

# BLOW OUT

a voice for the offshore worker

50p DONATION ISSUE 3 DEC '89

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# MERRY CHRISTMAS

Blowout would like to take this opportunity to wish all offshore workers and their families the very best for the New Year.

I think if we had to use just one word to sum it up the year that's just passed, then that word would be **change**. This Summer's strikes and sit-ins transformed the North Sea for ever. The "bears", organised by the young OILC, gave many of us back our self respect. We paid our respects to our colleagues from Piper and all the others who have died over the years. The questions of offshore safety and the need for workers organisation were raised and will not be silenced. Blowout appeared, proud to be part of the changes that are taking place and to offer a platform from which all offshore workers can speak.

Next came the opening of the Offshore Information Centre "at the crossroads of the industry", a magnificent achievement by any standards.

From Tiennaman Square in Beijing China to Wenceslass square in Cheekoslovakia, the picture is one of massive change. Even Mrs Thatcher looks a bit vulnerable these days. By insisting on having a say in the running

of our industry, we are right in line with all those throughout the world who have had enough of being treated like dirt. 1990 promises a lot. We 'll have to make sure that the promise is made a reality.

We're well on our way to transforming our industry. And to those in the oil companies and their accomplices in the Department of Energy who think that they can go back to pre Piper days we say; The wall of silence and disinformation that you have erected round the North Sea will fall just as surely as the Berlin Wall.

It would be dishonest to say that it will be easy. The government in the shape of the D of E is involved in an incestuous relationship with the oil companies. Major incidents that threaten life are still occurring and being covered up with a monotonous regularity. But the truth about NW Hutton and Ocean Odyssey is coming out. And there can be no doubt that we have not heard the last about the sinking of Interocean 2 or the Seacrest

The celebrations of Christmas and New Year that'll give so many of us and our families a great deal of happiness, will for others be a sad reminder of friends and relatives lost in the industry. We hope that the building of a strong OILC, and the determination of the offshore workforce will bring some comfort with the knowledge that these lives were not lost in vain.

### WHY NOT?

Some of us will work both Christmas and New year because our on shore management won't get it together to share out the holidays. This is outrageous. Every one of us has the right to at least one of the holidays at home with our families and friends. And while we're at it, it's about time that the on/off schedule we worked was put on the agenda for discussion. Fourteen on fourteen off schedules condemn us to spending more of our lives offshore than on. This is not healthy. Norwegian workers, work a maximum of 144 days a year offshore. This works out as 2 weeks on 3 weeks off, 2 weeks on 4 weeks off. If it's good enough for Norwegian workers it's good enough for us. Anyway it's the same oil and the same oil companies. If unions are looking for ways to gain credibility amongst offshore workers, they could do worse than bend their minds to this question.



## INTER OCEAN II

At 8.40 on the evening of Wednesday 8 November the last of the 51 man crew of Interocean 2 were evacuated by helicopter just 70 miles from Great Yarmouth. Twenty minutes later the rig sank in heavy seas. Another major incident had taken place in Britain's oil and gas industry and it didn't even make the main BBC TV News the next day.

Neither the "Glasgow Herald" nor the edition of the "Guardian" that reached Scotland the next day, carried the story. The "Independent" in its 50 word story had 43 evacuated and no word of the rig sinking. Likewise the rig didn't sink in the "Times". It just took about a hundred more words not to do so. Only the scab Press and Journal managed a major article. It was run on the front page and did highlight the last minute nature of the men's escape. And so it bloody well should have.

This is an outrageous state of affairs. The press can agree to any code of ethics they want to, but reporting of this kind amounts to effective censorship. And it stinks.

It's not hard to see where the media get their inspiration. Mr. W.K. Bowie the Acting District Manager in Aberdeen for Texaco (they had the rig on charter), had a memorandum out early the next day. This warned Texaco employees to, "ensure that you do not answer calls with respect to the Interocean 2 from any source whatsoever". All information was to be tightly controlled.

According to Texaco, Interocean 2 left block 48/7 on the Monday evening, and arrived on location about 70 miles away on Tuesday afternoon. It couldn't be positioned initially because of tides and then because of worsening weather. After a tow line from the Ann Viking parted, a planned evacuation of 43 men was initiated as a precaution. With all but a few of the original 43 already airlifted, there was a total power failure at about 8.30 on the Thursday. It was then decided that the remaining men were to be evacuated. Ten minutes later this had been completed, and by 9 o'clock the rig had sunk. Thank God the power failed.

If you have any information concerning this incident, get in touch with "Blowout", you may be able to help fill in a few blanks.

### OUR PEOPLE

More than a thousand people died when the typhoon "Gay" devastated the Gulf of Thailand, (just north of the South China Sea), on November 3. Over 500 died at sea, and of them 91 were crew on the UNOCAL drillship "Seacrest" which overturned in the typhoon. Six of the crew survived.

Our thoughts go out to the families and friends of those who were lost. "Blowout" will carry a full account of the disaster in its next edition.

**OFFSHORE INFORMATION CENTRE**

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# FLARE OFF!

## The catering dispute

Everyone in catering is a bit disappointed just now. The proposed 48 hour stoppage that the Catering Shop Stewards called, failed.

I am still a bit angry, but lets take a look at ourselves. Two years ago we were lucky if we could get one platform on strike, let alone forty. We had a membership of 450 with very few activists. The TGWU and NUS were (if we are being honest) at war with each other. Shop stewards were not getting the respect they deserved, we had the case if your face didn't fit you were treated like shit. Safety - well that was a joke!! Wages were very poor to say the least.

Then there were a lot of bad incidents that changed workers' attitudes, the most obvious being Piper Alpha. Soon after this disaster the TGWU and the NUS started working more closely together. Our membership started to grow, we had a lot of shop stewards active locally, we won an 11% pay deal with a promise of 7% or inflation the following year, which was a good deal at the time. However we are still low paid and we need more time to get better organised.

Then came the birth of the OILC. I think in the early days no-one realised how strong it would become, but it has proved to be the focal point of everyone's imagination. My only regret is that more of our shop stewards and members didn't go to the mass meetings in the early days, as I felt isolated at the time.

We have seen the improvement in wages that the construction workers have received, which catering and drilling didn't, even though some came out in support. However through our growing strength we have managed to open up negotiations with the Catering Offshore Trading Association, who did not think we had the power to take them on. We soon proved them wrong with over 40 platforms on strike for one day.

We were then offered 14% for stewards and 16% for chefs, with the COTA companies claiming because of the shortage of skilled chefs that they should have more money to attract them offshore. Really what they were trying to do was to divide the stewards and the chefs. Anyway 14% or 16% of £3.11 is still not a lot of money. Why should it change from the way it's always been with an across the board rise where everyone benefits.

Over 40 shop stewards called for a 48 hour unofficial stoppage for those very reasons, and to show their contempt for COTA's offer. Unfortunately it ended up with only 12 platforms on strike, so they were convinced to return to work after a lot of persuasion. The reasons that the other platforms did not give their support varied: The threat of sackings; it was unofficial; we gave the oil companies too much warning; inexperienced shop stewards; and lack of accurate information were all cited.

The COTA companies then made an unofficial offer of another 1% or 2%, with a guarantee of consolidation of the offshore allowance over three years, but only if shop stewards were prepared to recommend it to the members. If the shop stewards were to reject this offer it would be withdrawn and the industry agreement would not be signed. The shop stewards really had no option but to recommend acceptance, but it was only by three votes

## YOUR LETTERS

-21 to 18. If any company does not sign the industry agreement, that company will be balloted with a recommendation to reject the offer.

Looked at over the last two years we have increased wages by 25% to 30%, which looks and sounds good, but I consider myself still one of the lowest paid workers offshore. I personally would have liked to reject the offer, but we must look to the future. It's only nine months till we're back round the table. We are determined to be more organised next time. Hopefully more stewards will be involved with the OILC and will have been on shop stewards training courses. However you still have the right to reject this offer now, so when your ballot paper arrives through the post, think carefully before you vote.

We have made great progress so far thanks to the efforts of the OILC and our own active shop stewards, (both TGWU and NUS), but there's still a long way to go and unity is needed for success in the future.

Derek McGillivray (TGWU 7/84 branch secretary)

## Across the great divide

Dear Brothers,  
Ever played five-a-side football offshore? What about volleyball or aerobics classes. Does your rig have Saturday night candlelit discos with non-alcoholic wine?

Before "the bears" hoot with derision at the idea of roustabouts in leotards, I should point out that about 30% of this rig's crew is female, mainly catering hands, and they get exactly the same access to the sports and recreational facilities as anyone else.

You've probably guessed that this enlightened rig is not in the British sector. It's Norwegian, The Oseberg, Norske Hydro's newest platform. Not only are recreational facilities first class, the accommodation is the best I've seen anywhere. Single rooms, each with colour telly and radio and with toilet and shower en suite.

Safety is a priority too. The gym doubles as an emergency field hospital to supplement the ordinary medic's room. The drilling module is separate from production, and the accommodation is in turn protected by a huge fire/blast wall. Before anyone starts work on the rig, not only do they have to have the Norwegian survival certificate, they also must have taken a three day course on safety in the Oseberg field, followed by a stiff question paper.

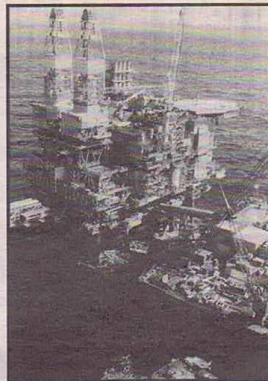
Wages and conditions leave British rigs far behind. The crew work mainly 2 weeks on 3 weeks off, then 2 on 4 off. Plenty of time to spend the wages that are between one and a half and twice as high as those only a few miles away on their British counterparts.

So why the big difference? Is the oil that they're drilling for any richer or what?

The reason safety, wages, and conditions are all better in the Norwegian sector is the same reason that drilling companies can get away with paying 75 cents - 1\$ per hour to local drill crews in the Far East.

The Norwegian sector is strongly unionised and the Norwegian government pays less attention to oil company bullshit and a little more to protecting the conditions and future of its own citizens. A recent week long strike by helicopter pilots was solid - and successful - the only scabbing being done was by a few rogues from the British sector. When that sort of thing stops, and we learn to stand together, maybe we'll get the same conditions as the Norwegians.

Dave  
(Name and address supplied)



Brae - B

## NRB — the big stick

Dear Ed,

I am currently on the Brae A platform with Deborah Scaffolding. I started in October and this is my second trip, my first job since being demanned during the strike.

On arrival at the platform I met my supervisor, who I knew from working on the Brae B hook - up for 14 months. On that job overtime was optional: take it or leave it. This time the bottom line in our conversation about rules and work times was, to quote him, "Anybody who doesn't want to work 15 hours every day may as well fuck off".

Not being a man of means and out here like any other "bear", to feed my family, I bit my tongue. Being out of work so long since June, the money with overtime came in very handy. I did a ten day trip to get on a rota on this new contract.

When I came out here on my second trip I did not work my first night, having had a six fifteen check-in, but I worked the next two consecutive nights, Saturday and Sunday. On the Monday I was told that there would be no smoke or tea breaks on overtime. Having told my chargehand that I would not be working that night, my supervisor, came round to ask why. I explained that I didn't want to work this particular night and that I believed that I should be able to decide when I wanted to work overtime.

When I was then told that Les Pringle, the Marathon Construction Supervisor, who made the decision that all overtime breaks would stop, expected me to work and that I might not be back when my employer Deborah Graystone found out. I don't think you could print my reply.

On my first trip on the Brae A I went to a meeting with the OIM about the new safety reps and safety committees. He said that Marathon take safety seriously. I believe on the whole they do. But I also think that we're going into the 1990s and not the 1890s. Any contract worker should have freedom of choice as to what overtime he wants to work. Specially for safety's sake. We should do away with the big stick of NRB (not required back), which is used instead of the truth.

I think we are lucky to have Blowout to air our grievances, and also the OILC which I support.

Jim Cairns,  
scaffolder Brae-A  
OILC supporter  
AUEW shop steward

## Delighted

This letter is long overdue. Apologies! Thank you for the review in "Blowout". I was delighted. It has been of the utmost personal importance that I got the book right in the eyes of the people who work so hard day after day offshore. The response I have received seems to show that I did it O.K. and as I said, that means more than I can describe.

I'd hoped to visit the OILC information centre, above the Criterion, last week, but I got caught up in business at the divers association. I want you all to know that I totally support your work.

It is gratifying to see real participation in the stand to make it work for people offshore. We seem to have just a few more things on our side now, and if the guys maintain commitment to change then it will happen, even if it appears slow at first.

I will be back in Aberdeen sometime before Christmas and I'll make a point of calling by. Until then be clear that you have my support and thoughts in your very important undertaking.

Ed Punched  
(Author of Piper Alpha: A survivor's Story)

## Poll Tax

We have managed to secure poll tax exemptions on behalf of members employed "deep-sea" by arguing that, given their long absences away from home, their house or flat cannot be classified as their "sole or main residence."

If this applies to seafarers, why not rig workers?, after all, why should they pay a fat-rate tax for year round local council services when they are unable to use those services for much of the year?

We have accordingly prepared a "standard" letter for members to send to their local councils. Copies are enclosed, and you may wish to pass them around (available from the Offshore Information Centre) Of course, feel free to re-jig the letter in any way you feel appropriate.

Have just seen an edition of "Blowout" - excellent! If we can offer any help from our end, please let us know.

Yours Fraternally,  
Mike Gibson (NUS Research Officer)

## Thank You

Dear Readers,

I am writing this letter to congratulate "Blowout". I read your fine second edition on the train up to Aberdeen. We were going up for the handing over of the memorial banner from Australia, on the 27th of October. I also had a copy of your first edition sent to me a few days later. I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to John Fyvie, writer of "Death of a Piper", which was heartbreaking to read for the first time but true and right to the point. I and a few more of the widows agree with everything you and your brothers are doing to get safer rigs and working conditions. Neither I or anybody else want what happened on the Piper that tragic night ever to happen again. The heartbreaking the tears and the loneliness as well as the ruined lives will never heal with money as it will never bring back the good times I and my children had and could have had with my husband.

If my husband had survived he would have been right behind your campaign for safety, so please don't let him and all the others who died on the Piper Alpha, die in vain. Fight until you get what you are entitled to, a safer place of work for all. And wives of all offshore workers, help in any way you can to keep your loved ones safe, because to lose him is to lose part of your life. Part of me died that night on the 6th of July, and never to have his body recovered so he could have a decent burial, still hurts.

Mrs. S. Leggat

## On the South China Sea

This letter was sent from Malaysia. It has been slightly edited to preserve the anonymity of the correspondent. The Employment Provident Fund is roughly the equivalent of our National Insurance Scheme.

Hello Garry,

I guess you still remember me from your short stay on board the tender last month. You met me and Vic on your last day onboard. How are things with you? I assume you must be busy with Blowout 2nd edition, if I am not mistaken.

Just after you left, we did receive a letter from the Employment Provident Fund regarding our company contributing our share. The court is looking into the matter. We hope the problem will be solved by the years end.

The weather here is Ok. Last week one anchor snapped off during bad weather; strong winds and rough seas. The monsoon expected around mid October - January.

Your 1st edition of "Blowout" is very interesting. Especially "Remember Our Dead - Piper Alpha" and "North Sea Strikes" I hope we hear more from you soon.

Ghazali

# Odyssey Survivor demands Enquiry

Thank you for your excellent piece on the Ocean Odyssey saga. As you quite rightly point out, the powers that be seem to be dragging their heels over this incident. In the light of the Piper Alpha enquiry and many subsequent offshore incidents, which usually accord very little press coverage, the suspicion is gaining ground that the Odyssey blowout is subject of a cover up. It is over a year since the actual incident. Evidence has been given to both the D of E and the Procurator Fiscal, but so far nothing has been done to either convene a Fatal Accident Enquiry or to prosecute those responsible for the blowout.

The only official statement concerning the Odyssey has come from the D of E in the form of a "sequence of events" leading up to the blowout and which was distributed to all operating companies in the North Sea. Why such a sequence of events would interest all operating companies when the Odyssey was quite unique in terms of the depth, temperature and pressure of the well it was drilling, is beyond me. I can only conclude that the D of E statement is nothing short of a cynical public relations exercise designed to divert attention away from the true causes of the blowout and to fix it on the co-flex hoses.

In fact the D of E "sequence", which just falls short of the laughable, does blame the co-flex hoses for the explosion and fire. However, the D of E investigator, Derek Redman, who took my statement, informed me in a recorded conversation last April, that the co-flex hoses were not responsible for the disaster, and that their downgrading arose not from the Odyssey incident but from the problems the Treasure Saga was having in a totally unrelated incident. Mr. Redman also informed me that his investigation showed that there was enough gas on the Odyssey to cause "multiple" explosions, and that in fact his explosion expert had uncovered three explosion sites on the Odyssey, one at the shaker level which had destroyed the Ex-Log shack, and two below, near to the moon pool.

In addition, the D of E "sequence" is fatally flawed in a number of areas. It categorically states that the choke pressure was 8,000 psi maximum during attempts to circulate out the gas. This is wrong, as

pressures of up to 13,000 psi were recorded. The pressure had fallen to 8,000 psi just seconds before the explosion. I was standing outside the life-boat, facing the drill floor when the first explosion occurred and I am certain that this explosion occurred at the shaker level and not down in the moon pool.

Since the incident, I have met up with several survivors from the Odyssey, and I have heard harrowing tales of victimisation, discrimination, and blacklisting. Some of the men are still recovering from physical and psychological traumas and are unable to work; some will never work offshore again due to their unfortunate experience; some men have been subjected to pressures to change their version of the events prior to the blowout because they do not accord with what some would like the "official" version to be. Many men are suffering extreme financial hardship which compounds their feelings of being isolated and marginalised because of the lack of interest and concern over the events aboard the Odyssey.

I will never work offshore again because I spoke out on the evening of the disaster, and I will continue to speak out until the truth is known. Every man who was on board the Odyssey at the time of the blowout has both the right and the duty to speak out. Not to speak out is to allow the status quo to remain and to perhaps condemn fellow workers to the same fate suffered by those on the Odyssey. It is in the interest of every offshore worker, contractor, service hand, drilling, and even operating company personnel, to speak out for change, for better regulation of the offshore industry, for the breaking of the incestuous relationship between the D of E and the oil companies, and for the return of control of British wealth to the British people. The oil companies have had it their way too long; it is about time they came under closer public scrutiny and control.

A complete investigation into the events aboard the Odyssey can be a starting point. The truth of that incident must be made known to the public. The men of the Odyssey must speak out.  
James Murphy



Ocean Odyssey

## A single Union for offshore workers?

For a number of years now, both trade unionists and non trade unionists have been discussing the idea of a single organisation offshore. It is argued that it would be a way to improve pay and conditions and change oil company and contract company attitudes. The reasons that this claim is still made is because of the failure of the existing unions to have any effect on the oil companies and contractors with regard to safety, pay and conditions. It is only with regard to the OCA (Offshore Construction Agreement) that the unions have had any influence and even the contact of this agreement has been eroded. The failure of the trade unions to work together helped conditions to deteriorate rapidly particularly during the oil price slump of a few years ago. The wage reductions, travel expense cuts and the "if you don't like it you know what you can do" attitude of the employers convinced many offshore workers that the only way forward was to create a single union. It was at this point that the OILC was born, created by rank and file trade unionists who felt that the time was right to organise all offshore workers, trade unionists and non-trade unionists.

In the ranks of the OILC, which coordinated the actions during the Summer, there are a substantial number who are voicerous in their belief in a single union, and that this ideal should be pursued with the support of the existing unions. When the OILC made approaches to the national officials of unions with an interest in the North Sea, seeking support for a single union structure, this was rejected. I wonder if the unions are aware that there is a potential for a single union of over forty thousand members. By their rejection of this idea, thousands of workers including many out of compliance members, are disenfranchised. Many have claimed that they will not rejoin their own or any other union but that they would support and join a single union.

National officials have expressed the view that the way forward for offshore workers is through the involvement of the OILC on various bodies of influence, with delegates to these bodies. One such organisation is the IUOOC (Inter Union Offshore Oil Ctte), which is made up of local full time officials who have been meeting with the likes of UKOOA (United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association) and the Department of Energy and the Health and Safety Commission. It is their belief that this would give the offshore workers the control and influence that they are demanding. I doubt it though. But because of the difficulties and the time scale involved in setting up a single union, and also the willingness of the unions to accept their failings, we have to go forward and accept in good faith that the unions will

get their act together. The real fight is after all with the oil companies and the contractors.

To that end all offshore workers should join or rejoin a union and give them the "clout" necessary to convince the employers that it is in their best interest to agree to our just demands.

A final word to our unions. The time scale for the initiative demanded is not without limit, and if that initiative cannot be acted on then the claim for a single union will surely be resurrected.

Jim Fleming

## The future of the OILC

Since oil was first discovered in the deep waters of the North Sea, the trade unions have competed with each other to increase their membership rather than discuss the industry and the best way to approach it. As a committed trade unionist myself, as a rule I leave any criticism to my branch meetings, but I have to depart from tradition to lay the blame for the shambles in the offshore industry at the feet of the trade unions.

After hearing of the IUOOC (Inter Union Offshore Oil Committee), for the first time at an OILC meeting in Glasgow on the 2nd November, I made enquiries among offshore workers about this committee without any success. This indicates to me that a drastic change is needed regarding the unions' attitude towards the offshore workers. The freedom the employers have relished when designing contracts of employment have gone on too long. The omission of statutory protection and the degree of intimidation must be addressed by the unions.

Does the offshore worker regard the OILC as an alternative to the unions? This is a problem for the unions only, and must not end in the dissolving of the OILC. The reason why so many people are leaving their trade unions offers many arguments. The reason why the unions appear to have abandoned the offshore worker has never been addressed. Indeed, the only time the oil industry has been highlighted by the unions was in the 1982 "Scottish Trade Union Review" in an article "Sale of the Century" by Gordon Brown MP and dealing only with the privatisation of the industry.

Since the OILC was formed there is a fresh mood of optimism among the offshore workers. Whether they regard the OILC as a substitute trade union or not is not up for debate. The OILC was inevitable through the "laissez faire" attitude of the trade unions. It is time for the trade unions to stand up and be counted if they are to win over the confidence of the offshore worker. This can only be done by securing a common agreement acceptable to the rank and file through the auspices of the OILC.

I am not convinced that marrying up the OILC with the IUOOC is wise. Nor do I see a Trades Council as the answer to the prayers of the offshore worker. I feel a much bigger effort and response from the unions is necessary. The expansion of the oil industry and the increase of labour, demands a respect for the industry and its workers from the TUC, and a committee similar to the Confederation of British Shipbuilding and Engineering Trade Unions is one alternative. Being a rank and file member of my union, I feel at a disadvantage when it comes to inspiration. I am aware of the anti-trade union legislation and I sympathise with the difficult task that the trade unions face in reaching a common agreement. However, it is of paramount importance that such an agreement is secured if the offshore industry is to be brought in from isolation, and not left to the unscrupulous practices of the "captains of industry".  
John Padden

## A Reply

I'd like to reply to the letter, "View From Home", which I found very interesting. I think I can speak for the majority of the "Offshore Support Group".

At the time the group was formed there was a desperate need for support and unity. Women whose husbands were either stranded on the "Safe Felicia" or involved in the turmoil offshore, were desperate for information, and wished to share their distress with women in similar situations. You couldn't describe the loneliness unless you'd experienced it. To know your husband is stranded on the North Sea without any home contact and without any inkling of what is to happen in the hours or days ahead, promotes a feeling of frustration and anger.

This anger erupted that day in June, when the women felt so strongly that their men could not fight by themselves, because of the situation they had been thrown into, that we were forced to do something that would alert people to what was going on. (The women invaded BP's Aberdeen headquarters and put the offshore dispute to the fore front of the TV news for the only time. Ed.)

There is a difference between turning up at an office and demonstrating on behalf of your partner, as the writer of the letter spoke about, and the desperate fight for improved safety offshore that we are at present involved in. I believe that you need to have experienced the worry caused by someone close having an accident offshore, as I have, or reading again of yet another fatality, to realise that our fight comes from the heart.

The lady is right, there is a problem of parking at the airport, but this seems a trivality compared to a mans life and I am not embarrassed to help fight for the protection of my husband.

Terry Lippe

## Abseiling

The Information Centre in Guild Street has been open for some time now, and I've met and spoken to an amazing amount of people in that time. Men from platforms and semis who live all over Britain call into the office on their way home or on their way offshore. Trade union officials, reporters, TV presenters and others who believe in what we're doing and want to help. The one aim that we all have in common is, that the offshore worker in the British Sector should have the same conditions as their counterparts onshore. And why not? You pay income tax, national insurance, and are expected to pay the community charge even although you're home only part of the year. So why can't you enjoy the same protection as the rest of the British workforce.

My husband has worked offshore for almost 17 years, and in that time he has worked in most of the fields in the Northern Sector, both on platforms and semis. Not a lot seems to have changed. He now works 2 on and 2 off instead of one and one. That's about the extent of it. After the rise in wages in the Summer his rate is 40p an hour more than it was 10 years ago. Unfortunately the cost of living has changed dramatically in that time.

I'm also concerned about the safety issue. Terry Lippe wrote in the last Blowout about what the Offshore Support Group had been doing to highlight our worries in that area. Many of the platforms on the North Sea are a good age now and require 24 hour maintenance to keep them together - are the oil companies spending the money required on this? They seem to be cutting corners elsewhere. The latest thing - which horrifies me - is abseiling. This method is used to save money on scaffolding. But what happens when the alarm summons you to prepare to abandon the platform? Regulations oblige all personnel to make their way to muster stations by the most expedient route. Dangling 30 or 40 feet in the air by a rope makes this difficult. About 14 years ago my husband was asked by an American toolpusher to test for gas on the drill floor with a welding torch. This sounds unbelievable - but then so does abseiling down the side of a North Sea platform.

Perhaps some of the wives/girlfriends of offshore workers are reading this. If so I would like to point out that I'm here from 9.30 to 5.00pm daily, and if you want to come along and see the Information Centre and have a chat, you will be made very welcome.

Lorna Robertson  
OILC, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen

# Editorial

## Somebody is Lying

Peter Morrison, the Secretary of State for Energy says that an "underground blowout" occurred on NW Hutton on the 2nd of September. He further says that, "The first occasion when movement of gas and fluids appeared to have ceased was 12.00 hours on 4 September...." This information was dragged out of him as part of his answer to written questions tabled in Parliament. Amoco said on the 3rd of September that, "The well is under control...." Somebody is lying about a major North Sea incident that resulted in the mass evacuation of the platform. "Blowout" has printed Mr Morrison's version (see article same page). Drilling personnel can now study and comment on these events. In the meantime there are a number of questions raised by Mr Morrison's answers.

How do you take a "kick", never mind a blowout, while drilling the 55th well in a field? Are Kicks/

blowouts inevitable?

Why was the 13 3/8 casing set approx 150 feet higher than programmed?

What are "normal procedures" for regaining control of an underground blowout?

Were crew informed that an "underground blowout" was in progress during the 16 hours before they were mustered to emergency stations?

Are 77 men required for well control procedures in these circumstances?

In addition Mr Morrison seems to have failed completely to answer one of the questions put to him by Frank Doran so we ask again, "...what assessment he (Mr Morrison) has made.....of the possibility of an abnormally pressured formation in the field, charged by gas or fluid from another formation, and of the hazard posed thereby in respect of other wells which may be drilled in the formation?"

## Drugs

It seems to me that despite the clean bill of health awarded to the Sedco707 after it's crew were dope tested recently, that management are convinced that their crews are at it anyway. This is a giant slur on SEDCO employees and all offshore workers. There is not a drugs problem offshore. No doubt if they put enough resources into it they will finally turn up something. Just where would you look in this world and find absolutely no evidence of drug abuse. It must be said also however that those people who are prepared to go to the length of random drug testing on all their installations on the basis of false alarm, must be devoid of all embarrassment and getting desperate to prove their suspicions. (Do Schlumberger's wire line, mud

logging, and well testing employees also come under suspicion because of this incident. Or are only those employees hired by their drilling division suspect?) All workers would be well advised to take particular care when travelling offshore that they don't inadvertently carry anything that might lead to accusations of drug abuse being levelled at them.

**CONTACT BLOWOUT**  
at  
**Offshore Information**  
**Centre**  
52 Guild Street  
Aberdeen  
Tel 0224 210118

## Congratulations

Blowout sends its greetings to scaffolder Donald McMillan. Donald was unfairly dismissed by Rigblast Holdings Ltd on the 28th of March this year. That, for some people might be enough reason for congratulations. However Donald went on to fight Rigblast and with the help of the AEU's Divisional Organiser Tommy Lafferty, he won his Industrial Tribunal and was awarded compensation. Not a ransom, then these awards never are.

The Tribunal unanimously decided that they believed Donald. It seems that they took much the same attitude towards Rigblasts position as most offshore workers did towards Rigblast's outrageous statements during the strikes.

Oh! for the day when we won't have to wait on the precarious decisions of industrial tribunals before we get justice.

## The truth about N.W. Hutton

by  
Garry Forbes

Prompted by an article in the last edition of "Blowout", Aberdeen South MP Frank Doran tabled a series of written questions in the House of Commons. The questions were directed to the Secretary of State for Energy and related to an incident that took place on the NW Hutton on the evening of Saturday 2nd September.

This was a major North Sea incident. 108 men were evacuated from the platform. Blowout was enraged by the obvious disinformation released by Amoco, the operators of the platform, and the ignorant and slavish regurgitating of nonsense by the media. In the course of our investigations we were told categorically by an Amoco spokesman that there was no blowout.

Here are Mr Morrison's answers. They have been put into chronological order but are otherwise unchanged.

A total of 55 exploration, appraisal and development wells have been drilled in the North West Hutton field.

"Drilling was taking place on well 211/27-A42. At the time of the well incident, drilling was being undertaken with a 12 1/4 inch bit at a measured depth of 13,113 feet below the kelly bushing and a true vertical depth of 11,710 ft. A reservoir had been reached. The reservoir had been subjected to water injection.

The diameter of the casing set was 13.3/8 inch, at a measured depth of 6823 feet and a true vertical depth of 6102 feet. No difficulty was experienced in setting and cementing the casing. It was programmed to be set at 150 feet into the Cretaceous formation but a re-evaluation of the indicators used to determine the setting depth suggests that the casing was set just in the top of the Cretaceous.

Full mud returns were recorded while setting and cementing the casing. A cement bond log was not run after the casing was set. Formation integrity tests measured at two points in the well bore were 14.1 pounds per gallon at 6837 feet and 13.3 pounds per gallon at 6892 feet. The expected and actual formation pressures were 7800 psi and 9600 psi respectively. The programmed and actual mud weights were 12.8 pounds per gallon.

At 18.27 hours on 2 September 1989 the well was closed in by the use of the blowout preventer. The blowout preventer and the choke were closed simultaneously to shut in the well. Drill pipe pressure of 500psi was recorded which fell to 375 indicating that a zone higher up the well

formation had fractured and an underground blowout had occurred. It is not possible to be precisely certain at what depth the formation fractured. After the well was closed in, attempts were made to kill it by circulating mud of higher density. At 09.00 hours on 3 September it was concluded that the well could not be killed in this way. At 10.30 hours the decision was taken to reduce the numbers on the platform and at 10.38 hours the platform was shut down and the crew mustered to emergency stations. 108 persons were evacuated. Evacuation was undertaken as a precautionary measure to reduce the number of persons at risk because the well was not responding to measures to regain full control using normal procedures. There was no immediate danger and 77 crew members remained on board to continue the well control operation.

The first occasion when movement of gas and fluids appeared to have ceased was 12.00 hours on 4 September 1989 although subsequently there was some further movement. It is not possible to be precise about when the movement actually ceased. The first cementing operation commenced at 23.00 hours on 4 September 1989. Operations continued for several days. The well is now considered safe and has been re-entered. The possibility of encountering an abnormally pressured formation is present in all drilling operations. Before consent is given to any well operation, my department must be satisfied that the drilling programme has been designed to provide safeguards against this eventuality.

Blowout urges those offshore workers working in exploration to read Mr Morrison's account of the "incident" very carefully. We will be pleased to receive any comments that they may have to make about this account which we will pass on to Mr Doran.

See Editorial



## Who Shells Out

Eight out of Shell's 29 platforms are to be fitted with underwater emergency shut down valves. Remember them. They were the D of E's recommendation after they held a technical enquiry into the Piper Disaster. Now it seems there's no onus on any of the operators to install them. Shell are doing it out of the goodness of their hearts.

Eight out of 29? That doesn't seem like a very good ratio to us. Maybe they are the only Shell platforms that are at risk. I wonder who took that decision and whether the new safety committees that are now operational offshore will have the power to look into the reasoning behind the decision and perhaps make their own assessment of the risks to their own installations.

It seems that it'll be the summer of 1990 before they will be installed, a shortage of divers and the likes we believe.

Maybe there's a good reason why I'm not feeling ecstatic about this £60 million pound safety scheme. Actually it just leaves a dull ache in the heart and a nasty suspicious feeling all over.

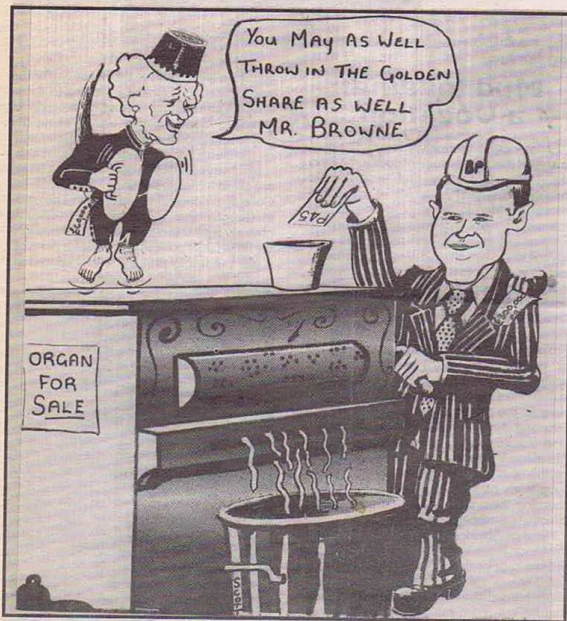
Anyway Shell shareholders shouldn't let

the news of £60 million pound spending on safety spoil their entire day. At least the Scottish Office have made it clear that they and their partners Exxon will be allowed to hold on to the £87 million in government grants that they got for their Mossmorran developments in Fife. It seems that some Fife councillors believe that they've reneged on their promises to build a polymerisation plant. An oil company breaking promises? Well never! Fife regional councillor, Dr Peter Davidson, is said to be, "pig sick". Aye and he's not the only one.

Meanwhile Shell's UK chairman Bob Reid was outlining just where he thought the £60 million and no doubt a lot more should come from. Yes you're right again. From us. He wants changes in the oil and gas tax regime. And in the unlikely situation that the government might not feel inclined to cut his tax bill (they have almost always done so in the past it seems), he issued an open threat. In his opening address to the Subtech '89 conference he said, "Operators like Shell Expro face the daunting task of rejuvenating their first generation platforms and facilities to secure their operational integrity for much longer than originally envisaged." I suppose that could be translated as, "give us the money to keep these ageing heaps of junk standing or else."

All this really does raise the question of whether these people are fit to be in control of this important national resource.

# Tartan Coolies? BY ALEX SALMOND



## Safety Reps & Safety Committies

by Ronnie McDonald

When safety fails the cost is dear: £180 million a year, it's estimated. Piper took that to £1,170 million in 1988. But the real cost is not in money, it's in the lives of our colleagues. And it goes on. Another six of our people have died offshore since Piper.

The new safety regulations are in force. "The Offshore Installations (Safety Representatives and Safety Committees) Regulations 1989". They do offer us increased protection. But they don't go nearly as far as the 1977 onshore regulations. Safety reps onshore are credentialed by an appropriate trade union and not only have the protection of that union but also the protection of the Act and Health and Safety Commission Codes of Practice. Our reps offshore don't have this, so unless the oil companies and contractors are committed to the spirit as well as the letter of the regulations, then the new safety committees will fail to end the carnage.

Despite a seeming willingness on the part of most operators to have the new committees set up and trained in strict accordance with the regulation's Guidance Notes, there is some cause for concern.

In House training is not acceptable for members of the new safety committees, according to paragraph 76 of the Guidance Notes. The regulations say that there must be a training input independent of the company. BP think differently. From the minutes of a safety meeting held in BP's Rubislaw offices, we read "BP In House courses were adequate for their needs". This is not so.

Lets spell it out for BP. Training arrangements are the responsibility of the safety committees, not of the oil companies. And in House courses are just not on.

And why we would entrust the organising of safety training to companies that can't even hang on to the minutes of their own meetings is beyond me.

Shell have set up, "Customised Shell Courses", and according to the minutes of a Shell Management Meeting, they will treat all safety reps the same way, "...i.e. pay for all costs associated with their training including time", except, as they explain later in the document, "in the event that any reps choose to attend another course, then all costs will be to the employing companies account." Quite clearly this is an attempt to avoid reps employed by contractors training outwith the customised Shell courses by imposing a massive commercial disincentive onto contractors.

The bottom line is that Shell wants to avoid any trade union involvement in the training of safety reps. The unions have been debarrred from any input into safety on the North Sea so far, and that's the way they want to keep it. But as paragraph 77 of the Guidance Notes admits, the trade unions have, "...considerable experience in training... particularly in the representative role." They are in fact leaders in the field of safety training.

So lets say it again. It is the safety committee and

not the oil company that's charged with the function of reviewing the arrangements for training. So speak out in favour of a trade union sponsored training course if you believe it would suite you and your safety committee. It is your right to do so.

Newly elected safety reps should be made aware of the facts now. Never mind the "operational requirements" that the oil companies trot out every time they want things their own way. Our safety reps have an unassailable right to training during the period when they would normally be on the rig, - and at full rig rates of pay - and without leave entitlement being affected.

And just one question for the Government. Do you really think that selling copies of the Regulations and Guidance Notes at £3.00 a time from HMSO bookellers is the way to ensure this vitally important information reaches the men?

The OILC thinks not.



If you're interested in the accounts of the OILC, the best thing you can do is take a trip along to the Information Centre. This is just a rough guide to what's been done with the money that's been raised throughout the North Sea and Morecombe Bay. But even this short account will give you an idea of the strength of the organised offshore workers.

So far the income of the OILC has amounted to about £28,500. This is magnificent. You'll find a list on page 8 of the installations on the Northern Sector that have contributed. And again, if we've missed you out we're sorry. We'll put that right as soon as possible.

Since its birth the OILC have organised 108 mass meetings throughout the country and countless Standing Committee meetings. Mass meetings have been held in Aberdeen, Dundee, Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Great Yarmouth, Hull, Liverpool and Glasgow. About £8,000 has been spent on this on advertising, printing and halls etc.

One of the major gains of the OILC is the Information Centre which is well equipped with the latest in "information technology". This is an asset for the whole offshore workforce and is already being heavily used. This has come to about £4,000.

£2,000 has been spent on desk top publishing facilities for "Blowout", and of course printing and distribution costs of the paper has been borne by the offshore workforce through the OILC.

Word from Guild Street has it that, because of on going relations with national union officials, positive changes will occur in the trade union approach to organising the North Sea. Watch this space.

BP's plans to sack 1000 of their Scottish employees have been forced under the Commons microscope by SNP Deputy Leader Alex Salmond. The influential Select Committee on Energy is probing the company's scheme for a massive shake-up and the promises given by BP when they took over Britoil last year. Here the Barrie and Buchan MP tells Blowout readers why he believes that if BP cutbacks were allowed to go through unchallenged, then all Scotland would be the loser.

Oil plants BP are set to float Scotland down the river with the services of 1000 of their upstream Scottish based workers, and in addition they plan to sell a massive \$1,300 million of mainly North Sea assets to a Dallas based American company.

What a contrast to last year. BP were battling to get their hands on Britoil, Scotland's largest company, and they were promising us the moon. Then it was all systems go, there were no redundancies or asset sales in the pipeline. Now they are planning to dispose of no less than one third of the production from the oilfields which used to be owned by Britoil!

When BP made their announcement on job losses and asset sales in September it was immediately clear that - despite holding the "golden share" - no action was likely from the Government. Indeed so anxious were the Scottish Office Ministers to toddy up to BP that they even denied that the special share could be used.

Although this piece of disinformation has been subsequently corrected by the Department of Energy it is clear that they too are hand in glove with the company.

That's why I pushed for the current probe by the House of Commons Select Committee so that the company would have to explain their actions - and Government its inaction - in light of the solemn and binding assurances given in February 1988.

My view is that BP have sold Scotland short - SHORT on jobs, SHORT on assets and SHORT on investment.

On JOBS, BP claim they can fire 1000 people because they have increased their workforce and transferred staff from England.

But last year Basil Butler, then chairman of BP exploration, clearly told me in correspondence that they would NOT hide sackings behind jobs he admitted BP was creating anyway, due to new projects. In addition, do BP and the Government really think it is morally acceptable to move people from the South and then disperse with their existing Scottish workers in a cynical numbers game?

## 1992 & Beyond

What does 1992 mean for us and our jobs? Everybody's bound to have heard about the single European market. They say it means an end to trade barriers. Companies will be able to operate anywhere throughout the market. But not so well known is the fact that workers will have the right to travel and work in the country of their choice without the need for a work permit. Well there's nothing wrong with that. Freedom of movement has got to be like freedom of speech or any other freedom that does not encroach on somebody else's freedom. It's a good idea. My concern though is that the oil companies will be welcoming these new freedoms for the very worst of reasons.

Today there is a shortage of the skilled trades and experienced men who are required offshore at present. There is a substantial number of projects in the pipeline. This welcome upturn in new construction, and the work that will be needed to be done after Lord Cullen reports on Piper, must lead to a worsening of the labour shortage. On top of this the construction companies have reduced training to a degree that has almost wiped out apprenticeships. This ensures, in the short term, a good deal for those with a skill. It's also being said by a few sceptics that no one from a European country would come and work in Britain and in particular the British sector of the North Sea. There is no doubt that this is true of

On ASSETS, BP said they wanted to get hold of Britoil's lucrative acreage so they could develop it properly. Now they want to sell out to a US company which has NO track record in the North Sea. When these fields were owned by Britoil they were controlled from Glasgow. Now with BP they are ultimately controlled from London. In future, with Oryx they could be run from Dallas.

On INVESTMENT BP have also reneged on their promises. Last year they said they wanted MORE investment in the North Sea. Under the reorganisation their inevitably will be LESS as they shift more of their exploration effort overseas from their new international base in Middlesbrough.

Of course the real culpability does not lie with BP. It lies with the Government who allowed - some say encouraged - BP to take Britoil over but, thus far, have refused to hold the company to the spirit or even the letter of the assurances of last year.

The most pathetic feature of this affair is the way in which the Department of Energy are totally reliant on BP for their information. On every major issue before the Select Committee the Department quoted BP statistics. The same question arises as it does on safety matters. How can the Department properly police the North Sea when they get all of their information from the oil companies.

One of the saddest aspects is the decline of BP's reputation for honest dealing. They are by no means the worst company in the North Sea but we expect more of a company of BP's prestige and we are entitled to hold them to last year's promises.

I know that the firm have just announced a major investment at Grangemouth and I'm happy to welcome that. But let's remember that most of these jobs are in construction - large in number but short in duration. The 1000 upstream jobs they plan to shed are permanent ones.

Scotland lost out on the real benefits of the first oil boom. The London Treasury grabbed all the oil revenues and there are more - and much cushier - oil jobs in London than in Scotland.

Now we are moving into the second oil and gas boom. This means that the Scottish people must make a plain choice - a choice which will determine a large part of our industrial future.

We can exploit the oil or we can continue to allow companies and the Government to exploit US - us being the Scottish community in general and our oil workers in particular.

We can settle DOWN for just a share of the development jobs, or we can settle UP and demand the decision making parts as well.

Scottish shieks or tartan coolies? That's what's at stake in this battle to hold BP to its promises.

many workers from the likes of West Germany, France, Holland, and Italy where wages and conditions are superior to ours. But what about countries such as Spain, Portugal and Greece, and possibly Turkey if she joins. These countries have higher rates of unemployment than the UK and many are no doubt looking to the opportunities that the North Sea might provide.

If our past experience of the oil companies is anything to go by, the surplus of labour that will be created by thousands of skilled but unemployed workers joining the labour market, will be used by them to try and force down wages. But the question remains. What should we do? Well firstly there's nothing you or I can do to prevent these workers from other countries getting jobs in our industry, and neither should we. I welcome the opportunity of all workers having freedom of movement and freedom of choice in employment. What we need to do is prevent an erosion of not only our pay and conditions but of the conditions of all future workers on the North Sea including those foreign workers that must become our allies against unscrupulous employers. We must strengthen the gains that we've already made through the OILC and win binding trade union agreements. With this there will be no need to fear the future or the influx of labour that is inevitable after 1992. Without binding agreements the employers will resort to their old swan song, "If you don't like it you can lump it. There are plenty more waiting to take your place."

## Construction Safety Campaign

The Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) is alive and well and beginning to show its teeth in Scotland.

It is committed to working for an end to death and serious injuries in the construction industry, both in the private and public sector.

Fred Crayk is their man in Scotland and has the

task of getting the message across.

Look out for articles from the CSC in future editions of "Blowout" and in the meantime for more information contact.

Fred Crayk  
51 Hazelbank Terrace  
Edinburgh EH11 1SL

# Record Men Report Crap Shock

# Daily Record

You can read some right crap about the rigs in the papers these days. No doubt some journalists are trying to make sense of it all but some are obviously not trying hard enough.

If the Daily Record's Arnot McWhinnie picked his own name then it shows his taste to be abysmal, and maybe that's all that's needed to explain his recent "Exclusive" "RIG MEN IN DRUG RAID SHOCK". According to Arnot, a hollowed out paperback had been found on Sedco's 707. A doctor and a bio-chemist then flew out and dope tested all 99 men on board. No trace of drugs was found but that didn't stop Dave McEwan Sedco's personnel boss from saying, "We cannot rule out the possibility that drugs had been on board.", and adding, "We are now introducing a policy of random drug testing on all our 10 rigs in the North Sea. Anyone involved with drugs will be instantly dismissed." What a scoop! The man's onto something here. There's an exclusive for every day of the week in this formula. We suggest he follows up with an expose of how there is no vice ring on the Brent C. Surely Shell could be persuaded to raid it. The man's got nae shame.

Give Mr McWhinnie his due. He doesn't know what these drilling contractors are like. And he wasn't on Sedco's Sedneth 701 about 1979. At that time the powers on board had convinced themselves that the ungrateful peons were escaping from the full delights of sharing 4 man cabins without bunk curtains, communal showering facilities, and the rest, by "Smoking them there drugs", and they were warning that they were going, "to bring out their sniffer daawgs".

At that time I was going out with a nurse

and had written her a letter which contained amongst other things the information that I was OK but like always, due to the change in water, heavily constipated. Of course I was a romantic devil in my early days. Looking back, the real reason for my constipation was probably fear. At that time one of the bosses was a complete animal who had once picked up a "samson post" and thrown it at a roustabout, breaking his arm. Maybe Sedco would be better doing spot psychiatric checks on management.

Anyway, one day I was called to the pusher's office and confronted by him with a letter. The envelope was purple, had a floral design in the bottom left hand corner, smelt strongly of eau de cologne and was quite bulky.

The pusher whom I'd known for many years, and liked, was visibly upset. He heaved his considerable bulk out of the chair and handed me the letter, asking if I would mind opening it in front of him as he suspected that the contents might be incriminating. We both got a bit of a shock when out came a rubber glove, a sachet of KY jelly and a suppository, accompanied by a sympathetic letter and some fairly stimulating instructions on how to alleviate my suffering.

Well of course he promised that the contents would be kept in strictest confidence, and I, after telling him where he could stick the suppository, made sure that everybody on the rig new the story.

Arnot! Don't get caught up in the paranoia of these people. If you want some good stories about what's going on offshore read Blowout or contact the Offshore Information Centre "above the Crit" in Aberdeen.

How have mud logging companies managed to keep their highly trained and skilled workers on poverty wages?

## Mud logging: a Vocation

Some loggers themselves have attempted to answer this. The argument goes something like this. Cowardly and sycophantic management have undercut each other's prices in order to avoid offending the oil companies with demands for reasonable contract prices. This will ring a bell with anyone who's actually met a logging company manager, but does it tell the whole story?

Why do impressionable young men and women continue to spew out of the geology departments of our universities, to find that the only chance of a job is either as a logging geologist on the North Sea, or as a something or other with South African mining companies? What a choice. It seems strange in the light of continual cut backs in education. How do the geology departments do it?

Recent news that Conoco has funded a new lectureship in petroleum geology at Aberdeen University may throw some light on the question. Maybe the oil companies have been paying the universities to keep churning them out. It may be quite a cost effective investment.

Head of Aberdeen's geology department, Professor Brian Williams says, "This is one of these happy relationships in which everyone can gain...." Maybe he was thinking more about himself than of the geology graduates that he will churn out as fodder for the oil companies.

From a humanitarian standpoint, the mud loggers might like to consider touring the

country's universities at the beginning of the next academic year and speaking to those students considering starting on a career in geology. Some straight talking about the wages and conditions for geology graduates on the North Sea might change a few minds.

Meanwhile, not to be outdone, BP, it is said are about to put some money into Jordanhill College of Education. You know! The place in Glasgow that trains teachers. They've obviously sussed it out. If you put money into the universities you can get labour for pennies. If you put it into primary school education, maybe you can get it for sweets.



Rigger

## A day on the road with a Specialist

By  
Dirk Shambles

"You're kidding? Oh no!" I groan into the phone in response to the awful call.

"OK I'll make it. Can you try and get me on the Norwich flight? ...Yeah I know Friday's usually hopeless, anyway see what you can come up with and I'll leave for the airport right away. Call you from there."

My head is recovering from last night and it's three in the afternoon. Last night? More like last week. Tight across the forehead like my brain sack is trying to get loose of the skull but is still stuck by desiccated nerve endings. Empty stomach and foul mouth. Christ will I never learn. I knew days ago that the call would come. The longer it took the more prepared I should have been.

Nothing ready. No bills paid. Mountains of letters unanswered. Nothing resolved about the kids and the divorce papers still to be signed. Well there's a few minutes yet. I scribble a cheque to the Gas Board hounds and one to the DHSS so my lodger can contact the government. That's all I can put together. No plan for an ordered escape back to work, just stagger from the sofa and scramble together whatever catches my eye.

Whatever's in the laundry basket will probably be needed and can be washed offshore; books, re-read something and get another at the airport. Money, airport bank! Clothes to wear, smart stuff, may have to via London. God can I really be thinking about looking cool sporting this drunken visage.

The brain is now working. Parallel discordant trains of thought, really getting into its professional stager.

"Jim wake up! You wanna earn yourself my taxi fare?... Good get off your butt and try to start the car." I'll take the first flight south wherever. "What? How the fuck would I know when I'll be back?"

Half an hour later I'm slumped in the car's rear seat in disco pants, clean t-shirt, and borrowed leather jacket. I'm gagging from an accident with the aftershave. I am always dubious of men who smell like I do. Down, down to heel expensive. I'm a joke. A caricature right down to the divorce papers in the briefcase. Beats me how anyone can take anything I

say seriously. Except the clients. However can't dwell on it, life has at least fleeting purpose right now. To travel. A plane is a buzz anytime, evoking memories of intercontinental travel when the money was better and I was doing what I wanted in this business, seeing the world with the responsibilities of a very young man. It's a filthy foggy late afternoon outside the battered Cavalier. Self esteem has been a dream for too long now, yet I can't get the ball rolling in an effort to regain it. My efforts are notably weak as the winter sets in and the date of my sainted ex-wives pay off looms. I feel so professional!

"If you come back in 25 minutes I should have a seat for you it's full leaving Aberdeen on the telex, but we'll know by the time you come back." It'll be a relief if I get it. My travelling time to Norwich cut by three hours and the appalling tube ride across London avoided.

I've been to the bank. A quick beer has done nothing for the way I look but the head has thawed sufficiently to browse the bookstall. I could now talk coherently. Probably. Menzies does not add to the narrow beam of clarity. Cheap authors and glib covers confuse me, and my anger at Penguins for now being invisible amongst the trash makes my brow damp again.

I make it to the phone booth to reassure myself that this is not all just an exercise designed to evaluate how quickly I can get on the move, but the job is still on. Call Joanne to let her know I'm leaving again, or is it just to hear her voice? My words vomit out. I can't put my feelings across. What's new?

The suffocating bumpy flight takes two hours and the young stewardess seems to see right through me as I search for a quid for the beer. In a taxi from Norwich to the village I am burdened with a talkative driver. His wife's boy friend has severely beaten his child. My God what is wrong with these people? And why did I sit in the front seat? Into the hotel bed. It's a comforting cocoon away from home where the troubles boil down to misplaced trust and values. And now the pay off.

I reach the heliport sober and with renewed vigour. I'm ready to talk the company talk. The fog is closing in and there are sixty odd people in high spirits, warming to the notion of another night at home.

"Mr. Shambles your company has been trying to get hold of you. Your job has been postponed. You're booked on the next flight from Norwich to Edinburgh.

Check, but not checkmate. The game will be resumed

## Sue Jane Taylor

A TOURING EXHIBITION OF  
PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS, ETCHINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS  
FROM 1985-1989

SCOTTISH VENUES

November/December 1989: City Art Centre, Edinburgh  
December/January 1989/90: Macnans Galleries and Museum, Dundee  
February 1990: McRoberts Art Centre, Stirling  
March 1990: An Lanntari, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis  
May 1990: Inverness Museum and Gallery, Highland  
Printmakers, Inverness  
August/September 1990: Lillie Art Gallery, Milngavie, Glasgow  
October/ November 1990: Maritime Museum & Artspace Gallery, Aberdeen

## Quotes From The Artists Site Diaries

The time had come to pay my 'final respects' to the dying Howard Doris Kishorn Yard so I walked around as the morning sun melted the overnight frost beneath my feet. I passed a Geordie worker I recognised heading for the Wellie bar. His unshaven face and bloodshot eyes betrayed a night spent drowning bitter sadness at the news of being made redundant. Howard Doris Yard, Loch Kishorn, February 1987 Chapter 3 Ron, a big, burly Yorkshireman and the platform's chief fire officer, came in to act as guide for the day, first showing us the deck of our lifeboat in the event of an emergency evacuation. No camera flash allowed in case it triggered a reaction. The very lowest level was deemed too dangerous as the wild waves crashed against the legs and well conductors... the sea was everywhere as we walked along the stairway which hung over the side of the platform amid a cold, blustery day magnifying the power of the threatening sea.

The vast emptiness created an eerie timelessness. Scale cannot be measured, even approximated by the naked eye for the only comparison is with the horizon or the other platforms - all apparently identical. The reek from oil, various chemicals and gases is unavoidably inhaled. For Ron systems like the 'Christmas Trees' (a network of pipes and valves) and turbine engines are simply part of an everyday process pumping oil to onshore. For me, however, some of the machines were like mysterious passageways and the bowels of some strange, huge monster.

The living quarters are sound proofed and all boots must be taken off, once indoors. But I could still smell oil and chemicals wafting in from outside. The inside is a glorified portacabin. BP's Forties Bravo Platform, November 1986 Chapter 5

## Murder for a fiver

Mr. David Learmont is the air transport editor of a magazine called "Flight International". His eyes were wide with wonder recently as he pondered the strangeness of human behaviour. What David was so impressed by was a new method the boffins at the Cranfield Institute of Technology had thought up to simulate panic conditions amongst passengers leaving an aircraft. In this way the scene could be studied and improvements to the aircraft and evacuation procedures could be made. What they did was offer cash to the first people to get out of the test plane. "They really did climb all over each other and just

about murder each other, jamming the exits to get out of that plane and be handed a fiver," he said breathlessly.

We can only assume that his amazement was that people should endanger each other, not to save their own lives, but all for a couple of quid. He's pretty naive to be surprised about this. The people who run our industry for example are quite prepared to see death and injury and all for a few quid. Any oil executive would tell him, albeit privately, that there is a cost element in the safety equation.

Yes David! Shocking isn't it?

# Reviews

## Christmas

blowout welcomes George Whittaker as our so critic. He will not be going out of his way to ew "pap" so unfortunately there are many of ut here who will perhaps not see these movies. for a while anyway. For those of us lucky ough to work on installations that do get new vies George felt that we should also suffer a bit ympathy, and this explains his comment about ew festive beers"

**SCROOGED** directed by Richard Donner. rring Bill Murray, Karen Allen, Bobcat rthwaite, Carol Kane, Robert Mitchum, David ansen.

he slickest piece of direction in "Scrooged" nes right at the beginning. The camera pans ose a snowy landscape, carefully taking in a th Pole sign, and ends up in Santa's workshop, ss, complete with diminutive helpers in scarlet psuits and pixie hats. For a terrible moment I think you're about to watch a re-run of "Santa e Movie" but then the camera deftly pools back reveal that the vomit-inducing sub-Disney nes are in fact being shown on a TV monitor. tching the monitor in their Manhattan office ck are the IBC TV management team, who are he process of unravelling the promos for their ristmas Eve programmes for the benefit of work president Frank Cross (Bill Murray). ss, however, is not happy. He thinks th imos are too tame. His idea is to advertise the npany's 40 million buck live blockbuster itation of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" by imaging effects of global death and destruction. what if it's nothing to do with the story? It'll ke the punters sit up and take note won't it? f that reveals Cross as some way short of a full ck, the next twenty minutes or so confirm him a thoroughly bad bastard absorbed with power, ney and his own swollen ego. He has one of his m thrown out on the street for daring to question judgment, forces his secretary to ditch her ns to take her ailing kid (the Tiny Tim figure in a film) to the doctor so that she can worklate ead, and even grabs acab from an old woman len down with shopping. All this in the season goodwill too.

The rest of the film more or less follows the plot Dickens' perennially popular tale of bad made o. Thus Cross is visited first by the ghost of ead boss who warns of the purgatorial pain it awaits him unless he undergoes a radical rsonality change and thereafter by the ghost of ristmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas t To Come, all of whom conspire to scare the it out of him and force him to see the error of his y. Not all the jokes work but there's more than ough to keep you chuckling, largely owing to e superb performance of Murray, whose pertoire of facial expressions and natural ility ensure a measure of sympathy for the isanthropic Cross. There's the odd scary oment and some genuinely poignant ones too. Cross despite himself ("You're taking me back time to show me my mother and father and I'm pposed to get all goosey and blubbery - well rget it pally, you got the wrong guy") is taken ck to his less than rosy childhood, shown his adual deterioration from high-principled guy to round smuck and, worst of all, reminded of e girl he callously ditched in his pursuit of weath d power.

Dickens' absorbing storyline simply can't fail, it apart from Murray's inspired performance hat makes Scrooged such a treat is the modern rist given to familiar elements of the tale, such as e Ghost of Christmas Past appearing in the form a cigar smoking, street-wise cab driver (played, ould you believe by David Johansen, erstwhile ad singer with the New York Dolls) and the nost of Christmas Present taking the form of a ugh little liberated female who introduces herself cross by kicking him squarely in the crotch.

Add to all that a bunch of engaging cameos (in rricular network boss Robert Mitchum, seventy mething and still turning on the style with a flick a hooded eyelid) and you've got, well, nothing ite in the class of Frank Capra's "It's A Wonderful fe" (also based on "A Christmas Carol") but as atachable a seasonal movie as you could asonably hope for. True, the overblown ending sitively drips with sentimentality but what the ill, if you've had a few festive beers it'll probably rry you right along with it.



Bob Orrell

## John Rowlinson Reviews

NANCI GRIFFITH - "STORMS" - MCA Records

Having decided, under gentle pressure from the sisterhood, to choose a woman performer for this edition's review, I was torn, glancing through this month's batch of new releases, between the very wonderful Ricki Lee Jones and the to me unknown Nanci Griffith. As I could doubtless fill several pages of this estimable broadsheet with my favorite Ricki Lee Jones quotes, tying them into the musical memories of the past ten or so years and seeing the editor scarcely able to conceal a yawn at the prospect, I decided to plunge into uncharted waters. Besides, a few friends whose opinions I respect have mentioned the name Nanci Griffith with some enthusiasm of late - she sold out a recent concert in Glasgow - so I bought "Storms" favorably predisposed and eager, though not convinced I had made the right choice.

Nanci Griffith apparently belongs to a new wave of singers, songwriters and musicians who are currently pushing back the frontiers of Country and Western in the U.S. (i.e. they don't sing about apple pie and can play more than three chords). She hails from Austin, Texas from a liberal Democrat background (i.e. she is capable of thought) but has based herself in Nashville. She's 35, eschews wigs and rhinestone and is, apparently, an aspiring novelist. If she can write prose as good as some of her lyrics, she'll be worth reading. "Storms" is her eighth album since "There's A Light Beyond These Woods" was released in 1982 and those who know say she was good to start with and has steadily matured.

To "Storms" itself, then. The first thing that struck me was the quality of the production (Glyn Johns at his unobtrusive best) which allows a sparse but full, mainly acoustic backcloth to the almost fragile Griffith voice. Much credit, also, must go to the musicians who make up her Blue Moon Orchestra who use their skills in the service of each song to enhance the mood and underline the lyric rather than clutter and distort it, particularly Pat Donaldson, a bassist of rare taste and touch, and Bernie Leadon (ex of the Eagles and as melodic as ever) for some craftsman-like acoustic guitar work. Each song is clean and crafted. To listen to "Storms" is as refreshing as a walk in Spring rain.

The album, though, is mainly about the songs, ten in all, all by Griffith herself or co-written with James Hooker, her keyboards man, with the exception of the title track, penned by one Eric Taylor, I believe her ex-husband. And truth-to-tell there isn't a dud amongst them. From the opening track, a beautifully melodic "I Don't Wanna Talk About Love" which introduces one of the album's dominant themes, coming to terms with a long-term relationship gone stale, to the almost mystic "Is There Anybody Out There" (not mentioned on the sleeve for some reason), the album takes you inside a life and a personality acquainted with joy and pain, serenity and bitterness, anger and self-doubt. It also takes you on a journey through a range of musical styles from a real hill-billy slapper, "Listen To The Radio" (try listening to that on a Walkman without a spring coming into your step) to an almost Dylanesque protest song, "It's A Hard Life Wherever You Go", for me not only the high point of the album but a probable desert-island disc. For good measure, she also puts in possibly the best Everley Brothers song they never sang, "You Made This Love A Teardrop", appropriately enough getting Phil Everly to do a harmony vocal on it. Of all the songs this is the refrain that lingers in the memory:

*You made this love a teardrop ready to fall  
Some people can't love right, I just can't love wrong.  
When you're lonely in the night, I hope you will recall,  
You made this love a teardrop ready to fall.*

# Stranger than fiction

## BLOW-OUT

### ROBERT ORRELL

Published by Hale @ £12.95

The preface to this newly released book starts, "This is a true story based on real people and actual events." Not, "a true story about real people", but based on people. A list of characters who appear under their own names in the book includes Paul "Red" Adair and the aptly named Captain Bob Balls.

But it's not these real people who make this book such a good read. That's done by the list of characters who don't appear under their own names. They make the book worth every penny of its hardback price and a contender for next year's "Booker Prize"

Bob, as the author appears in his own book, spent a relatively short time offshore as a radio operator, and medic of sorts, in the late sixties as the southern gas fields were being opened up. But during his short stay he encountered, indeed he had a pretty intimate relationship with, some of the most outrageous characters ever to grace the oilfield, or modern fiction for that matter. And all on one rig too.

That rig is the Hewett A platform. The author uses the book to set the scene for the eventual demise of the Hewett. It blows out on the 15 November 1968, with the loss of three lives, when the standby boat the Hector Ganett sank, when she was holed, trying to evacuate the crew of the Hewett A.

Meanwhile Robert Orrell takes us on a conducted tour of rig life in these early days. Incredibly he does catch something of the flavour of the period. At least as far as I recall from time spent on the Sea Quest in 1972. But don't ask me how he does it.

Spiced into this description of offshore life is an idiots guide to rotary drilling. Not unlike the IADC modular training literature so beloved of some of the drilling contractors. Only not quite so well written. But more interestingly he introduces us to his cast. There were the two Corsican bandits. Of which the 24 year old Raul meets his end, shot while trying to rob a bank in a Paris suburb. Charlie the most tragic roustabout ever. Larry the illiterate Tennessee farmer doomed never to marry his hill-billy sweetheart, Rose Ann. The roughneck with the artificial leg who eventually makes driller, and my particular favourite, "Scotch Jimmy a strange, wild-eyed ex-docker from Glasgow who was fighting a drink problem....He had been in gaol for having an incestuous relationship with his teenage daughter, which his wife had happily condoned." And of course a host of minor characters, "Graham a British lad in his early twenties, two Frenchmen, a Greek and a Turk." The whole of humanity infact.

The sentiment, the defiance of a woman who has been the victim of a loveless relationship for too long, has many echoes. From "I Don't Wanna Talk About Love" she sings

*I don't wanna talk about changes,  
Changes come of their own free will,  
And if you wanna talk about leavin',  
Well you always walked and you always will,  
And every time you talk about love,  
Well you talk about your yesterdays.  
Yesterday's washing away with this morning's rain.  
While in a more light-hearted vein from "Listen To The Radio",  
"I left a handsome two-steppin' good ol' boy in Tennessee,  
Now he's sittin on the sofa, waitin for his supper  
Wonderin' what's become of me.  
I got a double O eighteen Martin guitar  
On the back seat of my car  
An "I'm Leavin' Mississippi with the radio on."*

The idea of leaving, particularly the security and stability of a long-term relationship, for the uncertainty of a new life is another recurrent theme most poignantly in "If Wishes Were Changes" and, more abstractly, in "Leaving The Harbour", both songs of a quiet beauty.

The whole album's worth buying for the one song, though, "It's A Hard Life Wherever You Go". Arecollection of seeing a child on a street corner in Belfast sets the singer to wonder what kind of life that child can expect. This fires another memory, closer to home:

*Cafeteria line in Chicago  
A fat man in front of me  
Is calling black people trash to his children  
And he's the only trash here I see.  
And I'm thinking this man wears a white hood  
At night while his children should sleep*

The book informs us of the blowout on the Hewett A, the sinkings of the Hector Ganett, the Sea Gem, and the Ocean Prince (a forerunner of the Ocean Odyssey?) and of the Ocean Viking emergency, none of which, apart from the Sea Gem disaster, I had heard. And I suppose for that reason alone it's a valuable book. It's definitely worth every penny for the characters it introduces us to. But it is for the dialogue, remembered over all these years, that makes this book priceless.

Here is Vernon, (he's one of the real people), a toolpusher, "angry and perplexed by this latest challenge to his authority", as he confronts a "rabble rouser", "Bob, tell that goddam boat to come alongside" "OK you guys, I've come to an agreement. I've agreed with mahself that you ain't nothin' but a bunch of trouble. As of now, you ain't on the pay-roll no more, so get your asses aboard that boat. You can have your strike but have it in England." He'd certainly have sorted out all this here OILC nonsense.

But it's Scotch Jimmy's confessions that will stun you. "She said she didna care who I had it away with, so long as I kept off her. Och, it was an awful thing to do, but when a man gets the evil drink inside him, he's in the grip of the devil himself!" He stared at the ceiling, and suddenly his voice rose to a crescendo: "I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, for thou wast angry with me. Thy wrath is turned away and thou hast comforted me"....."Isaiah, Chapter 12" he said, almost opologically.

Well! As I said before it's well worth the money, and maybe if enough of us buy it it'll come out in paperback. I'll be disappointed if it doesn't become the North Sea cut book of the year. Ask Santa for it this Christmas.

Another couple of titles that you could scribble on a bit of paper and throw up the lums.

**Red Adair - An American Hero** by Philip Singerman Published by Bloomsbury and costing £14.95 in hardback

And if you think that all that celebrating over Christmas and the H

New Year might get a little too much for you you could try

"The Seaman - A History of the National Union of Seamen" by Arthur Marsh & Victoria Ryan Published by Malthouse Press.

"Polmaise - The Fight for a Pit" by John McCormack with Simon Pirani Published by Cydeside Press.

All of these books will be reviewed in "Blowout" - eventually.

*But they'll slip to their window and see him  
And they'll think that white hood's all they need.  
It's a hard life, it's a hard life, it's a very hard life  
It's a hard life wherever you go.  
And if we poison our children with hatred,  
A hard life is all that they'll know."*

I love that, not only because it confronts something as ugly as racism, but because it sees how such attitudes are self-perpetuating. The more we screw up our own world, the worse the world our children inherit. The song, however goes further when the singer turns her attention to herself.

*"I was a child in the sixties  
When dreams could be held through T V  
With Disney and Kronkites and Martin Luther.  
And I believed, I believed, I believed.  
Now I'm the back seat driver from America  
And I'm not at the wheel of control.  
And I'm guilty, I am worn, I am the root of all evil  
And I can't drive on the left side of the road."*

She was brought up in a cosy world to believe that goodness prevails, that there's always a happy ending, a belief her experience has shown to be fatuous and rendered her impotent to confront a darker reality. There's a wisdom born of humility here which is deeply moving, a song that should be a national anthem for somewhere good.

I wrote at the start that I wasn't sure that I'd made the right choice in getting "Storms". I don't regret the choice because this is one good album and I'll probably buy more of her work, partly because of the musicianship and craft she and her band bring to the songs, partly because of the refreshing intelligence which shines through her words. But Ricki Lee Jones - man, she's something else.

# Thanks to the BEARS



The last three editions of Blowout have been financed overwhelmingly by offshore oil workers. And this is how it should be. If the paper is to develop as the voice of the offshore workers then no one but you should be able to "pull the plug".

The bulk of this money has come to Blowout from the "bears" and the caterers who are organised as supporters of the OILC on major Northern North Sea platforms. Not only have the publishing and printing costs of the paper been met in this way, but a computer has been bought that will allow us much more control over the publishing process in future editions.

This marks the last of the "occasional" issues. From the end of January/beginning of February, there will appear regular monthly editions. Basically the theory is "Offshore workers have important things to say and the determination to say it. Blowout has the responsibility to provide the platform for this."

Regular monthly publication brings its own requirements. A full time worker, and financing of the paper on a regular monthly basis.

We've made an initial costing of the paper. It seems to us that the support is already there. We are appealing to Blowout supporters



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from now on to put your contributions onto a regular monthly basis.

Plans are under way to organise the collection and administration of the finance required. We propose that this takes place through the network of OILC activists on the Northern and Southern sectors, in Morecombe bay and the rig building yards. These plans rely on continued support from our old friends, and on winning new ones as well. We make a special appeal to those men on the semis. If you feel the paper is important contact us in the Information Centre and organise a regular order. Blowout thanks the men on the following installations who have made the last three editions possible.

Cormorant A, North Cormorant, Brent A,B,C,D and Spar, Claymore, Dunlin, Safe Gothia, Eider, Montrose, Ninian South, Tern, Beryl A, Beatrice B, Brae A, Arbroath, Thistle, Forties A,B,C,D and E, Safe Felicia. Ocean Alliance, and OILC meetings throughout the country.

And to those individuals who have contributed but not been mentioned in previous editions, we say thanks.

D.M., George Binette, B.K., Greg Douglas, Dave Croft, B. Agar Ron Brown, Charlie Walsh, A.B.

If we've missed anybody we're sorry and will set the record straight as soon as you remind us.

## Crane op in hospital

A crane operator on Conoco's Murchison platform was trapped in his cab after the main cable came away from the drum when the crane was being load tested. The man was treated in his cab by the field doctor from the nearby Safe Gothia after he had been freed by colleagues

The accident happened on the afternoon of Sunday 12 November and he was flown to hospital in Lerwick where he stayed for the next 10 days before being transferred to a hospital nearer his home in Lincolnshire. According to Conoco the man did not wish his name to be released to the press. The spokesman also said that the man's colleagues on board "did an excellent job in releasing him."

When an incident occurs on your installation please contact "Blowout" with the details. Oil company versions of events can sometimes prove to be a little short of the full story

# BLOW OUT

a voice for the offshore worker

## A Memorial to Piper

Two different attitudes to the Piper victims are hinted at in recent attempts to produce two quite different memorials.

In Australia, Julie Montgarret produced a banner on behalf of the Victorian Trades Hall Council. It was carried to Aberdeen by members of the Seamen's Union of Australia, and was handed over to Aberdeen City by Campbell Christie, STUC General Secretary, at a ceremony in the Aberdeen Art Gallery on Friday 27 October

The banner is very beautiful, certainly beyond my powers of description. The names of all those who died are stitched on it. It will make a lasting impression on all those who see it.

Lyn Christie and other relatives of Piper victims have however met less success in their attempt to have a statue erected in the Rose Garden at Hazlehead. When the idea was put to the families they were overwhelmingly in favour. But when Occidental and the contracting companies were approached, they were less enthusiastic. Oxy said no! And of the others the Wood Group have proved

to be by far the most generous with a donation of £2000. The families themselves have nearly doubled the amount coming from the companies, but are still not half way towards the expected £80 - £100,000 needed.

The response of trade unionists half a world away, expresses the need of workers to remember in order that a similar disaster can be guarded against. In the same way, the miserable response from a multi-million pound industry expresses the employers wishes that the whole episode be forgotten as soon as possible. Relatives already suspected that this lay behind the decision to topple the Piper remains out of sight beneath the waves, and abandon the attempt to recover the bodies.

Lyn and the other campaigners may, however have found an ally in Red Adair. While in Aberdeen launching his recently published biography, his daughter suggested that he would be interested in the scheme, and that he might be prepared to unveil the statue himself.

## A new home

"Blowout welcomes the Piper Support Group to their new premises in the Offshore Information Centre.

## Neeps Gazette in trouble

Aberdeen's two daily newspapers could close by February next year, the city's Lord Provost was warned.

Councillor Bob Robertson's warning is the latest move in the bitter dispute at Aberdeen Journals, where more than 100 journalists on the "Press & Journal" and "Evening Express" have been sacked.

Lord Provost Robertson warned that local authorities are now ready to withdraw statutory advertising from the two papers. Almost 30 councils throughout Scotland have already cancelled advertising.

He condemned Aberdeen Journal's managing director Alan Scott and said: "I can only surmise he considers the P&J and Evening Express to be expendable. Local management would prefer to see both newspapers die rather than talk meaningfully with the NUJ or use the good offices of ACAS."

The journalists were dismissed in October following a second strike over trade union recognition and victimisation of union members. Since then, thousands of readers and advertisers have blacked the papers. And thousands of people - including many North Sea workers - have signed a petition urging the company to open negotiations with the National Union of Journalists.

Councils may now consider publishing their own news-sheet to

carry statutory advertising, which would include planning notices and public announcements.

Lord Provost Robertson added: "I want to make it clear that I condemn the actions of Mr Scott in dismissing the journalists during a dispute."

NUJ members are now set to step up economic and political pressure on the company. Union leaders recently returned from Strasbourg, where they lobbied members of the European Community.

Union vice-president David Sinclair said: "It is quite clear that the public and local authorities will not stand for this sort of behaviour. The company must realise that public sympathy is on our side and that they have to start talking to resolve this dispute."

## PHOTOS

Has anyone working in Morecombe Bay got any photographs of British Gas's accommodation vessel AV1. Please send us them if you do. In fact send us photographs of anything you think will interest. Black and white preferably. Attach a short note of explanation too please.