from the decision making processes affecting their day to day health and safety.

RMT has been actively campaigning for greater workforce involvement in the health and safety decision making process. We were recently at the forefront of a successful campaign convincing the industry that offshore safety representatives should be given more training to aid greater involvement and ownership of the H&S agenda. We have also submitted a report to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) calling for greater powers for offshore safety representatives as part of DECC’s offshore regulatory review.

We maintain the actual “risk-takers”, the workforce, our members, should be empowered through knowledge and education to be truly involved in every decision making process from the Board room to the tea-shack. We consider this to be entirely reasonable, given they face scenarios like the Elgin incident where, had the gas found an ignition source, we could have been looking at a major disaster.

Since the event our Regional Organiser has been invited to an ‘update meeting’ with DECC and the HSE. On March 26th he was informed that Total had installed a “bracelet” device to divert the gas away from the well head; apparently a seal between the casings and the Christmas tree with hoses taking the gas down to sea level for dispersion. The plan was to bring in the vessel ‘West Phoenix’ to pump mud to the well head platform and go for a top-kill of the well. At the same time, and just to cover all the bases, there are two mobile drilling rigs doing relief wells, the Sedco 714 and the Gorilla IV.

All agreed at the meeting that killing this well is the priority, but only after this is done will the ‘work’ actually start. The HSE will commence investigations with a specialised team and every aspect of this well failure will have to be looked at. One thing is for sure, it will be some considerable time before Elgin will be producing anything other than reports and recommendations and we’ll be scrutinising every word!

Elgin leak – opinions!

The gas leak (so called), on the Elgin platform, is, in fact, an ongoing “blowout”. The oil company, Total, lost control of the well on the 25th of March. The “event” didn’t begin that day as claimed by Patrick de la Chevardiere, Total’s Chief Financial Officer. The event started a month previously!

The 25th of March was the last day Total had any degree of input into the situation. Since then they have had no control over what has spewed out of the well. Initially 200,000m³ of non toxic (is that code for highly inflammable?) gas per day was Total’s best guess. Nor have the oil company had any control over wind strength or direction.

Given the fact the entire crew were evacuated (successfully and in a timely fashion) and there was huge volumes of “leaking” gas and a naked flame, (the flare) it’s hard to believe anything other than - luck - prevented a colossal disaster.

Total had no more control of the G4 Elgin well than BP had over the Macondo Deepwater Horizon well.

They (Total) can squeal all they like about the differences between these two events. Yes eleven men died at Macondo, mercifully no one died on the Elgin. But it’s not the differences between Macondo and G4, but the similarities, that need to be understood. And it’s those similarities that should be scrutinized by workers throughout the industry who stand to lose their lives when safety fails, and by the environmentalists with an interest in monitoring an industry that has contributed greatly to the pollution of the planet, and by the lawmakers in Government who are supposed to regulate the industry and protect us - oil workers and citizens. Because as long as blowouts are allowed to occur, huge loss of life and environmental devastation are inevitabilities, notwithstanding the sheer good luck that prevailed on the Elgin platform this time.

The Macondo blowout was devastating. The Elgin blowout has been, as yet, relatively benign. But this has had nothing to do with how well Total has handled the G4 or how badly BP handled the Macondo well. Both oil companies ceased to have any influence on the unfolding of these events after they had lost control of the respective wells. Total had time to make a run for it, BP didn’t!

Both the Deepwater Horizon and the Elgin platform were connected, by wells, to gigantic energy reservoirs. Both BP and Total would agree (indeed would argue aggressively) that it is entirely possible to drill, complete and produce oil wells safely. Both failed in these two instances!

In the industry it is an article of faith that blowouts are not inevitable. If they were inevitable then neither I nor anyone else would be on these installations. So what went on at Elgin? This wasn’t just “one of those things” that could happen at any time in any place despite the best endeavours of, Total Safety Corporation AS, whose “first priority” was as ever the safety of the workforce. It was a blowout! And for that to happen there has had to have been a complete breakdown in Total’s safety planning and procedures. At least two physical

barriers between an atomic bomb’s worth of energy, and the people on the rig, had to have been breached. And the smart money has got to go on multiple mistakes directly orchestrated by Total’s senior people onshore and carried out by offshore management, all praised for their “professionalism and dedication” and with an “outstanding attitude” according to Total’s managing director Philippe Guys.

The media, or those interested, repeat uncritically, the disinformation fed them by Total. The workers are saying little or nothing probably fearing for their jobs. And can the unions be too alarmist on this issue? I doubt it! Are they going to advise their members that their risk of being caught up in a blowout is as low as is reasonably possible? Maybe we need just to recognise that the oil industry will continue to blow up oil rigs and that wages and leave schedules should be adjusted to take some little cognisance of that risk.

I’m going to continue taking my chances offshore, but then again, I work on the Norwegian sector.

Neil.

[Unfortunately we had cut Neil’s letter slightly due to space. A full version will be available on our web site at; www.oilc.org]

So that’s one opinion and here’s another -

Mr Molloy, I am currently working on an offshore Installation and have found your comments on TV to be less than helpful to people in this business.

Due to your wild exaggerations on the crisis I found myself calling home to my family having to explain that, no, not all platforms will explode, and that an “imminent” explosion on the Elgin was not going to affect me where I work and no I would not find myself flying through toxic gas clouds when I demob the rig. At the point of your comments and to date, no one has been aboard the Elgin to see what has occurred, so to make your comments on TV is wreckless to say the least. You and the other so called experts need to take a long hard look at yourselves and actually think about what you are saying on TV. Yes the Elgin is a major incident but scare mongering when you have no actual facts on the leak is nothing short of disgraceful and totally demeaning to the hundreds of oil workers in this industry.

Personally I believe your wild exaggerations have done nothing but harm to the Oil Industry this week, many people not involved with Elgin have had extremely difficult conversations with family members simply because you threw wild totally INACCURATE information into the media.

The Union is designed to look after members, not to be a podium for people like you to be able to have a go at Oil Companies with wild and totally out of order accusations. Do us all a favour and resign!!

Anonymous. [Our anonymous writer declined an offer to discuss his concerns].

Deal or no deal?

COTA; attention all catering members!

As this edition of EiE goes to press we are commencing a ballot for industrial action of all catering grades covered by the COTA agreement. Each and every one of you should have received a letter at your home addresses alerting you to this and asking you to update your personal details as soon as practically possible. In addition to this we have emailed those addresses we have, sent text messages, and carried alerts in our publications and on our web site. This process has taken some considerable time and caused a lengthy delay in starting the balloting process. We apologise for this but remind members that you must inform us of changes, we have no other way of knowing.

If you have updated all of your details you should be receiving a ballot paper through your door in the coming days. The ballot papers will be posted out to your homes on May 10th and the ballot will run for 5-weeks. If you haven't received a ballot paper by May 18th at your home address you must contact us immediately on; 02075298827 and make us aware. The closing date for the ballot will be Thursday June 14th.

This ballot is extremely important and it is vital that every member participates in the process. Talk to your workmates offshore and get the message out there. If you fail to get involved you run the risk of undermining the ballot process.

Caterers - MAKE SURE YOU USE YOUR VOTE!

**STOP PRESS:
EMPLOYERS CHALLENGE BALLOT!**

Offshore Diving Industry Agreement – ODIA referendum

All divers and support staff covered by the ODIA agreement should be aware of

the employers offer for the 2012-15 pay and conditions review. The information has been cascaded through the various company reps and vessel reps, as well as by email to members. Details are also carried on the various diver face book pages, the "Ukdiving brotherhood", or "rmtdivingmembers.proboard.com" and many others.



If you're still not aware of what the offer is and what has been done at the negotiating table, the full details of the offer and minutes of meetings etc can be accessed on the ODIA web site; www.odia.org.uk

Go to the "Work Programme" link and consider the offer in full.

This offer will now be considered by each of you, the members, by way of a referendum. Voting papers and details of the final offer from the employers will be sent to your home addresses for consideration. As a democratic organisation it will be for you as members

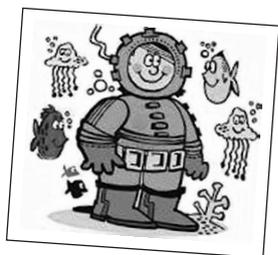
to decide whether the offer is accepted or not, so make sure your voice is heard. Final arrangements were being made as EiE went to print, but it looks like the voting papers will be sent out the week commencing May 7th and will run for a period of six-weeks. Check the website for full details at;

www.oilc.org

Divers - MAKE SURE YOU USE YOUR VOTE!

And finally on the subject of 'votes', ballots and pay deals; we can tell you that the Offshore Contractors Association (OCA) review was out to ballot as EiE went to press. The offer made by the OCA employers was claimed to be 3.9% on Category B rates of pay, but even this is disputed by some!

Members will know that RMT is not involved with the negotiation of this deal. Some say this is a good thing, because the deal isn't worth the paper it's written on, while others say our involvement with the deal would strengthen the position of all the unions.



Caterers, Divers and maintenance crews to vote

Criticism – constructive?

Like the warnings you get on the telly before the evening's feature drama starts around watershed time, we must warn people that the following pages include; 'scenes of violence and strong language!'

The opinions expressed over the following pages are pretty critical of our fellow TUC affiliate Unite. We completely understand this because in the Branch office we are dealing with countless calls and emails from members all wanting their say about the OCA deal. But what you will read over the next couple of pages doesn't even scratch the surface of the mountain of views and opinions, some of which we just couldn't print!

Consider the OCA 'views' with the other news here on this page; the Catering workers across the UK sector possibly taking strike action, and all members of RMT and Unite working together. Also the divers and their support staff conducting a referendum on their pay offer covering the UK sector. Both are examples of unity and strength. Consider also the STUC Congress recently in Inverness (23rd to 25th April) where a resolution calling for; "a united, legal, political and industrial campaign to achieve working time rights for offshore workers" was raised and all of the unions committed to working together for the collective. And the emergency motion raised at Congress by RMT about the EU Regulation, which was seconded by Unite and supported by all other unions, again unity of action!

So why can't we have this with the OCA, and the UKDCA? Imagine the divers, the caterers, all maintenance and engineering staff, and the drillers, all standing together shoulder to shoulder with common objectives on pay, holidays, medical standards, pensions...dreaming? No, it could be achieved.

The thing is, until we achieve unity we won't stop the annual outcry and we make no apology for that. It's criticism of another union, yes; but it's not criticising Unite members who are suffering as much as our members are. So take it for what it is – constructive criticism of union policy.

OCA review brings annual outcry!

It's that time of the year again folks and our old adversary Bill Murray is at it again. OCA has made an offer of 3.9% on the Category B rates and most people contacting us think it's an insult. In a letter we've had sight of, Mr Murray says to the National Officers of his partner unions;

"In arriving at this offer, the Employers have taken into consideration the prevailing economic conditions; in particular, increased living costs (although a fall in inflation rates is evident) and costs of travel. Concerns over future workload will remain until such time as a revival in construction work materialises, as predicted following the recent budget. The Employers believe that this offer is at the limit of what the industry can afford at this point in time."

Economic conditions? Revival in construction work? What the industry can afford? Please Mr Murray, drag your head out of wherever it's jammed, wake up and smell the coffee! Then again we shouldn't be too hard on Bill, he's got a job to do and is obviously doing it well! In fact, he's doing it so well you'd almost think he was on performance related pay of some sort? Maybe there's a big bonus waiting for him if he manages to get his 'partners' to believe this baloney!

And he is trying hard to do just that as he signs off;

"We trust with your agreement to recommend acceptance of these improvements, a positive outcome will result from your consultative ballot."

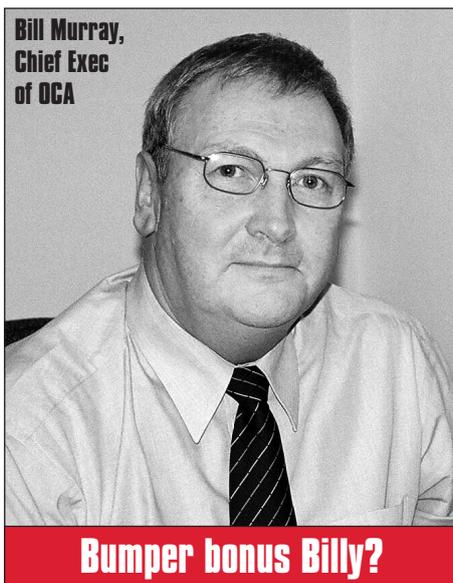
Don't hold your breath on that one Bill, even we're getting letters from Unite members now!

To Whom It May Concern

I am a member of Unite and been a member since it was just PTU. I received my voting paper I think it was Friday past before coming offshore Monday. I didn't recall having read anything recommending acceptance of the offer. I have voted against the offer.

Let's not kid ourselves the union is only as good as the bottle the workforce has to put up a fight. In my experience bottle is very thin on the ground. The number of times I have seen the workforce come together to demand anything and stand their ground, in my time offshore since 1991 is twice. I have stood up and been counted several times and there are lot of platforms on the North Sea I will not be being allowed back too. Every time I speak out or notify my union of anything I believe is against my interests, lets be honest when I stand up for anything being done is because it might be me next, or it is my health and safety or life that is on the line.

I make sure management know it is me that is doing the reporting and not the guys who are doing the suffering. I



Bill Murray,
Chief Exec
of OCA

Bumper bonus Billy?

know the majority of people will not put themselves on the line. If they did even your union would have more power.

Men maketh a union the union does not maketh men.

It annoys me that your young union does not name the men and the unions they are/were members of, that put their jobs on the line and done all the organisation to create OILC and got it to work. Because I know/knew a lot of those guys personally. I see these letters slugging off my union in your news letters, yet all those platforms I was on obviously had OILC members on them who were not stood next to me in front of OIM's when I was making them aware of my grievances.

I'll be anonymous in this letter as lets be honest it's irrelevant. But I'm sure I would only have to put in my initials and everyone who has been on any of those platforms would know exactly who I am.

Our Regional Organiser, Jake Molloy, responded;

Hi Colleague,

Your email about Unite and "young" unions etc has been passed to me to deal with. It's a pity you feel the need to remain anonymous, I much prefer to speak openly with workers and I can assure you that your name and or initials etc would never be used by us.

You make a couple of points which I feel I need to respond to. As for workers standing together; I couldn't agree more and I think you'll find your members and our members would all agree. In fact our National Executive would welcome this too, so I think you need to ask yourself who is preventing offshore workers standing together?

As to occasions when OILC or RMT members have stood together or challenged; I've been involved with OILC since 1989 which was the first time workers across the sector stood together and won. (Minimum increase 42%) This was orchestrated by OILC. Since then I've been involved with numerous occasions where the troops have stood shoulder to shoulder; in the Brent while I was still offshore we collectively fought for and secured significant changes to terms and conditions; thereafter we've organised the Forties to resist cuts to their terms and conditions and more recently they fought for and secured their right to a TUPE transfer. In later years the Brent again collectively fought a cut to terms and conditions. Our members were the first to take up the role of full-time safety reps and many members still fulfil the safety rep role.

Other examples of a collective; OILC lodged over 100 claims to the Employment Tribunal before Unite/Amicus lodged any! It was our pressure on the OCA that brought about the 4-weeks paid leave provision and we had over 70 members settle in return for the holiday, while Unite/Amicus had 4.

We fought the BP proposal against wage cuts; we fought the denial of stand-by payments; we campaigned against NRB; we fought and beat the “temporary lay-off” provisions; RMT divers stood collectively to secure a 47% wage increase in 2006; we have funded and fought the working time argument since 2003; we regularly lodge multiple grievances to contest company changes to conditions; we make representations on behalf of members in every safety forum there is; we brief the press and the public about the industry; together with Unite/T&G we have secured caterers 3-weeks paid leave provision, medical retirement provisions, and we are currently balloting for industrial action; we represent members on a daily basis at disciplinary hearings and in the Employment Tribunal; only last week at the STUC RMT were raising an emergency motion about the proposed EU Regulation and Unite were there to second that motion; and so the list goes on.

Your colleagues, Unite/Amicus members have been involved in some of these issues and that’s where you are 100% right - “Men maketh a union the union does not maketh men.”

And let’s be absolutely clear about this; the “slagging” you refer to in our publications is our members wishing to express their opinions about how they see your union. Our members have a voice and as a full-time officer I am not going to suppress that voice. In any case it is not “slagging” you or any of your colleagues, as our members have nothing but respect for members of other unions, including Unite/Amicus. The opinions of our members are based on my first point and are generated by frustration with your union. The fact your union continues to resist any idea of working with RMT/OILC is at the root of that frustration coupled to the fact your union

denied them their right to have any input into the selection of trade unions in the sector in the first place. If you need proof of that read the attached “The Uncertain Road to Partnership”.

The attached is important in respect of your suggestion about “young unions”; the fact is when OILC was fighting back in 1989 there was no collective bargaining rights and no recognition rights across the platform maintenance and drilling sectors. OILC were organising in those areas long before your union (then AEEU, now Unite) was selected by the employers - **not the workforce** - to be their “Partners”. We spent 11 years fighting the corner of the offshore workforce recruiting over 8,000 members during that time. Then in early 2000 the employers announced they had selected a union to represent workers in the offshore sector, your union! It was that denial of basic rights to organise which planted the seed which now festers in the minds of many workers. Your union has had the collective bargaining and recognition rights since then and you still feel unable to speak out openly? I think your case is evidence of the failure of the arrangements that were put in place back in 2000 and which prevail today.

So to summarise; I’m sorry you feel aggrieved about our members “slagging” your union, but until your union engages with our union and agrees to work with us, I suspect our members might keep sending in their letters. But then I suspect you already know all this - right!

Jake was completely right as the following ‘letters’ pages will illustrate. And for those interested in why we’re in the mess we’re in, you can read “The Uncertain Road to Partnership” on our web site; www.oilc.org

Letters

Rolling Standby

Recently, it has been drawn to the attention of the Offshore Energy Branch that there has been an outright abuse of the Standby Payments section of the OCA document by Wood Group/PSN. Two of our members raised grievances with the company as regards this matter and the company caved in after pressure by RMT/OILC, and received all the money backdated.

We have also seen in recent email exchanges the new concept of “Rolling Standby” where workers employed by Wood Group/PSN on the BP Andrew Project have been told that their standby rate shall be paid every second day while held at home, with the other day being paid at field break. RMT/OILC accepts that the standby rate/held at home rate in the workers terms and conditions is significantly higher than if they were to be held at home on the OCA provisions, however nowhere within the T/Cs does it say that this should be paid every second day. We have also seen emails from Wood Group/PSN confirming this fact, and we are led to believe that Taqa

operations are affected as regards this as well.

RMT/OILC is not putting up with this anymore, we need some clarity on this matter, and we want our members paid as per T/Cs that the company has issued to them. We view this matter as a unilateral change to the workers T/Cs and we are going to challenge it. So we advise our members to raise grievances on “mass”. Contact the Branch Secretary to get a letter drafted as regards this, don’t delay it.

Branch Secretary

Disgusted

I’m presently working on the Tartan platform and I, along with others are becoming more and more disgusted with the number of hungry miserable Bastards who are failing to take their full entitlement of holidays which some of us have fought long and hard for over the years. Others are taking only some of their holidays and doing as many 3-weeker’s throughout the year. This is not what holidays are all about. They were put in place to allow you to have more

time away from your place of work without losing any wages. Those of you who I am referring to are playing right into the hands of the companies and undermining our chances of holding onto our holidays. The bosses on the beach are desperate to take the holidays off us and will be looking at the percentages of guys who are not taking their entitlement.

Also, quite a number of the guys who are fortunate enough to be on a 2 on x 3 off rota are turning their rotas into 3 on x 2 off with all the extra weeks they are working. Again, you are proving to the bean counters on the beach that you are content with just 2 weeks leave instead of 3 weeks. With companies hell bent on cost cutting it may just be a matter of time before you are reverted back to 2 on x 2 off. Come on guys, get a grip of yourselves before it’s too late and take your leave as it was intended, spending more precious time with your families instead of the greed for the extra money. Give some consideration also to the number of extra guys who could gain employment by doing

Letters

holiday cover and filling in during periods of high activity.

We are also seeing more and more self employed guys working offshore who are earning higher wages and paying a lot less tax (good luck to them) but when asked, they tell us they do not get holidays. Is this the case or is it a subtle way of saying they are too bloody hungry to take time off. Some of you pound sharks should also consider putting your hands in your pockets and join the OILC/RMT who, on your behalf, will fight to retain the holidays along with the enhanced rotas. It costs as little as 1 hour's wages in the month. DISGUSTED!

Member no. 03412 (OILC)

20 years of exclusion

We have all been working offshore for over 20 years and never been consulted about any pay rise or our T&C's. We are all members of the RMT-OILC which have most members offshore and we think this is a disgrace that this union has not been involved in the OCA discussions. Is it not a legal entitlement for our employers to listen to the views of the union which represent us and in not recognising said union are actually breaking the law?

The profits of the oil companies and their service companies are immoral. The oil companies are passing on to their personnel a much larger proportion of these profits and are insulting their contract workers more and more each passing year, the differentials are just getting wider.

When the price of oil drops all you hear from the oil companies is that the contracting companies and workforce must tighten their belts. But we're not rewarded when the price rockets and maintains the levels they have been at for the past four or five years, as they do with their own workforce and share holders. To put it bluntly this cannot be allowed to go on and we must continue to press for recognition of the RMT-OILC union by both the oil companies and OCA companies.

Signed - OILC members Schiehallion FPSO

Unite members please!

Having just returned offshore I was told of the Unite message on the "pay

rise". Can I use this publication to send a message to the members of this so called union as I know that they all read EiE, not having any other way of finding out what is going on in our industry.(apart from Blowout of course, another OILC/RMT publication).

My message is this; can you all pick up a pen or get on your computer and contact that bunch of lazy, complacent "sweethearts" and tell them to at least attempt to start negotiating a decent package for the offshore workforce.

It was only a few months ago that they heralded the message that they were going for a substantial pay deal with 15th day payment, improved sick pay etc, etc. What has happened? The usual! Not satisfied with insulting their own members they are dragging this whole industry's workforce back at least ten years.

3.9%!!! Yes you read it right, 3.9%! Is that a substantial pay rise? Let me ask you a question; how much has a litre of petrol gone up in the past year? How much has a pint at your local gone up? I could go on but you know the score as well as I do.

I will ask once again, all Unite members, please get on to your union reps and tell them in no uncertain terms what you think. Remember, we are all going to be paying more for everything in the years to come and if you settle for this you will be "budgeting" for the essentials like the rest of the country.

Regards,

Member No. M0104306

Standby – Taqa a hike!

I am writing this letter because of Wood Group's antics regarding standby payments. In the last few months we have had a Wood Group manager from the beach appearing on the North Cormorant standing at a meeting telling the men that when the platform got evacuated due to diesel being in the water that TAQA paid WGE 12 hours per man for the men on standby in the house. He then went back to the beach and denied he ever said that and started hiding behind the men's T&C's that state you are due 8 not 12 hours (TUPE transfers from Amec get 12, anybody after that gets 8). So the boys only had his say so and got nothing in the end up. This shows you the mentality of the

people who are supposed to be your managers.

We have now got them trying this 1 day standby, 1 day field break p***! How can you accrue a field break when they haven't paid you any hours for that day? There is nothing in the OCA agreement about rolling standby or rota standby or anything like that so my advice to anybody in this position is don't stand for this crap they are at it pure and simple! Read the OCA agreement on the OILC website for your own benefit. We can't really expect anything else from Wood group as this is a company that has "relocated" to Guernsey and rebranded itself from Wood Group Engineering to Wood Group Offshore Services to save paying its NI contributions saving it millions a year. Then Ian Wood announces he is sticking in £50 million of his own dough for a garden in Aberdeen.

My advice to him would be stop f***ing about in the Beechgrove Garden or whatever, and start paying YOUR workers what they are entitled to. I might just go my summer holidays to Guernsey to show the wife and kids the brass name plate that I am now employed from. In these times when there are cuts to public services all over Britain there really should be a campaign to shame all these companies that are doing this. What have all these MPs got to say about this tax dodging? Nothing, because their noses are in the same trough as well?

Member M0106378

UNITE? – No 'Uwrong'!

On Wednesday 28 March an article appeared in the Aberdeen Evening Express about the Elgin gas leak with the headline; "Union fears over explosion threat to neighbouring rigs". Included in the article was a photo of Wullie Wallace, Unite Industrial Organiser, with the Unite union being referred to as a "major player."

I thought – major player? Since when have Unite/Amicus been "major players" on the UKCS? But that was just the first of the crazy claims in this bammy article!

No disrespect to Wullie Wallace, who is probably trying his hardest, but the statements just got more and more ridiculous. There was the statement that said there was; "a clear and present danger". I can agree with that, but it went on to say that, "everyone within a five mile radius should be removed to

safety". Can someone please tell me what kind of risk assessment was conducted by Unite to justify this call? Did anyone have the intelligence to look at a map of the area around Elgin before making this knee jerk statement? These rigs are no like a row of terraced hooses you know!

I mean this was the middle of March when the weather is usually crap in the North Sea. If it was July and a hot still summers day, then maybe, just maybe there might be something in the argument. But I just couldn't figure out how a gas cloud was going to keep its formation and its density and travel across a huge expanse of open sea, then suddenly find another installation like the Shearwater, then hang over that installation and find an ignition source and explode? You'd be having a really bad day if this happened! This was a ridiculous statement to make and it must have caused concerns for a lot of families. Thankfully though we received an email from RMT/OILC saying the union did not support this view, and that was reassuring.

Another thing - did Unite know that by calling for this five mile exclusion zone they could have stopped hundreds of workers going out to the Shearwater for a big shutdown? They would have been stopping guys working, who may have badly needed the money. If there really was a safety risk then of course we would all support the Unite position, but the reality is - they put their foot in it!

And that wasn't the end of the crazy claims. I couldn't believe Unite claiming they had 15,000 members in the UK offshore sector! Where are these 15,000 members? Somebody's telling 'porkies' me thinks, because I don't know any! When I'm out two bagging from rig to rig all I ever see is RMT/OILC members with stickers on their hard hats and the Blowout in every tea shack. 15,000 members? I think they've got two zero's too many there!

Unite made themselves look daft, and the Elgin incident proves the point - they know jack-shit about offshore.

Adhoc Rigger M0105973

Are we in or not?

Just one question; are we involved with the other unions (ie the sweetheart unions) with this years OCA



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agreement. Cause I'm sick to death of shouting our point in the tea shacks offshore only to be told by some Amicus/Unite members we have no seat and no say! It's getting me and the other lads really down mate.

Regards, George

Branch response; Are we involved with the so-called OCA negotiations? In a word NO!

We have the membership, you and your colleagues are an example of that. In most cases both the Unite and RMT union members would like it to happen, it makes sense as we are stronger together. Most contractor employers would like it to happen, (but won't say it in public) as we sit in every other type of forum with them, while there's no other union representatives there! The oil companies would like it to happen, we are after all involved in every other aspect of their operations while none of the other unions take an interest. The GMB would welcome the idea, though again won't say it in public.

The only thing standing in our way is, UNITE. They are fighting tooth and nail to stop us securing a seat at the table, even when their own members are calling for it! This is despite the fact we currently work with Unite (formerly TGWU) with the COTA agreement! Talk about self preservation!

All of that said; to suggest because we have no seat we have no say is just nonsense. Ask your Unite colleagues how they secured their OCA 4-weeks paid leave, because the reality is if we hadn't had a say, they wouldn't have it! They may think they are the only ones deciding what gets done, that's the usual Unite line, but I can assure you they are not. We are providing all-round comprehensive representation for our members in every available forum and with that comes extensive influence. Sitting down at a so-called "negotiating table" once or twice a year doesn't cut it

brother, but let them live in their 'dream world'.

As we speak we are preparing to have a go, and believe me if this works we will bury their so-called agreement once and for all! And the reality is, that's where the OCA agreement belongs because it is dead and has been for years. What's the point sitting down with would be OCA employers like Wood Group PSN, Amec or Petrofac, when they are all members of the Oil and Gas UK board? It is the OGUK board that controls the purse strings. The OCA is a sham as the employers will say - 'we have to consult with our clients' - but the reality is they are the clients! You honestly couldn't make this crap up, yet Unite try to make out it's a 'proper deal'. Garbage!

Branch Sec.

My back isn't bent!

To say this offer (OCA 3.9%) is derisory is a gross understatement! Suffice to say that in living memory the offshore workforce have never received a reasonable pay increment and have always fallen short of current inflation rates.

So where do we stand with this one? Despite oil rates being at an all-time high, we are still shown a level of disrespect that no other Industry would put up with and yet this industry has never known a recession! If it wasn't for the 2 and 3 "concession" that we are still clinging to, without hesitation I would be finished offshore. For a business that continually announces record profits year on year but habitually devalues the efforts and substantial sacrifices of its workforce with miserly levels of pay increases, it deserves a severe wake-up call in the form of whatever industrial action the unions suggest we take. In the immortal words of a great civil rights leader; "it's time we all straightened our backs, cos' a man can't ride your back unless it's bent."

Member M0105275

68 pence!

I am totally disgusted by this so called rise of 68p per hour by the so called unions on my behalf. It is a complete joke, as it is not a cost of living rise as everything is going up and up. Are these union negotiators living on the same planet as the rest of us? Do they just bow their heads and take any scraps that they are offered by these

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'maximums profitus' companies. The price of oil and profits of the oil companies is astronomical, and it just beggars belief that we can't get a proper and realistic wage rise.

These OCA companies keep telling us that there is no money to give for wage rises, and don't start me on about holiday's entitlement! These OCA companies and oil companies are driven by greed and maximum profit before safety and welfare and living standards for the workers who make their vast profits. Absolutely fed up with their vast profiteering and treating the workforce as worthless. When are we the RMT going to get to grips with this OCA carry-on and get us what we deserve; better pay, pensions and working conditions. So get on that negotiating table and get what we the workforce deserves.

Member M0105547

And finally a letter sure to cause discussion and debate amongst our smokers offshore.

For their good and ours

I submitted the following to the CARE card meeting on the rig as a health and safety issue.

We have become settled and complacent with arrangements for smokers on North Sea platforms. We need to rededicate ourselves to assisting these people to address their addiction. For a long time now we have set aside a special place for smokers, where they are made comfortable in soft chairs and "Smoker Only" rooms with television. This means smokers seldom mix with the rest of the rig crew and spend hours at a time in a carcinogenic smog.

This should now be looked at again with a determined view to taking

personnel out of this poisonous atmosphere as soon as they have finished their cigarette. Rather than a duplication of facilities, the smoking room should be a smaller place without incentives to linger, such as TV's or any form of seating. Smokers go in, do what they have to do standing up, for just a couple of minutes and then return to a clean healthy atmosphere again almost immediately to resume their socialising with their peers. We should not stand idly by while our colleagues continue in this risky behaviour, but be pro-active in assisting them to address the problem through bringing them back amongst us in such a way that the smoking part is reduced down to a few minutes away from their company at a time. Hopefully then, after a while, smokers will come to see themselves not as different, but as aspiring non-smokers and that fuggy, hazy, little room as a place they would wish to avoid.

Member M0105017 Claymore Platform

The Offshore Energy Branch and the North East Shipping Branch nominate Pat Sikorski for the post of RMT Assistant General Secretary. Ballot papers will be released on May 28th and we strongly urge our members to vote in this election and support the Offshore Energy and North East Shipping Branches nominee.

COMMITMENT - EXPERIENCE - DEDICATION

PAT SIKORSKI

FOR RMT ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

STANDING UP FOR OFFSHORE WORKERS!

- **2 ON: 3 OFF FOR ALL OFFSHORE WORKERS**
- **ALL HOLIDAYS IN RIG TIME**
- **RECOGNISE AND REWARD VITAL ROLE OF OUR CATERING GRADES**
- **'ONE TABLE' PAY BARGAINING**
- **A SEAT FOR RMT AT DRILLING AND ENGINEERING NEGOTIATIONS**
- **NO SOCIAL DUMPING, ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS OR ENFORCED SELF EMPLOYMENT**

