

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

The Bulletin of **اَلنَّوَالِ** — The offshore energy branch of **RMT**



DEATH BY 1000 CUTS NEXT?

Are you NEXT for a cut?

As part of our efforts to keep you informed of the facts around the changes being imposed to workers terms and conditions across the North Sea this is our second "Special edition" of Enough is Enough. In our last edition we focused on – 3:3 it's not for me! In this edition we want to show you the extent of what is being imposed along with the 3:3 rota, if this wasn't bad enough! What we set out here is an attack on hard earned terms and conditions which will see a return to the dark days of the late 1980's and as our cover says this really is; Death by a thousand cuts!

Back in 1989 in the aftermath of the Piper Alpha disaster a small group of workers started a revolution which saw the birth of OILC and with it a fight against savage attacks to terms and conditions and safety standards. By the time the dust settled at the end of 1990, thousands of workers had secured an average 47% pay rise; sick pay; travel allowances; a minimum of 4-days paid leave; pensions; bereavement leave and much more. Many workers sacrificed thousands of pounds in pay and suffered great hardship to achieve these changes, some of them were never to return offshore as they were sacked and blacklisted. Today, nearly 25-years on it appears those sacrifices were for nothing, as the oil companies bully and intimidate workers turning the clock back to those dark days.

To give you a feel for what may be coming your way, on top of 3:3 working, we set out below the basics of the cuts to a Petrofac employee working on the Marathon Brae field.

- The most obvious change is from a 2:3 rota to a 3:3 rota thereby increasing the working year by 28-days or 336 hours worked, and 28 days more away from the family.
- Sick pay will be cut from 3-months full pay and 3-months half pay, cut down to £177 per week for the first 13-weeks.
- Pension payments cut from the current employer contribution of 7% slashed down to a 1% employer contribution.
- Travel allowance cut from £150 radius allowance to 2nd Class return rail.
- Move from monthly pay to weekly pay on an hourly basis, meaning a cut of £40 per day on average.
- There will be no holiday entitlement during working time, all holidays will be taken during field break time.
- Medical health care cover is being reduced to single cover, cutting out the family friendly aspects.

All of these cuts will apply to those who retain their jobs, the 'lucky ones'! Along with the change from a 2:3 rota to an equal time rota of 3:3 there will be reductions in crewing numbers and among the construction teams of Petrofac on Brae that means just over 30% of the staff will be made redundant.

The Belfinger Salamis people on Brae got a similar letter setting out the move to 3:3 and telling them they would have no holiday entitlement etc. This was better than some of the Belfinger Salamis people on Apache operations as some got a call on their mobile as they travelled to Aberdeen to be told, you will be doing a 3-week trip as you're moving to 3:3 with immediate effect!

For the Stork Technical Services people on Forties there wasn't any letters, instead it was a slide show presentation to say you will all go to 3:3 as of May 1st, if you aren't made redundant. There was a couple of slides indicating that Scaffolding, Painting, Electrical, Deck Crew and Insulators would all be at risk of redundancy. For the Apache workforce it was the 'town hall telling'!

And now the most recent announcement - Talisman will be putting all crews to a 3:3 cycle in the coming months. Workers were summoned to a series of "Town Hall meetings" across Talisman operations to be told the 3:3 would be happening and the effects of the change would be communicated to workers by their respective employers in the coming days and weeks! These 'town hall tellings' are supposedly consultation and engagement exercises by Talisman, Apache and Marathon and their attitude seems to be - 'this is what's happening whether you like it or not and we're doing you a favour by telling you up front'!!!

This really is a throw back to how business was done in the sector in the late 1980's and the Oil & Gas UK member companies involved should hang their heads in shame for treating their own employees and employees of contracting companies with a level of contempt and disregard not seen since those dark days. Today we are assured repeatedly by employers, operators, regulators and trade unions, that "workforce engagement" is vital to ensuring a safe efficient operation. Not so with Apache, Marathon and Talisman who have torn up the rule book, if there ever was one. And on the subject of tearing things up we have to highlight that these companies are effectively tearing up any and all existing trade union agreements, not least of which is the OCA agreement that specifically provides for 4-weeks paid leave during a period that would otherwise be worked. This clause is of particular interest to the old OILC people, now part of RMT, as it was the OILC actions which brought about this change back in 2007.

So what's to be done about these attacks? We asked in our last special edition - WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? Your response has been to ask - What can we do? We will try to explain your options here, but we must emphasise you have to get involved as RMT officials can't do it for you. First up you need to challenge the move to 3:3 operations and these are some of the ideas we've suggested workers submit to their employers. Do it in writing and copy us in.

Reducing costs - and risks

If we accept there are increased costs associated with 2:3 rotas then we need to acknowledge what they are; 5-shifts and increased helicopter costs. The company claims by moving to

equal time there is a potential to save on staff costs and on helicopter travel. On this basis we consider a move to equal time of 2:2 would be the optimal and safest move, but maintain the provisions of paid leave should be retained. To minimise costs associated with the leave provision we believe the operation of an “even 6” principle for paid leave entitlement could be considered. (Even 6 = 2:2, 2:2, 2:2, 2:6; twice per year) Rotas are drafted at commencement of the system, are applicable for the calendar year, and rotate accordingly. In essence it's a different bum on the helicopter seat or in the bunk. These ‘different bums’ could be drawn from the ‘permanent relief pool’ proposed below. A move to 3:3 is untried on production platforms, is not wanted by workers or their families, and creates more risks especially with the new CAA rules on weather restrictions which will lead to extended trips beyond the industry “best practice” of 21-days maximum working.

Consider flexible working practices for contractor/drilling/catering staff.

Consider job share opportunities for contractor/drilling/catering staff.

Explore “Joint Venture” working of employers within respective ‘Employer Associations’ to eliminate extensive “stand-by” scenarios. (workers maintain service with JV entity)

Consider the creation of a “permanent relief pool” engaged through the JV entity.

Explore opportunities to bring those who would remain “at risk” (and especially technicians) in to onshore operations where they might consider development to “engineer” status. (We reduce costs and maintain the commitment and loyalty of experienced knowledgeable staff as opposed to expensive consultants).

On the issue of paid leave; as this is loosely based around the objectives of the Working Time Regulations, drawn from a Health and Safety Directive, it could be argued the principle of the Regulations should be adopted. The Regulations are specifically aimed at reducing working hours and are explicit in that they prevent workers from “selling the leave entitlement”. Adopting a principle of “use it or lose it” on paid leave, would reduce costs.

Other proposals for saving money are; standardisation of all training and inductions. Workers have complained for years about attending several different inductions, permit to work courses, different competency measures for the same role and so on. Given all training takes place during the workers leave periods, there's a cost for employers and lost time for workers. Standardisation across the sector should be adopted and more training conducted offshore, again to reduce costs.

There should be new HR principles to eliminate excessive costs when dealing with relatively minor issues. Removal and replacement of workers, who are suspended on full pay at home pending the outcome of lengthy investigations which end up as verbal and written warnings costs everyone. The

Oil & Gas UK member companies involved should hang their heads in shame

ability to have representatives offshore able to assist in dealing with minor issues would enhance employment relations, and eliminate significant costs. Similarly, Logistics departments need to be far more efficient in dealing with crew movements. The common complaint is; ‘all we ever get is voicemail’; this leads to expensive and at

times excessive periods of travel and accommodation when a simple response to a call could reduce those costs significantly.

Get all of this written up along with any ideas you and your colleagues have and send it to your employer right away, and remember to copy us in. We also want to see the responses!

Some of you have asked about grievances against the changes being imposed, but unless the entire workforce stands together on the issue you have little chance to beat it on an individual basis. If a split section has a go at grievance, the employer will serve notice of the change and refusal to accept will be considered resignation. RMT doesn't pursue many grievances in other sectors like rail, we know it is doomed to fail. Instead we use good old industrial muscle as lost business through work stoppages is far more costly to train operators. The same can of course be said about oil companies - what would cost more, a couple of nights shut down or a couple of helicopters?

Some members have suggested that fellow workers don't have the stomach for a fight and won't raise a grievance far less take industrial action. If this is the case where you are, you might want to suggest they at least join the union. If we can get numbers up we can in some cases make a claim for “recognition” with your employer which gives us bargaining rights. We can then demand face to face talks with companies forcing these changes through and do the collective grievances, or failure to agree meetings, directly with those companies. They can't bully or intimidate us, we're not employees!

In the meantime RMT is continuing to push at every level to try and prevent these attacks. Since early December we have met with the Scottish Energy Minister, Fergus Ewing; the leader of the Scottish Labour Party, Jim Murphy; Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon; and countless other politicians. We have been involved with the “Energy Jobs Task Force”; we have raised an Early Day Motion at Westminster; we have done endless press briefings; we have had meetings with HSE; DECC and even the new regulator Oil & Gas Authority. We have called for a summit of unions across the EU who organise in the North Sea from Norway, Denmark, and Holland as well as the International Transport Federation and EU trade union group Industriall. Most importantly we continue to push at Oil & Gas UK demanding they get their members in line and work with us and more importantly YOU as we believe the actions they are taking will never improve efficiency and will only cost more.

We are doing everything we can to defend you, but you are the last line of defence and if it comes to the crunch you will have to engage to stand a chance of resisting these cuts, you can't avoid it. There is no silver bullet and that fact is the politicians don't really care. Your international colleagues continue to work 2:3 or 2:4 and are NOT faced with the cuts you are. If you don't engage and get into this fight there will be a one word question - NEXT?

