

## ACTION BEGINS ON NORTH SEA

**THOUSANDS** of workers on 24 North Sea platforms have stopped doing routine overtime. They are working to contract in response to a call from the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC).

The employers organisation, has responded with a press release.

The Offshore Contractors Council (OCC) claims that, "...the majority of offshore employees are well satisfied with their new terms and conditions...". But they are it seems, "...being misled by false statements being circulated by a minority."

Their statement continues, "The Council has drawn up terms and conditions of employment for member companies which have given the offshore workforce earnings increased by more than 30% over an eighteen month period. Other benefits, including sickness accident and life insurance, have been increased and it will be the policy of the OCC to review employees' terms and conditions annually."

"Exactly!" commented an OILC spokesman. "They reviewed our wages and conditions in the aftermath of the '86 slump and the money that some of our lads have won in the past 14 months still hasn't taken us back to 1985 levels. But this is not a fight only about money, it's about working conditions, safety and basic rights. Without an agreement in place to cover all offshore workers they'll review our wages to the bone the very next time they engineer a price slump to cut their tax bills."

The press release was signed by Les Balcombe secretary of the OCC and David Odling, boss at AOC International, a company who have of late been telling anyone who will listen that they don't have an OILC problem. The statement is all the more unusual because it follows hard on a speech given recently by the Clem Cooke, chairman of the OCC's parent body, the Oil and Chemical Plant Constructors Association. In an after dinner speech, he told the bosses, "We believe we have a positive agreement paying good wages for good land-based work. Is it really to much to ask for a similar structure offshore?" Well yes! would seem to be the answer from Balcombe and Odling who see no virtue in any agreement and certainly don't see the impending industrial anarchy that Cooke also warned of.

It wasn't money, or even the wage cuts and sackings in 1986 that set this fight in motion. The workers' determination to win an agreement was inspired by the unacceptable spectre of an industry in which oil company and other offshore employers had unchallenged authority. That resulted in the Piper Alpha and Ocean Odyssey disasters which will not be repeated if the offshore worker has any say in the matter. We need the Continental Shelf Agreement as a first step.

# BP, EXXON, CONOCO & SHELL IN COURT

**EVERY WORKER** on the continental shelf was affected in some way or another by the oil price collapse of 1986.

Lives were shattered when jobs were lost, homes repossessed and marriages broke up under the strain.

At best we took wage cuts (sometimes massive), followed by three years of wage stagnation.

The answer to why this happened looked set to emerge in a case now going on in a New York court-room. But so far BP, Shell and Exxon have managed to keep the lid on the story, and agreed to an out of court settlement with Transnor, the small Bermuda based oil trading company.

Basically the story goes something like this.

A tax evasion scam developed in the early 1980s. The government were levying tax on oil production from the North Sea, based on the price of that oil on the open market. The oil companies in response, set up "daisy chains", in which oil, which wasn't even out of the ground, was traded from company to company, (some making and some losing - speculation I believe is the term). The oil company would eventually get their oil back, ship it off to their refinery, and then pay tax on the basis of the lowest

by Garry Forbes

price that had been paid during these transactions. All completely above board by British standards no doubt.

Transnor subsequently sued BP, Shell, Exxon and Conoco for losses it made during the collapse. They blame the 1986 oil price collapse, on market manipulation by these four oil giants who, it's alleged, were involved in artificially lowering oil prices in order that their tax commitment to the British government was reduced. The exchequer is alleged to have lost \$9 billion in this fraud. Shell, BP and Exxon have settled out of court. We wonder why - and they're not saying.

This all conjures up a very different picture of the great '86 shake up on the North Sea. All this time we've believed that it was "market forces" or "OPEC over-production", or other such "unavoidable circumstances", that destroyed careers, disrupted lives and forced oil workers and their families to uproot and flee Aberdeen.

How are we now supposed to view the

widespread allegations of cutbacks in essential maintenance offshore in the wake of the '86 price collapse? Much of the massive maintenance programme planned offshore this summer, date back to work shelved after the '86 collapse. Somebody should have cited Transnor to appear and give their evidence at the Piper Alpha enquiry.

The facts behind this allegation must come out. The struggle of the offshore workforce for an industry wide agreement is precisely an attempt to separate our conditions of life from the criminally speculative behaviour alleged by Transnor.

Equally the oil companies can't be allowed to revert to a pre Piper situation where they suppress all information which is potentially damaging to them. Journalists on the business pages of the so called quality press have begun to raise the issue. Now the many journalists who claim to want to present an objective view of our industry have a clear responsibility. They should uncover, and present in a popular fashion, the social and political issues that are raised here.

Maybe Aberdeen University's world renowned oil economics expert, Professor Kemp, knew what was going on back then, and could throw some light on the situation for us.



A STRIKE MEETING ABOARD THE SAFE FELICIA LAST SUMMER

**AN UNPRECEDENTED** unity is developing offshore between the construction and catering workers. It has resulted in catering workers, who traditionally do not work routinely above the 12 hours, also banning overtime.

A clear commitment has been given by caterers on some platforms, that any retaliation against construction workers, for sticking to their contract of employment, will be met by them with "appropriate action"

## DEMOCRACY

**YOUR FRIENDLY** OIM or General Foreman may find your decision to work to the letter of your individual contract of employment difficult to live with. Already it's being suggested that without a secret ballot your decision is undemocratic. Possibly you could remind him that it has always been the aim of the OILC to have every offshore worker balloted on the need for trade union recognition and on an agreement for all.

Last July, at the height of the strikes, there appeared to be an extraordinary level of agreement between the employers and workforce on the question of ballots. Here are what just some of the employers were saying on the subject.

"So far as the question of union recognition is concerned, we believe that such a key question should be decided by an independent secret ballot so that the employees can make their own decisions"

Mr David O'Dell Shell Industrial Relations Officer - in a "Situation Report" on the offshore dispute.

"Owing to the current circumstances and after discussions internally, and with some of our client customers we are of the opinion that the only way to move forward is to have a local union recognised agreement for our workforce..."  
 "The fact that the Draft OCC terms and conditions have been circulated to some locations and the initial response favourable, we are of a mind that the inclusion of Trade Union Recognition would further the possibility of acceptance."

Yours sincerely  
 for Aberdeen Scaffolding Co Ltd  
 John McDonald Managing Director - in a letter to the AEU.

"Subject to the acceptance by all APG employees engaged on Shell Cormorant and Dunlin Alpha to the Contract Terms and Conditions attached, Atlantic Power & Gas Limited hereby agree to engage ACAS to undertake an independent separate platform ballot, in order to establish the overall consensus from all the employees as to their wishes for Union Representation or vice versa."

From an Atlantic Power & Gas memo : GRB/CAN/AJB/07/040L - to all APG employees on Cormorant Alpha

Needles to say once the action ceased, there were no ballots and no union recognition. Advocating democracy is, it seems for some, a way to get yourself out of a hole.

## EDITORIAL

### NATIONALISATION ?

WE ALL KNOW that it is unfashionable to say you believe in nationalisation. Even re-nationalisation of companies recently privatised is considered by the Labour Party to be too expensive.

But the Transnor affair surely must at least raise the question again. If Transnor's allegations are substantiated - and there must be the fullest enquiry into them - then it surely raises massive doubt about leaving this national resource in the hands of these people.

We can understand the logic of sacking workers, cutting wages and destroying lives. We've lived with this experience and it's not only oil workers that have suffered this kind of behaviour.

No one offshore will be unduly shocked at the idea that essential maintenance was shelved and lives put at risk because of a scam that went out of control. We've lived with death and injury on a massive scale on the North Sea for 26 years.

But how would an incoming Labour Government feel about this strategically important industry run by people who were prepared to fiddle millions from the exchequer while a Tory government is in power. What hope for Labour?

### ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY is a key question in our industry. Basically the oil companies consider themselves accountable to no one. Not the Chancellor of the Exchequer nor the Secretary of State for Energy and certainly not to the workers.

The Timothy Williams enquiry should challenge that. They at least have to explain why someone died in their employment.

So it was sad to hear of the indignity with which the relatives of the dead man felt they were being treated at the enquiry. They have had to wait for an unprecedented time to hear why Timothy died, only to get the distinct impression that the whole exercise was being staged for the benefit of big business.

Of course the oil companies have never felt that they had to tell anyone the truth about what goes on offshore. And in this they have been ably assisted by the Press. But it's again a bit sad to see the Glasgow Herald a so called "quality" paper repeatedly using that old term of dis-information the "blowback" and when challenged, insisting that it's being used in this enquiry.

And how to describe Texaco's press release on the Goodrich incident? Maybe a downright lie is just a little strong. But somebody must have fed tripe to the Glasgow Herald who said about the incident, "highly inflammable liquid gas seeped into drilling equipment."

That hardly gives the impression of an event which in the case of the Ocean Odyssey went uncontrolled and led to the destruction of the rig and the death of one of our colleagues.

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

## MAKING AN EFFORT

I Have worked in the offshore drilling industry for more years than I can, or would like to, remember. It's been mostly overseas, until two years ago when I returned to the North Sea where I've worked, through agents, in both the Southern and Northern Sectors.

I have suffered and witnessed the loud mouthed, ignorant, overpaid and over here, senior members of some drilling companies. (that's putting it politely)

So it was with normal expectations that I joined a drilling rig working in the Southern Sector. To my surprise I found it crewed by a mixed but friendly bunch, (some exceptions). The food is good - English menu, TV sets work on the British line system. We have Sky TV for what it's worth, regular changes of videos, newspapers sent out as often as the helicopter flights permit, and people that listen to suggestions and complaints. And what's more they do something about them. The company each year gives the employees £100 towards union subs and pays 70% plus as wages if your rig is stacked.

So it's not all doom and gloom, and rather than hearing all the bad things, I think that companies making an effort should also get a mention. Please withhold my name as somebody may apply for my comfortable (could do with more pay though) job.

Medic

## THE DIET

I am employed by a service company as a Safety Technician - mainly on drilling rigs, and I recently picked up a copy of Blowout while working on a Maersk rig. Your excellent publication certainly lives up to its reputation.

I first became aware of the OILC whilst working on the Tern Alpha hook-up, and often heard Ronnie McDonald address union meetings. He certainly is a gifted orator who not only knows his subject, but also passionately believes in our cause. It does me good to see Ronnie, Frank Doran MP and offshore union leaders on the telly keeping our end up.

I like many other service hands, am paid on a day-rate basis, which in effect means that we are no more than casual workers. We are often offshore for weeks not knowing when we are getting home. When at home we don't know how long we will have with our families. No job security, no pension, no sick pay, no assurance of a minimum days offshore. If we dare to complain about conditions of employment we are put on "the diet".

For the benefit of the uninitiated, "the diet" is the punishment dished out by the ruthless service company managers, where you are left at home (without pay) for anything up to four months with the silent treatment. During one of these punishment periods on the beach, I was told that there was no work as business was slack; yet when I telephoned my workmates I discovered that everyone else was offshore. The other common excuse is that we telephoned but you were not in; yet most service hands must own a telephone answering machine.

I believe that what we have to do is, at the next general election, vote in a Labour government - to bring in legislation to protect service hands from the abuses of uncaring service companies. Also we need to try and win the support of the apathetic, and educate the greedy, with the aim of getting union membership to over 80% of the workforce - only then will we have the chance of bringing

# FLARE OFF YOUR LETTERS

about a safer, fairer, securer and more compassionate working environment in the service sector, (and other sectors) of the UK continental shelf offshore oil and gas industry.

It will not be easy, it will mean sacrifice of time, energy and resources, to further the cause of the labour and trade union movement. Many of the youngsters now coming into our industry were at primary school when Maggie rose to power. They haven't experienced the alternative. I was talking to a trainee roustabout the other day. He was on one of these government schemes. He earned £90 for 14 twelve hour shifts of dirty, dangerous, hard work, yet thought Thatcher was great.

Best wishes to all at Blowout and the OILC, and keep up the good work.

Name withheld

## FOR AN OFFSHORE UNION

You may have already seen the enclosed letter from the Tern OIM to his contract staff. The recent statement in the press by Shell saying that the overtime ban is not affecting production on their platforms seems to be a rather false statement. It's obvious that the overtime ban is having some effect if the letter from the OIM is anything to go by.

The point about the OILC not being a union really bothers us out here. We would really like to see the OILC becoming a bona fide trade union, an offshore union embracing all offshore workers. We know that this is something for the future, maybe after the Continental Shelf Agreement is in place. We feel that this must be the way forward as the track record of the established unions is criminal to say the least.

We hope you give this much consideration. How about :- UK Offshore Industries Union. President :- Ronnie McDonald  
Keep up the good work

Tern Workforce

Christian Fellowship  
North West Hutton  
c/o Amoco  
Greenbank Road  
East Tullos  
AB14BR

Dear Sir or Madam,

Through your excellent paper we would like to contact any persons involved in the offshore industry that have a Christian fellowship onboard their installation.

Here on the N.W. Hutton we have a fellowship that is growing in strength and numbers and would be very happy to reply to all letters to the above address

God Bless all at Blowout and in the offshore industry.

Ron Stokes

## EXPLOITED ENOUGH

With reference to the letter from "a disgusted crew" in Blowout 6.

Do the catering crew know that they have the power to get what they want, (or should I say need), from Universal. If a construction worker does not finish a job, then it will take longer to do and cost more if overtime has to be paid. If a cook does not work then nobody will work.

Cooks and stewards could be the most powerful union in the offshore industry. In fact they could bring the industry to a standstill just to get what they deserve. We have been quiet long enough. I am in the same boat as you are. I think through Blowout we may have the chance to organise ourselves. We work just as hard as anyone offshore, in fact even harder. All we need is a bit of solidarity. I warn all catering companies; be fair, beware one day we will bite back.

If the catering staff on any platform, semi or jack-up did go on strike, it is you the catering company that will lose in the end. I can't see an oil company giving the contract to a catering company with a strike on their record. For example look what happened to Phoenix Catering in Morecambe Bay. They went on strike and they no longer exist.

You have had the icing on the cake long enough. We are at boiling point. You have exploited us long enough.

Remember crews, we have the power, do we have the will?

A Really Pissed-Off Chef

## NO FOOLS

With reference to your article, "Around The North Sea - Lofflands" in issue No 6 April 90.

What a great recruiting campaign for "The Offshore Cause". In one swoop or should I say swipe, you have probably made approximately 200 men the laughing stock of their particular installations.

Drilling has always carried the stigma of being, "alright to lift heavy fings". All you did was to drive the nail in a little deeper.

I am not a company man, and at present neither am I a union man. I consider myself to be a fairly free thinking individual with a modicum of intelligence, therefore articles that ridicule tend to make me and other like minded people wonder who is on drilling's side.

I have two points to make. The first is that the last two items on the pledge were being discussed before the appearance of the article and have been eradicated.

The second is that the badge on the coveralls has, "commitment to safety" not to "excellence" as printed.

In conclusion I would say that if you wish to gather all offshore workers under one banner, do not single out individual groups of men for ridicule.

Mike Smerdon  
Loffland Brothers  
Ninian South

# SHELL & THE

**NOVEMBER 6 1986, just a few miles off Sumburgh Airport in the Shetlands, 45 offshore workers died in what is still the world's worst civilian helicopter accident.**

**The events surrounding the Chinook helicopter tragedy provoked great antagonism towards Shell from those working on the Brent, where the aircraft was on charter from British International Helicopters.**

**This was in response to Shell's intransigence, and their failure to fully respond to the numerous pre-accident safety concerns of the workforce.**

After the disaster, Shell's refusal to take a decision about the re-introduction of the aircraft, only heightened the hostility towards them.

Industrial relations offshore were already strained by the sackings and wage cutting in the wake of the oil price crisis. The chinook crash came after five years of mounting safety concern and brought the tensions to a head on the Brent.

The events that surround the introduction and operation of this helicopter are therefore of specific interest. They reveal Shell's callousness hidden behind its benign public image.

**The cut throat competition that exists between helicopter operators is privately sponsored by the Oil Companies.**

In the North Sea the different types of helicopters essentially fulfil five different roles. These are inter-field movements, medium range, executive, crew change and emergency (SAR) flights. At 1989 manning levels there are approximately 330 pilots rostered on 120 helicopters and each aircraft is maintained by, on average, about 4 technicians. Of the 11 different types of helicopter that have been used the Sikorsky-61N is truly the workhorse of the industry. In a years operation the helicopter can muster in excess of 1500 flying hours. Up north its range and capacity normally limits it to flying between Sumburgh and the Brent Field.

In the 1970's the build up in offshore developments was mirrored by the rapid increase in helicopter movements. By the time the real impact of the oil revenues began to reach the Exchequer in 1980, the rise in helicopter traffic at Aberdeen's Dyce Heliport had been relentless. Thousands of flights were taking place every week. A million passengers had already been uplifted from offshore helidecks.

The organisation and administration involved in transporting persons on and offshore was enormous, particularly on the Brent, where passengers continued on to Aberdeen via fixed wing charter flights. The mounting congestion over the Shetlands even necessitated the intervention of Nato's Saxa Fjord radar to temporarily alleviate the problem. The total exercise in moving personnel and equipment (over 2,500 of vital equipment tonnes/year) was becoming increasingly disproportionate to cost. The tendency of Sumburgh to become fogbound

only compounded the situation. Prolonged freight and crew change backlogs in both directions between Sumburgh and the Brent Field were a costly logistical nightmare.

**The BV234LR (Chinook) carried many thousands of passengers and to the accountants perhaps they were a success story, but you can't measure barrels of oil in men's lives..... Can you?**

Logistical expenses can be offset against the tax paid to the UK's Inland Revenue but there are Government limitations to this exercise, and the prudent oil company will therefore inevitably strive to keep such costs to the minimum. The fare cost of a chartered helicopter is only a small proportion of the overall expenditure when additional traveling and hotel costs are taken into consideration. The helicopter operators were aware that a large helicopter with an increased capacity could conceivably have a lower "Break Even Factor" and "Seat Mile Cost". Shell would, in addition, be able to save both the costs of fixed wing charter rates and landing fees at Sumburgh, and in guaranteeing the full complement of passengers Shell would also be able to increase such an aircraft's cost-effectiveness still further. But perhaps most importantly, by-passing Sumburgh would significantly improve matters offshore, where often for the want of specialist help or a small component, vital progress could be delayed by fog or backlogs at Sumburgh.

Although many helidecks could accommodate, or be upgraded to cope with, the larger helicopters like the Sikorsky CH53 Sea Stallion or the Aerospatiale Alouette, there were no civilian versions currently available. However there was a long range, high capacity helicopter in the process of being constructed by the Vertol Division of the Boeing Company in the U.S.A. The helicopter was the civilian version of the tandem rotor Boeing Vertol CH47D Chinook and when two civilian versions were introduced to the helicopter operators in November in 1978, British Airways Helicopters (BAH) purchased three - BV234LR (long range) versions for use in the North Sea.

After aviation authority approval in America and Britain in June 1981 the first BAH-Chinook flew to the Brent Field on charter to Shell on the 1st July amidst the customary Shell PR. It was heralded as an entirely new concept in civilian helicopter travel. But in reality Shell had, for the sake of logistical expediency, compromised the

**by Bob McNair**

well-being of thousands. The long 2 to 3 hour flights in this untried aircraft in cramped, noisy and uncomfortably conditions, were undertaken far further out to sea than the 61N's flying between the Shetlands and the Brent. The risk of losing 47 passengers and crew instead of 22 on a 61N was conveniently forgotten. Certainly the Chinook had improved avionics and had an airliner interior, but Boeing's attempts to counteract the helicopters inherent vibration due to "Fuselage Response" didn't placate its "captive passengers". From the outset the fact that the aircraft's two separate counter-rotating rotors were driven off the same transmission system did not go unnoticed by many passengers.

**A North Sea's helicopter's passengers are unlike their fare-paying counterparts on the commercial airlines on two accounts. They are far more technically aware of the safety parameters of their aircraft, and as captive passengers on a chartered aircraft they are limited in expressing their complaints.**

In that inaugural year the BV234LRs carried 42,000 passengers whilst on charter to Shell. A marvellous achievement considering the mechanical problems that had forced BAH to utilise all three aircraft as and when they became available from Boeing. A further contract to BP followed in 1982 but after a BAH Chinook ditched in the Cormorant Field in 1984 whilst on contract to Shell, the BP contract was terminated. BAH now had a total of 5 Chinooks from which to operate the Shell contract (excluding the aircraft involved in the Cormorant ditching). Shell remarkably continued despite the rising protests of the majority of the workforce, who as "captive passengers" had no option but to use them. The workforce offshore are routinely told to use their own initiative on safety. But the concerns they expressed about the growing number of incidents, delays, cancellations and accidents, - and even a serious loss of life directly involving a military Chinook in Mannheim in Germany, - did nothing to shake Shell's resolve to continue flying the Chinook.

**The Total Number of Passengers carried per year from Aberdeen's Dyce Heliport**

- 1973 - 40,000 passengers/year
- 1975 - 140,000 passengers/year
- 1980 - 220,000 passengers/year

**(Subsequently during the 1980s the numbers of passengers handled went well into the 500,000 passengers/year with the total number of movements each year exceeding 37,000 flights.)**

By the end of 1985 the Chinook's operating in the North Sea had amassed more flying hours than the military CH47A equivalent that flew in Vietnam and the experiences of the passengers relating to - oil leaks - wheels falling off - warning lights - breakdowns - problems in the air - verified this flying record. In 1986 the entire helicopter fleet of BAH including the Chinooks were sold to newspaper magnate Robert Maxwell's Scottish Daily Record group of companies and the helicopter company was renamed British International Helicopters (BIH). When the Oil Crisis began in 1986 questions were beginning to be asked about the manner of operation of these aircraft, as they appeared to have been given extra in-field stop-offs en-route to and from the Brent Field. In the aftermath of the November 6 disaster the tolerance of Brent workers was stretched to breaking point.

**The necessity of helicopter transport offshore is well understood by the 35,000 strong workforce. To operate without this type of aircraft would be extremely hazardous if not impossible. Respect for the pilots amongst the oil workers is very high as both groups share the risks as they ply their trades on North Sea.**

**IF YOU'RE working without a company pension, Personal Pension Manager is a new and versatile scheme for retirement benefits which hold the key to your present and future financial independence.**

It's a personal retirement scheme that gives you complete freedom of choice for when you move from job to job and for when you eventually retire.

At present, the pension you'll receive from the state is made up of only two parts.

Firstly, there's the basic State Pension, which everyone, (as long as they pay enough National Insurance Contributions) gets at retirement.

Currently this is only £46.90 per week for a single person and £75.10 per week for a married couple.

Secondly, if you're paying National Insurance Contributions at the full rate there's the State Pension based on your earnings - the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS).

Currently this will provide the average earner with only £40 approx a week

The amount has been reduced recently for anyone retiring after the year 2000, and there's every possibility that this will be reduced further in the future.

All this hardly gives you a lot to look forward to when you retire

Personal Pension Manager is the key to a secure and contented future.

With one of our consultants and Personal Pension Manager behind you, you can well afford to look ahead.

Consultants representing Manulife Financial: Hazel Fettes and Audrey Henderson, (Members of Lautro), 23 Carden Place, ABERDEEN AB1 1UQ Tel 0224 641164

**U n i t**  
Values Can Fall as Well as Rise



advertisement

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

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

## CATERERS SUCCESS

Recently on the Brent Delta, the Kelvin Caterers on board decided to work to the existing "terms and conditions" of their contracts.

Over the past few trips we have been short staffed and have been allowing workers from other installations to work either extra days or extra weeks to cover the shortages. This has resulted in work that otherwise have gone unattended to being done.

This practice was ended recently. At the next change-over, the on board crew voted on whether to prevent a worker doing extra time when a full compliment of crew was not available at the change-over.

The vote was successfully carried. However, the decision did put extra pressure on the workers themselves since the rota had to be altered to help cover the vacant position.

After two days the success of, "working to the terms and conditions of contract" was seen when a brand new start was hired. This bothe removed the pressure from the existing workers and also created a new job.

In fact two new jobs were created since a second "new start" was made the following Wednesday.

Martin McGarvey  
NUS SHOP Steward  
Brent Delta

## SEDCO FAECES

It's a well known fact that Sedco Forex have been taking the piss, (in more ways than one), of their offshore personnel.

You can improve your promotion prospects by taking a lot of courses on your time off and at your own expense, and taking drug tests at the whim of management, and without an option.

Now management have supplied "faeces" test kits to the "707". How long will it be before other companies follow suite. Will we have to wait for an article in the P & J by our personnel manager saying that all stools tested have proved negative, but we as a company reserve the right to take the shit from our employees any time?

The reason given for these faeces kits being supplied is, that a supervisor saw shit on the toilet floor and decided that as he was somewhat of a sleuth, that he would get to the bottom of the affair. One explanation for the appearance of the shit is that the plumbing in the downstairs toilets is so poor that the toilets don't always flush but overflow instead, dumping the contents of the bowl onto the floor.

The investigation continues. The Sedco Forex company motto could well now be.

**FORGET THE REST  
WE ARE THE BEST  
WE DO MORE TESTS**

Name withheld

## STEWARDESS SPEAKS OUT

I am writing this to say my piece about the article in a newspaper about Stewardesses being sexually harassed offshore. I would have thought that if this was happening, and the men who were to blame were reported to their supervisors, they could quite well lose their jobs.

All I can say is that I have worked offshore for a year now, and can state with confidence, that neither myself nor any of the girls I work with have been sexually harassed by any of the men on this platform. Of course there is lots of banter between us but it's all in good fun.

Anyway! I would just like to say to the person who wrote to the newspaper about sexual harassment, next time could they please state which platform it occurred on, and not give the men on this one and the rest of the North Sea a bad name.

So to all the wives I say, "rest easy". The majority of the time the men are just talking about you and your children. To end my story I will just say that this is a man's world out here and has always been so. So it's up to each individual girl to try and fit in and not take to heart everything the men say. Working out here with men is like working in any other job with men, you just give back as good as you get.

Right girls, AND boys, lets have your views!  
The Duchess of the North Cormorant.

## TRIDENT II

I am writing to you to enclose a donation towards your cause, and to say what a good paper it is. It lets the average workers offshore voice their complaints about safety and pay etc.

I work as a roustabout on the Trident 11 and most of the crews on there agree with the paper and read it regularly. Keep up the good work.

Name withheld by Blowout

## BBC TUNE OUT

I like many other offshore workers, enjoy listening to the radio, during my time off-tower, and especially to the BBC stations.

I am now informed that the BBC Radio Network is planning to move exclusively to VHF/FM broadcasting.

This will mean that the 30,000 plus workers in the North sea oil industry will not be able to enjoy the BBC's excellent standard of broadcasting, once these plans are introduced.

If you care about this, take action now (before it's too late); write to your Member of Parliament, get your trade union to organise a petition, and possibly the OILC could organise some form of protest.

Name withheld

See article on page 8 - Ed

## SAFETY & THE CSA

The changes we're demanding to the health and safety regulations will need government legislation. But there are ways in which workers offshore can strengthen the role of the present safety reps and the safety committees regulations.

At present, without a trade union agreement, the oil companies are at liberty to, and do abuse the regulations without fear of redress.

A Continental Shelf Agreement would give the right to shop stewards and grievance procedures etc, and elected safety representatives would have the strength of the trade unions behind them. A safety rep would then feel confident in carrying out his duties without fear of intimidation and the victimisation that goes on at present.

While improvements to pay and conditions are important, a strong committed safety committee backed up by a strong agreement will give us the opportunity to stay alive and enjoy the benefits of a Continental Shelf Agreement.

A future Labour government is committed to improving the present legislation, but until that is achieved only the trade unions can improve and strengthen the present regulations.

I would urge all offshore workers who haven't yet joined a union or committed themselves to a Continental Shelf Agreement, to consider the safety aspect of such an agreement and act now.

Jim Fleming

## FIGHT ON

As an ordinary punter outside the oil industry, I have received most issues of Blowout through a friend involved in offshore work. My first reaction was horror at the conditions tolerated offshore and at the number of near disasters which happen on the rigs. Through Blowout I've learned a great deal about the oil industry and am impressed with the quality and content of the paper. Great stuff!

In addition I'm impressed with what's happened in the short time that it has existed. You, the workers, are organising to fight for your basic rights - to be treated as human beings in your industry and not something the oil company and contractee bosses have trodden in. These are exiting times in your industry.

I believe the drafting of the continental shelf agreement is a major step towards improving the terms and conditions of all offshore workers. However hard conditions become in the months ahead, keep fighting. After all, if you don't fight for what you deserve who will do it for you?

Good luck and don't let the b\*\*\*\*\* grind you down! Keep reading Blowout even if it's banned by the bosses. It's vital that you all keep yourselves informed of what is really happening, and you'll not get that information in the daily press or on television.  
Sandra McLean

## MOBIL SUBSCRIBE

Please find enclosed a cheque made payable to "Blowout" for £25.00 as payment for subscription and copies of the Blowout newspaper

I would appreciate if you could arrange to have Mobil North Sea Limited added to your current distribution list and copies of the newspaper sent to myself at the above address.  
P.D Sands  
Public Affairs Adviser

## COMPETENT AND CONFIDENT

With regards to Dave Paterson's recent article, "Don't Hang About", I would like to throw some accurate light on abseiling techniques offshore.

We use more safety equipment than your average rock climber, and non that is not of a non-return type, ( that is something which will not move on the ropes unless you want it to.). For example, a descendeur will stop automatically if you let go of the pressure lever. On top of this, as a back up, there is a brake system attached to your rope and back-up rope at all times. So in the event of your hand slipping, for example, you would stop immediately. As for abseiling straight off the end of your rope, this is impossible as we have knots in the end to prevent this.

One of the squad, the team leader/ supervisor, has undergone intensive training in both rescue techniques and safety awareness. After intensive training all trainees are immediately assessed by highly qualified and experienced mountaineers and members of the Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Team.

All our equipment is individually weight and load tested before every job, and the relevant certification is sent on to the platform to be made available to the safety department on each work site. As for working in freezing conditions and gathering darkness, it must be stressed that the team leader, has the last say over anybody on the rig, whether the men go over the side or not. And in all cases common sense prevails.

On each and every job there is an on site rescue system, either winch or pulley, which can be operated by one man. So as any injured party can immediately be pulled to the top, to receive any necessary first aid treatment.

I was personally involved in an emergency once on the West Sole field. I was working in the splash zone. Unbeknown to me there was a D of E exercise being held. The alarms went off and the deluge system was put into operation. I was at my muster point before the fire teams were at the incident.

In the event of an explosion or major fire, I would rather be in my harness a few feet from the water, than stuck in the accommodation or in a module.

With regards to getting an extra 10p an hour. On my present contract my rate is 23% more than my usual rate, and the minimum rate is £1.50 per hour more. Within the company I work for, nobody is "run off", as Mr Patterson puts it, for not abseiling, as there are more than enough people willing to do it. There can be no disputing that abseiling saves the main company, Shell, BP etc a lot of money. But what saves money for one party creates jobs and money for another.

I have been involved in the construction industry for the last eleven years. During that time I have worked from, "cradles", "cherry pickers", "bosun's chairs" and "swingers" (which are two wire loops with a "younger man" board hanging between them.) Needless to say I find abseiling the safest form of access.

So next time you see some one "hanging about", remember that he is both competent and confident. If not he wouldn't be there.

P Sayers

PS Best wishes for the future to Blowout, which as a source of information has been sorely needed offshore.

## COMMENT

WELCOME TO Blowout's World Cup Guide.

We must admit though, that the inspiration for this particular venture came directly from your employers. Yes that's right! From the oil companies and the drilling contractors themselves.

While researching the "leisure facilities" on the North Sea for a future article, we threw in a question about the companies' plans to celebrate this festival of football. Without exception they all said that they were going to do all that they possibly could to ensure that you would be able to participate in this jamboree.

What could we possibly do but try and compliment their efforts in the only way we knew how.

Yes! We do know that you are not all Scotland supporters. In fact when we gave our cover story to be previewed by a Geordie and a Dubliner they were both in complete agreement that the best thing we could do for their respective campaigns was to leave them alone. Very sensitive people.

To mark this international event, Blowout would like to take the opportunity to send greetings to those oil workers around the world who read the paper. Hello to our friends in the oil-fields of Trinidad, Norway, Ireland, Malaysia, and New Zealand, and to oil workers everywhere.

# WORLD CUP ITALIA '90



**If Andy Roxburgh was asked to find a lasting peace formula for the Middle East he would probably find it easier than taking Scotland's World Cup squad to Italy with any chance of success.**

Recent dismal performances against such luminaries as East Germany, Egypt and Poland have only underlined the huge task that faces the national coach.

Roxburgh is bidding to become the first man to lead a Scotland squad into the latter stages of a World Cup final series. He must be wishing though, that God had provided him with a slightly more talented group of players than the honest toilers he currently has at his disposal.

Roxburgh is bidding to become the first man to lead a Scotland squad into the latter stages of a World Cup final series. He must be wishing though, that God had provided him with a slightly more talented group of players than the honest toilers he currently has at his disposal.

Only Paul McStay and Maurice Johnston have the potential to play among Europe's soccer elite without looking out of place. And yet a nagging feeling persists that this squad of ugly ducklings may achieve what was beyond previous, more gifted, Caledonians.

What is in Scotland's favour is that 16 teams from the competing 24 will go through to the second round. In real terms this means that two points will probably be enough to see Scotland through as one of the four best third-placed teams from the six sections.

I would expect then, that if Scotland can defeat Costa Rica in the opening game of their section they can book their new hotel accommodation in the second phase. Until very recently though, it had even been suggested that the hapless Scots would encounter a great deal of difficulty overcoming these humble Latins. Conflicting reports had emerged from South America about their abilities. Roxburgh though, had the chance of assessing these unknowns for himself when the South American minnows played Wales in Cardiff on May 20th. What he saw must have delighted him; it certainly delighted me.

by Joseph McCabe

I have seen each of Scotland's opponents in the four previous World Cup adventures and Costa Rica are by far the worst of any of them. Wales won 1-0 with what was virtually a reserve side.

Willie Ormond, Ally McLeod, Jock Stein and Alex Ferguson were the four men who had previously been charged with the responsibility of taking a Scotland squad into the uncharted territory of the World Cup finals second round. Each of their teams failed narrowly to qualify from their sections.

But there's no doubt that the squads that each of these great managers were in charge of would have found little difficulty qualifying from the section Scotland are currently facing, given the more lax qualifying requirements this time round.

Ex-St. Johnstone boss Willie Ormond must go down in history as the man who achieved most success as Scotland's boss in the World Cup. In 1974 he had the task of steering his side through a group consisting of Brazil, Yugoslavia and the unknown Africans from Zaire. A 2-0 win v Zaire set the Scots up for the sterner tests v the Brazilians and Yugoslavians. If Scotland had lost both these matches no-one would have been too upset. We were all still chuffed with the fact that we had qualified in the first place.

It now seems incredible that Scotland outplayed Brazil on their way to a 0-0 draw and matched the silky smooth Yugoslavians

in their final match before a Joe Jordan goal gave us a 1-1 draw. Four points out of six in our first World Cup finals for 16 years, but all that we achieved was the dubious distinction of being the only side in 1974 who returned from West Germany without a single defeat. That side, consisting of such as Billy Bremner, Joe Jordan, Kenny Dalglish, Danny Mc Grain, David Hay, Jim Holton and Sandy Jardine would have had no problem dealing with the likes of Sweden and Costa Rica in 1990.

If anything, the task facing Ally McLeod's squad in 1978 looked to be the easiest on paper. The no-hoppers of Iran and the old-age pensioners of Peru were all that stood in our way, so the final game of the section v Holland would be meaningless. But a combination of bad preparation, appalling hotel accommodation, internal strife and Willie Johnston's drug-taking exploits - oh yes and a missed penalty v Peru at 1-1 in our opening match - all contributed to Scotland's downfall. Peru went on to win 3-1 and the shattered Scots could manage only a pitiful 1-1 draw v Iran. A heroic 3-2 win v Holland wasn't enough to prevent our exit from another World Cup on goal difference again.

In 1982 Jock Stein's squad also managed a haul of three points from a section that also included Brazil, Russia and New Zealand. Again goal difference was all that separated Scotland from place in the last 12. Highlight of our stay in Spain was a 2-2 draw with Russia after we had dominated the powerful Soviets for long spells of the game. But defensive blunders contributed to the Russians' two goals.

The task facing Alex Ferguson in Mexico four years ago was perhaps the most difficult encountered by a Scotland manager. West Germany, Denmark and Uruguay awaited us, all of whom entertained significant hopes of actually winning the World Cup for goodness sake. Narrow defeats by the Germans and Denmark left Scotland requiring two points against the hard men of Uruguay. Early on though, it seemed that someone was looking benevolently upon us. The Uruguayan assassin Batista was sent off for a shocking tackle on McStay after only a minute. But Scotland couldn't capitalise on their advantage, and a forgettable 0-0 draw was the outcome. Highlight of this campaign was the magical display by Charlie Nicholas against Denmark, before a brutal tackle late in the game ended his World Cup there and then. Low point was Steve Nicol's astonishing miss in front of goal. That would have given the Scots the goal needed to defeat Uruguay.

This year Roxburgh can hardly be blamed if Scotland possesses a mere handful of players who actually display natural gifts. But he has made the most of a bad bunch in getting to Italy at all. The Scotland coach has already kept to his side of the bargain. The preparation that has accompanied Scotland's bid for success has been meticulous. If a Brazilian player has used the toilet without Roxburgh knowing, he probably isn't in the squad. The hotel accommodation Scotland will enjoy in Italy is thought to be the best of any of the competing nations with the exception, perhaps, of Italy themselves.

Roxburgh has also worked hard to foster a superb spirit of camaraderie among his players that's been unsurpassed in the last 16 years. Already he's ensured that none of the off-field problems that have often afflicted previous World Cup campaigns will take place in Italy.

If his players can match even a fraction of Roxburgh's expertise in preparing for this event then a last 16 place is infinitely attainable.



ALLY McCOIST - HAS ALL THE SKILLS



PAUL McSTAY - TRULY WORLD CLASS

# BLOW OUT

a voice for the offshore worker



BRYAN ROBSON AND GARRY LINEKER - POSING FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

# BEST

"Brazil will challenge Italian Favourites - But England must be rated" - Says McEnroe

JOHN McENROE, the best tennis player in the world, is an oddity by North American standards.

He is a fanatical follower of Association Football, soccer if you like. According to most Americans, a sport where you can't carry the ball or strike it with a bat or club isn't a sport at all.

That's why it has taken a century longer than other nations to appreciate the qualities of football. McEnroe has often been exasperated at his countrymen's lack of interest in what he calls, the greatest and most popular game in the world. At least that's what he told Blowout last week when he phoned our offices to wish us all the best with our latest issue.

## YOUR GUIDE TO WORLD CUP VIEWING

### GROUP A

Italy v Austria	X	Rome, June 9th, 9pm
USA v Czechoslovakia	X	Florence, June 10th, 4pm
Italy v USA		Rome, June 14th, 8pm
Austria v Czechoslovakia	O	Florence, June 15th, 4pm
Italy v Czechoslovakia	X	Rome, June 19th, 8pm
Austria v USA		Florence, June 19th, 8pm

### GROUP D

UAE v Colombia		Bologna, June 9th, 8pm
West Germany v Yugoslavia		Milan, June 10th, 8pm
Yugoslavia v Colombia	X	Bologna, June 14th, 8pm
West Germany v UAE	X	Milan, June 15th, 8pm
West Germany v Colombia	O	Milan, June 19th, 4pm
Yugoslavia v UAE		Bologna, June 19th, 4pm

### GROUP B

Argentina v Cameroon		Milan, June 8th, 5pm
USSR v Rumania	O	Bari, June 9th, 4pm
Argentina v USSR	X	Naples, June 13th, 8pm
Cameroon v Rumania		Bari, June 14th, 8pm
Argentina v Rumania	O	Naples, June 18th, 8pm
Cameroon v USSR		Bari, June 18th, 8pm

### GROUP E

Belgium v South Korea	X	Verona, June 12th, 4pm
Uruguay v Spain	O	Udine, June 13th, 4pm
Belgium v Uruguay		Verona, June 17th, 8pm
South Korea v Spain		Udine, June 17th, 8pm
Belgium v Spain	X	Verona, June 21st, 4pm
South Korea v Uruguay		Udine, June 21st, 4pm

### GROUP C

Brazil v Sweden	O	Turin, June 10th, 8pm
Costa Rica v Scotland	X	Genoa, June 11th, 4pm
Brazil v Costa Rica	X	Turin, June 16th, 4pm
Sweden v Scotland	O	Genoa, June 16th, 8pm
Brazil v Scotland	X	Turin, June 20th, 8pm
Sweden v Costa Rica		Genoa, June 20th, 8pm

### GROUP F

England v Rep. of Ireland	X	Cagliari, June 11th, 8pm
Netherlands v Egypt	O	Palermo, June 12th, 8pm
England v Netherlands		Cagliari, June 16th, 8pm
Rep. of Ireland v Egypt	X	Palermo, June 17th, 4pm
England v Egypt	O	Cagliari, June 21st, 8pm
Rep of Ireland v Netherlands		Palermo, June 21st, 8pm

GAMES TO be shown on ITV are shown above marked by X. Those being shown by BBC are marked O. This can only be a rough guide so if missing any specific game will ruin your World Cup then double check these times.

Second round games will be played at the following times : Naples, June 23, 4pm.

Bari, June 23, 8pm. Turin, June 24, 4pm. Milan, June 24, 8pm. Genoa, June 25, 4pm. Rome, June 25, 8pm. Verona, June 26, 4pm. Bologna, June 26, 8pm.

Quarter Finals will be played : Florence, June 30, 4pm. Rome, June 30, 8pm. Milan, July 1, 4pm. Naples, July 4, 8pm.

Semi Finals : Naples, July 3, 7pm. Turin, July 4, 7pm. The game for third place will be played : Bari, July 7, 7pm.

**WORLD CUP FINAL**  
**ROME JULY 8 1990 7PM.**

So the great American tennis player will be one of the watching billions as the World Cup unfolds before us for a month between June 8th and July 8th. It's been estimated that the viewing figures for the entire World Cup will exceed the equivalent of the world's population x 2.

Most people know that the inaugural World Cup competition took place in 1930 in Argentina. But it wasn't until after the 1970 finals in Mexico that the competition could lay claim to the title of The Greatest Sporting Event in the World. That was the year when Brazil defeated Italy 4-1 in a glorious final in Mexico's magnificent Azteca stadium. It was also the year when Pele was finally confirmed as the greatest player in the world.

The Brazilians that year, played a brand of football that raised the sport to an art form. But it's also generally accepted that no World Cup finals series since then has ever come near to equaling the quality of football that was on display throughout the 1970 Mexico competition.

In 1974 the Dutch, led by Johann Cruyff, did their best. But by then European football had embarked on a downward spiral into general mediocrity, while South American football was at it's lowest ebb for decades. Eventually the pedantic Germans carried off the cup on their home territory. The 1978 competition in Argentina was an improvement. It was impossible though, to enjoy the spectacle to the full because there was always that nagging doubt that the Fascist regime of General Galtieri was using the whole affair as a public relations exercise. At least the triumphant Argentinians, inspired by the wonderful Mario Kempes, were an exciting and skilful team to watch and deserved to win the trophy.

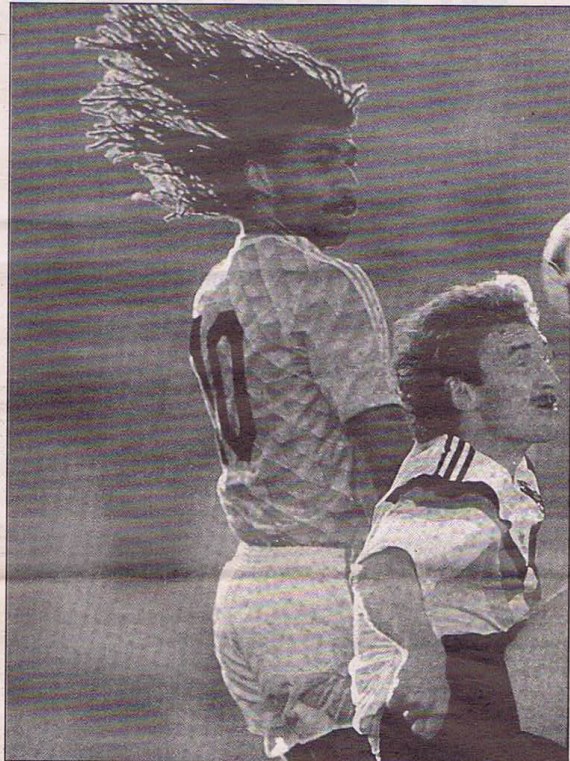
The 1982 finals in Spain maintained the quality shown in Argentina without approaching the magic displayed in Mexico, 1970. Brazil and France excelled, but their commitment to attacking football earned scant reward and both succumbed to the more cynical Germans and Italians. Italy though, had at least made an effort to throw off the cloak of defensive football, which had shrouded their game for so long, and inspired by top scorer Paulo Rossi, easily defeated West Germany 3-1 in the final.

Mexico in 1986 was saved as a spectacle by Argentina, and in particular Diego Maradona. It had become clear that no European sides were capable of playing football of sufficient quality to actually win the World Cup. But Maradona made up for that with some of the most stunning goals ever seen together in a single finals series. Personally, I thought the best of the lot was

# OF THE REST



MARADONA TORMENTING HALF THE BELGIAN TEAM



RUDI GULLIT - HE GIVES HOLLAND A CHANCE

the "Hand of God" goal that helped defeat England in the quarter final.

Argentina's 3-2 win over West Germany in the final means the South Americans will kick off this summer's Italian extravaganza with an intriguing tie against the Camerouns. Potentially, the 1990 World Cup can be the best since Mexico 20 years ago. Italy will start as favourites, playing in front of their own passionate fans. The Italians, under the tutelage of Azeglio Vicini, have assembled one of their most exciting teams in years. With players like Gianluca Vialli in attack alongside the world's most expensive player - Juventus' splendid striker Baggio - and Di Napoli in midfield they will be formidable. That little lot will be backed up by the world's greatest defender, Franco Baresi, captain of A.C. Milan.

Italy's greatest challenge could come from Brazil, who have added some much-needed tactical awareness to their outrageous natural ability. They also have the added bonus of possessing several players who have been plying their trade in the Italian league recently, among them Careca and Alemão of Napoli and Fiorentina's Dunga. Much will depend on PSV Eindhoven's brilliant little striker Romario, who tragically suffered a broken leg a few months ago while playing in the Dutch league. All the indications are though, that he will be fit for these finals. Because of this my money is on Brazil to take the World Cup back to Rio for the fourth time.

As ever, West Germany will pose a significant threat. They are never classed as bookies favourites before any finals, and are always ranked alongside England as the side

everyone wants to see beaten. But sheer industry, professionalism and arrogance, often see the Germans through against technically better sides. Striker Jurgen Klinsmann will do well and may finish as the Germans' personality player. He has just enjoyed a very successful first season in Italian football with Inter Milan, and along with Allofs, Brehme, Augenthaler and Lothar Matthaus, will ensure the Federal Republic qualify for the semis at least.

Argentina will also be there or thereabouts. Diego Maradona is playing even better now, if that is possible, than he did four years ago. No matter how badly his team are playing, Maradona is capable of dragging them along by the heels to victory by pure genius alone. Barruchaga is still there from Mexico 1986, and team boss Carlos Balardo has taken the unusual step of recalling the magnificent Jorge Valdano from premature injury retirement to help the cause. My friend is going out with a gorgeous Argentinian dame right now and she says Argentina will triumph. In deference to her and to keep alive any hopes I might have of nipping in there while the mate is on the field, I can't really disagree. There's also this Italian waitress down at the cafe....

Whether you like it or not, England are my favourite outside bet for World Cup glory. Much was written about their European championship failure two years ago but Robson's men were not as bad as many thought, and gave Holland the fright of their lives before defensive errors gave Gullit & Co the verdict. Captain Bryan Robson is one of the top ten players in the world in terms of value to his team, and they

will have to nail him to the ground before he ever conceded defeat to anyone. The prodigious Gary Lineker is poised to become the World Cup's top scorer again, as he was in Mexico four years ago. Liverpool winger John Barnes must now begin to show the world that he can play as well for England as he does for Liverpool. If he does, England are quite capable of making the last four. Chris Waddle's undoubted skills have been refined even further by playing for French champions Marseilles. He can also make a mark this summer. It's in defence though, that England's problems lie. The Rangers duo of Terry Butcher and Gary Stevens are particularly vulnerable, and manager Robson may have to look at this situation closely before deciding on a settled formation.

Holland are everyone's favourite other team, and can be a joy to behold at the top of their form. Their European championship success may have been the peak of their collective talents, and I feel they will find it difficult to reach the same level of brilliance in Italy. Despite Gullit's awesome skills, even he will find it difficult to recapture his best form after such a long absence from injury. His A.C. Milan team mate, Marco Van Basten remains the most gifted and graceful striker in world football, and his finishing power could ensure that the Dutch reach the last eight at least.

It's virtually impossible to see the eventual winners coming from outside these top six sides. Spain, Russia, Belgium, Uruguay and Yugoslavia will provide excellent entertainment but none possesses the same pool strength and big occasion players of such as Italy, Brazil, Argentina,

West Germany, England and Holland.

If pressed I might include Yugoslavia alongside England and Holland as having a slight chance of winning. Much of that though, is down to the fact that they have arguably the most gifted midfielder in Europe appearing for them, the incomparable Dragan Stojkovic, recently transferred from red Star Belgrade to Marseilles for £3 Million.

Roumania are not a bad side, but the effect of that country's bloody revolution and continuing political problems will have had an effect on the national side. Czechoslovakia will also need to be watched but their present squad are still struggling to match the ability of the outfit that lifted the 1976 European Championship.

Scotland? I feel the best that our men, with such a mediocre squad can achieve, is a place in the last eight. To do that they would need to finish second in their section. If they can manage that then they would, almost certainly face either Austria or Czechoslovakia in the second round, both of whom are beatable by such as ourselves.

Jack Charlton's Republic of Ireland squad have been riding on the crest of a wave after their special achievements in the European Championships, and in qualifying for the World Cup. I have a suspicion though, that the Eire bubble could finally burst in Italy. I honestly can't see them getting past the sectional stage. I do hope they prove me wrong.

Of the so-called no-hopers of the Middle and Far East, keep an eye on Egypt's performances. They showed in their 3-1 win against Scotland recently that they will give away little in terms of skill to anyone.

# SCOTLAND'S WORLD CUP HOPEFULS

**MUCH HAS** been written about the 22 Scots chosen by Andy Roxburgh to pursue dreams of World Cup glory in sunny Italia this summer.

You can almost feel the frustration of our national football writers as they try to write nice things about our boys.

They would have an easier task trying to convince Ravenscraig workers that it would be in their best interests to vote Conservative, than trying to tell us that the Scottish players are worthy of the many lines of brown-nosed gibberish that's written about them every week.

In this issue, BLOWOUT will try to redress the balance by telling you how our national 22 really rate as players.

## GOALKEEPERS:

**Jim Leighton.** Jim is the living proof that when good Scots goalkeepers play in England they become useless. He was undoubtedly one of Scotland's greatest ever stickmen during years of superb performances for Aberdeen. Two years ago he followed his mentor Fergie to Manchester Utd - a move that has cost him his position as Scotland's number one. He has had a disastrous season for United, culminating in him being dropped for the English Cup Final replay, after his shocking performance in the first game gifted Crystal Palace two goals in a 3-3 draw.

**Andy Goram.** A series of sound displays in the midst of a shaky Hibs defence this season, has seen him catapulted to the verge of World Cup glory, following Jim Leighton's sad demise. Rangers want him to become their player after the World Cup, which will upset Hibs' besieged boss Alex Miller. Even more upset though, will be the owners of Edinburgh's wine bars and discos for whom the sight of the big carefree keeper can mean the difference between profit and loss each week.

**Bryan Gunn.** The only reason he's in the squad is to keep Andy Goram company off the park. The blond Norwich playboy showed us all what he was incapable of with a generous display against Egypt recently. Watching him in action brought memories flooding back of Stewart Kennedy's Wembley performance in 1975. Gunn's Scotland career should be just as short as the hapless ex-Rangers keeper's.

## DEFENDERS:

**Maurice Malpas.** The Dundee Utd full back has a business degree from college and he is in the squad so that he can negotiate his colleagues' appearance money. (I almost said win bonus, ha! ha!). Maurice thoroughly deserves his title of king of the back-passers. No part of the playing field is ever considered too remote from his goal mouth for the tangerine defender to attempt one of his famous back passes. A very popular player among the Scottish press corps after he urged his Dundee Utd team mates not to talk to them in response to criticism of another boring Tannadice display in a draw against Hibs.

**Richard Gough.** Has an unfortunate background in that he is white and was brought up in South Africa, but he is undoubtedly one of the best players in the squad at either right back or central defence. Don't be surprised if he is no longer playing for Rangers next season. He has already stated a desire to leave Ibrox and has been linked with a number of English clubs. And Lady Patricia Fraser among others.

**Stewart McKimmie.** Aberdeen's useful right back guaranteed his selection for the World Cup by scoring a good goal against Argentina in a warm up game. The adulation

**Blowout takes a jaunciced look at the strengths and weaknesses of the men Andy Roxburgh has chosen to ruin the Summer of 1990**

that greeted that goal should have been tempered by the knowledge that it was the ex-Dundee defender's first senior goal in five years - a record that will obviously fill the respective goalkeepers of Brazil and Sweden with fear.

**Alex McLeish.** It's difficult not to be nice to big 'eck. He's been outstanding for the Dons during the past 13 years. Showed that he can also play without holding Willie Miller's hand, with his brilliant performances this season during Miller's injury absence. Deservedly won the football writers' player of the year award, and should be awarded it again next year for his superb acceptance speech at the awards ceremony.

**Roy Aitken.** Despite what Gerry McNeen says, I think Roy should never be away from the Scotland team while he is fit. Oh I know he isn't the most skilful player around, but when he's in the team no-one will mess us around. Rumours that he was responsible for Gordon Strachan's absence from the squad are entirely unfounded.

**David McPherson.** One of the peripheral players in Roxburgh's squad after three brilliant seasons at Hearts. Not a bad big player but has a tendency to imitate a polaris submarine when any opponent attempts to tackle him - a habit picked up, no doubt, from his days at Ibrox.

**Craig Levein.** Craig's inclusion in the squad should be an inspiration to the unfortunate Ian Durrant who is presently recovering from a similar injury to the one that kept the Hearts player out of the game for over a year. One of Scotland's best defenders in that his pants don't turn brown whenever the ball arrives at his feet.

**Gary Gillespie.** No doubting the Liverpool player's ability. Perhaps though, he'll have shrugged off his daft tendency to score crucial OGs before the finals actually start. It's been said that he has only ever had to wear one Scotland strip during his career because it never gets dirty. Blowout just doesn't know where these scurrilous reports come from.

## MIDFIELD:

**Paul McStay.** Paul is simply a genius, and that's about the long and the short of it. Like most geniuses though, he is often misunderstood. Because of his outrageous ability he tends to get the blame whenever Scotland play badly, as if he should somehow be able to make up for the deficiencies of those around him. Playing for Celtic should have made him used to that by now, in my opinion. If he has a good World Cup, expect a queue of shady continentals lining up with bulging cheque-books at Celtic Park. Expect also, a queue of shady Celtic directors falling over themselves to be rid of him in exchange for a fat cheque that would be better spent on four or five players like Tommy Coyne and Mike Galloway.



**ALEX MCLEISH - A GREAT AFTER DINNER SPEAKER AS WELL**

**Murdo Macleod.** The most surprised person at his inclusion in the squad, apart from me, must be Murdo himself. The fact that he will be one of Roxburgh's first choice midfielders, demonstrates the lack of real ability at the national coach's disposal. Don't get me wrong, Murdo has done marvellously for himself since exchanging life in the Parkhead rowing boat for a berth in the luxury liner of Borussia Dortmund in the German Bundesliga. Is he true international class though? No! So he should find himself quite at home in the Scotland squad.

**Jim Bett.** Along with McStay, Johnston and Gough, the Aberdeen player has the ability to make a name for himself in the World Cup. "Jazzzer" is what he's called by his team mates, so let's hope he can "jazz up" Scotland's midfield in Italy, as the Daily Record would say. You Bett he will, as the Daily Record would also say (That's enough Daily Record - Ed)

**John Collins.** The gifted Hibs player should have established himself in the full Scotland squad before now, but that's what playing for Hibs does for you. Blowout will make a prediction right here and now: John Collins will be a Celtic player by the time you read this. If he isn't he'll be a Rangers player, and if not that either, he will still be considering his future. So there. This is the newspaper that doesn't sit on the fence.

**Gary McAllister.** I honestly can't see what all the fuss about this player is. Obviously he can play a bit. But having distinguished himself at Motherwell before transferring to the heights of the English second division relegation zone with Leicester, he still has a lot more to do to prove himself worthy of international recognition. Has looked overawed any time he's played for Scotland. It's a tragedy that a player like this is going to Italy while St. Charlie Nicholas sits in a BBC studio commenting.

**Alan McInally.** The Everton player came to prominence by scoring two goals against Liverpool in the 1989 English Cup final. Since then he hasn't looked back, as they say. One of the few new players to have distinguished himself in a Scotland jersey.

## STRIKERS

**Maurice Johnston.** "Supermo" as he's known because Mo is short for Maurice and he is occasionally super. Le Petit Merde as he's known affectionately by Celtic fans after he made Judas

seem like St. Peter with his defection to Rang after appearing to have re-joined Celtic at beginning of last season. Whether you love him or hate him he remains an absolute magnificent striker, who is capable of winning games with great goals against any opposition.

**Ally McColist.** Maurice's sickkick at Ibrox with half of his ability, although still a g player. Only managed to score two goals Rangers between January and May this season which doesn't augur well for Scotland. He is Rangers' top scorer for the last five seasons, I've a feeling he could make a telling contribution in Italy. Graeme Souness wants to get rid of him from Ibrox because he's the only Rangers player who can get the better of his boss when it comes to verbal sparring. There are rumours that Celtic could make an audacious swoop for him, but paper doesn't deal in half truths.

**Gordon Durie.** Another player who shouldn't be anywhere near the Scotland squad unless in a luggage-carrying capacity. Performed reasonably for Chelsea in the English league because he is big and hard enough to on the end of those interminable crosses the so fond of in England. An artless and talentless player who once scored a Yugoslavia, on the strength of which he seems have found his way into the squad.

**Davie Cooper.** One of the best wingers Scotland on his day, which occurred sometime September 1983. A sustained press campaign in the West of Scotland media, after he had played well against Celtic, secured his inclusion in team that faced Egypt. Let's face it anyone play well against Celtic these days. I think fact that a 34 year old Motherwell player, past his best, can force his way into the squad weeks before the Finals, proves what a weak we have.

**Alan McInally.** The best thing about McInally is that somehow, he managed to those nasty Germans at Bayern Munich paying over £1 million to Aston Villa for signature. Celtic were laughing when I managed to get £275,000 from Aston Villa him. But he had one reasonable season in English first division with Villa. Now Bay want rid of him. Any takers? Andy Roxburgh seems.



# CHINOOK



NEITHER BRITISH AIRWAYS OR BIH COULD OFER BLOWOUT A PHOTOGRAPH OF A CHINOOK. BIH INSIST THAT THEY DON'T HAVE A PHOTO OF ONE IN BIH LIVERY. BA SAYTHEY DON'T OPERATE THEM ANYMORE. BIH PROVIDED THIS PHOTO OF THE SIKORSKY 6IN THE UNRIVALLED WORK HORSE OF THE NORTH SEA.

Incredibly the gearbox part that disintegrated on the Chinook that crashed could have been fitted with an "all-in-one" military version but financial costs were "PROHIBITIVE".

After the tragedy, Shell took an inordinate length of time to decide whether to continue to use the aircraft or not. But after oil production was threatened by the workforce on the platforms, management onshore were forced to give way to workforce demands against the Chinook's return. Shell's PR posture, parroted ad nauseam in the media, was of the benevolent father looking after his children. But reality was that the captive passengers (and their families) had won a small victory over this multi-national.

That terrible day in November eventually ended the Chinook's service in the British Sector of the North Sea, and despite continued sales approaches from their owners BIH to recommence services, they were forced to eventually sell off the remnants of their fleet to an American logging company in 1989.

## STILL WAITING

THE FAMILY of one of the Chinook disaster victims has recently accepted an out of court settlement from Boeing. This brings home the unpalatable fact that over three and a half years after the world's worst helicopter accident, those responsible are still denying the families the right to get on with the rest of their lives.

Helicopter transport is statistically 50 times more likely to have an accident than other types of aircraft, and in the North Sea special precautions are taken by way of survival clothing and evacuation techniques. Indeed the passengers on a North Sea chartered helicopter are required by certification to have undergone a specific helicopter survival course and the helicopters carry, as a legal pre-requisite for operation, additional de-icing and navigational aids.

The bulk of the Chinook cases are at present proceeding through the courts in Philadelphia USA, and, according to legal sources are at the stage of "pre-trial conference". Counsel for the families are said to be, "very confident of success."

One of the most obvious lessons for all oil workers is that you cannot assume just because you work in the dangerous environment of the North Sea, that your life and limbs have been assured by your employers. And even if they have, policies worth £5,000 or even £25,000 are useless. £200,000 is more like it. You have a duty to yourself and your family to find out what your cover is, and do something about it.

The Continental Shelf Agreement must specify the level of life insurance cover that must be provided by the employers. And that cover must be for all workers irrespective of grade or employer.

A North Sea's helicopter's passengers are unlike their fare-paying counterparts on the commercial airlines on two accounts. They are far more technically aware of the safety parameters of their aircraft and as captive passengers on a chartered aircraft they are limited in expressing their complaints.

### Helicopter Operator

British Airways Helicopters  
Boeing Vertol (demonstration)  
Helikopter A/S Norway  
Taiwanese Army  
Arco Alaska

Total

### Total worldwide numbers of BV - 234LR aircraft built at Boeing Vertol

6 (losses over 30%)  
1  
3  
3 (BV234MLR)  
2 (BV234ER)

15

## A QUIZ

compiled by  
Martin Hind

- (1) In which Shakespeare play do we get the song, "Who is sylvia"?
- (2) What is the chemical element found in all proteins?
- (3) After Kruschev fell, which two men shared power in the USSR for a while?
- (4) What does the acronym LASER stand for?
- (5) Which three knights of The Arthurian legend achieved the Holy Grail?
- (6) What is mrzipan made of?
- (7) Why was the Scottish Cup not awarded for the season 1908-9?
- (8) Which country administers the territory known as the Ross Dependency?
- (9) A famous allegory was written in Bedford jail in 1675. What was its title?
- (10) Which pop singer appeared at the Old Vic in 1960 in Oliver Goldsmith's play - "She Stoops To Conquer"?
- (11) Who was Scotland's first ever "footballer of the year", and in what year?
- (12) When the British pop charts were created in 1952, who was the first person to reach number one?
- (13) Which pop star appeared as an extra in "The Virgin Soldiers"?
- (14) What is the longest river in Western Europe?
- (15) What are the six categories of the Nobel Prize?
- (16) What popular device did J Bardeen, W Shockley and W Brattain invent in 1947?
- (17) What is the unit of currency in a) Egypt, b) Israel, and c) Cyprus?
- (18) What is the noun of assembly for a) finches, b) larks, and c) starlings?
- (19) Which two companies, besides BP and Esso, produce Ethylene in the UK?
- (20) At what stage in oil refining is Paraffin Wax produced?
- (21) Who is reputed to have said, "Trust in God but keep your powder dry"?
- (22) Name the parents of John the Baptist?
- (23) Why would an MP apply for stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds?
- (24) The "Trinidad", "San Antonio", "Concepcion Vittoria" and "Santiago" made up the fleet of which explorer in 1519?
- (25) What was Britain's "oilgate" scandal?
- (26) If you landed at the following airports, in which cities would you be? a) Schwechart, b) Vantaa, c) Barajas, d) Logan, e) O'Hare, f) Nantia.
- (27) What would you have if you suffered from a) nosophobia, b) algophobia, c) ergophobia?
- (28) Who were the leading males in a) "Against All Odds"-1984, b) "Reds"-1981, c) "Mississippi Burning"-1989, and the leading females in, d) "Cal"-1984, e) "An Officer and a Gentleman"-1982, f) "China Syndrome"-1979?
- (29) Of the nine known planets, which are the only two that don't have satellites?
- (30) When was the last season in Scottish League Football that the Old Firm failed to win a single trophy? Who won, b) the league that season, c) the Scottish Cup, and d) the League Cup?

Answers on Page 7

# SAFETY TRAINING UNDER SCRUTINY

TRAINING for safety reps has come under close scrutiny by offshore workers since the new safety legislation was implemented last year. A constant stream of complaints have been received by Aberdeen's Offshore Information Centre.

These have centred on the election and operation of some of the committees and the lack of choice about training.

It seems however that we're not the only people to be unhappy with the way the whole thing is being handled.

Even the Department of Energy, widely recognised in the industry as the oil companies' tame dog, has been of late forced into bearing its tooth.

A circular from the D of E's Director of Safety, Jim Petrie to the operators on the continental shelf, has found its way onto Blowout's desk. And it's a stormer.

The whole tone of the letter is one of extreme irritation. It seems that despite allowing the oil companies to operate for years, unencumbered with the safety legislation applicable onshore, and then imposing it in a watered down version that does not stipulate a role for the trade unions, this was still not enough for them.

.....it has already come to the attention of the Department that some operators are not adhering to at least the spirit of these regulations with respect to the training of safety representatives", intones Mr Petrie. He continues, "It seems that some companies are insisting that safety representatives employed by contractors must attend courses organised on a company basis at specified training centres for which they will pay and allow time off. However they are not prepared to allow time off or pay for attendance at any other centres chosen by the safety representative. No consultation with the employees of the contractors or the safety committees involved appears to have taken place before the adoption of these policies."

Well! Well! We at Blowout are flabbergasted. But there's more. Listen to Mr Petrie on the question of oil company intimidation of safety representatives.


"Additionally, incidents have been reported to inspectors in which safety representatives who have raised matters of safety on their training course have returned to their installation to find that an OIM on the course with them has reported back to their OIM that they have been 'causing trouble'. Such an approach, if substantiated, would be a matter of grave concern to the Department. It would work against the purpose of the regulations. It may even be construed as a form of intimidation."

## AROUND THE OILFIELDS

### - OCCIDENTAL SANITIZED

A MESSAGE from "Europe's Largest Safety Organisation, specialising in: Agricultural, Home, Leisure, Occupational, Road and Water Safety and Safety Education, in conjunction with Kimberly-Clark Ltd.

"Safety conscious Occidental Petroleum Caledonia has earned a special pat on the back by Britain's Health and Safety watch-dog RoSPA and washroom product manufacturer Kimberly-Clark.



**TRAINING FOR SAFETY**

SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS  
GENERAL COUNCIL

A Residential Course at  
Treesbank House  
Kilmarnock

From Monday 6  
to Friday 10 August

**PARTNERS AND CHILDREN WELCOME**

For more information contact  
Ian Miller STUC Education Officer  
16 Woodlands Terrace Glasgow G3  
Telephone (041) 332 4946

Indeed Mr Petrie. It's business as usual as safety remains firmly in the hands of those who gave us Piper Alpha, Ocean Odyssey, the NW Hutton underground blowout, the Montrose near miss and the Brent fire pumps. But perhaps the most telling part of the whole letter is his opening sentence.

"As you will no doubt recall, the above Regulations came into force on 18 September 1989."

Yes Mr Petrie! They indeed may have forgotten about the legislation. We however haven't forgotten July 6 1988 and the 167 deaths that provoked the outrage that forced the government to legislate in the first place - late and toothless as it is turning out to be.

Responsibility for safety must be put in the hands of those people who stand to lose their lives when it fails.

The company based in Aberdeen, has been given a silver award for making the working environment safer for employees in the latest round of annual awards set up in 1967."

It goes on and on. Now Kimberly Clark, shitehouse cleaners, have probably cleaned up some pretty awful messes in their time, but they've got a real challenge on their hands if they're trying to clean up Occidental's safety record.

### -SIBERIA

An excellent report in May 23 Guardian from Jonathan Steele documents the conditions endured by Siberian oil workers. Writing from Nefteyugansk he details the growing consciousness and confidence of these workers.

He quotes one union member as saying, "If the centre uses your product to put pressure on Lithuania, what stops us from doing the same to the centre."

## UNIONS CHALLENGE S.C.O.T.A.

IT LOOKS LIKE the unions are beginning to get their act together on the question of safety training. After cancelling a series of courses, due to take place in April and May, Ian Miller the STUC education officer recently announced a new initiative.

The five day course is not a "top up" course to supplement the employers courses being run by SCOTA and various other bodies, but an alternative. It offers fully comprehensive training for safety representatives under "The Offshore Installations (Safety Representatives and Safety Committees) Regulations 1989, and will cover the full gamut of offshore safety aspects.

The cost to the employers to send reps is £200, and safety committees are invited to consider recommending to the employers that they use this course. But significantly the course is open also to other workers in the industry who may not at this time be accredited safety reps but who see the value in safety training. Towards catering for these people, a number of scholarships are available, paid for by both the STUC and the individual offshore unions. Workers interested in these are advised to contact the STUC or their own union.

Most significantly, and most welcome from Blowout's point of view, is that partners and children are also welcome. In fact a whole package is planned to make the week as attractive as possible to families who are split for over half the year as it is. This is an important first in our industry.

"THE DEPARTMENT of Energy, as stated in our Guidance Notes to the Regulations, takes the view that companies should not rely exclusively on company run courses unless any such courses includes input independent of the company on the representational rule of the safety representative."

JR Petrie, Director of Safety, Department of Energy.

### - BBC TUNE OUT

PROMPTED by a letter, Blowout recently contacted the BBC's engineers. Yes it is true that this year Radio 2 will go to being transmitted on FM only. In the near future Radios 1 and 3 will go over exclusively to FM leaving only Radio Scotland and the new Radio 5 (education and sport) on the medium wave.

The reason is it seems so that the medium wave "resource" can be sold off by government to commercial radio.

Yes it is likely that workers on the North Sea will find it much more difficult if possible at all to pick up these stations. Forty miles is a good range for FM though it varies with terrain and weather.

No nobody bothered to take oil workers into consideration as far as we know.

Maybe we should take this up with the government. On the other hand maybe we should look into the idea of a radio station to serve offshore oil workers.

GOING FOR A NEW JOB?  
NEED A NEW CV - OR THE OLD  
ONE UPDATED?

### THE WORD PROCESS (co-operative)

GRANITEHILL ENTERPRISE CENTRE  
GRANITEHILL ROAD ABERDEEN  
Telephone: (0224) 698 545

POST US THE DETAILS OR  
CALL IN IN PERSON

### - EIDER SMEAR

DESPITE the scuppering of Occidental's sabotage smear against the workforce on the Claymore, Ian Morrison OIM on the Eider is not convinced that he hasn't got a saboteur on board.

In a communication to, "All platform personnel" and dated May 14 he says,

"Two instances had occurred recently, where sets of bolts had disappeared just prior to their use.

Yesterday a fusible link disappeared from a fire damper which was being repaired.

All these incidents could possibly be explained by accidental or inadvertent dumping or wrongful use, and I would prefer that this was indeed the case. However if not, the implications are disturbing and disappointing and obviously extremely serious."

He goes on to threaten to bring in Shell security to investigate and then urges everyone to be careful so as not to inadvertently dump anything. His final paragraph goes,

"If anyone can shed any light on the missing bolts and fusible link, such that we can hopefully eliminate any form of sabotage or malicious intent, I'd be very grateful, and I'm sure we would all be happier"

If in the future, any offshore worker finds himself confronted by a document or statement and wonders whether it is a smear or not, then he should use this document as a template to compare it. If your document has any of the elements of this document then it is indeed a smear, and should be exposed as such.

### - SABOTAGE

MAINTAINANCE foremen throughout the continental shelf believe they may be facing a mass outbreak of sabotage. Seemingly long handled scrubbing brushes, squeegees and paint brushes are disappearing at an alarming rate and have been for the last 25 years. Investigations are to continue.

### - PRESS URE

PRESS OFFSHORE employees on the Cormorant Alpha have registered a grievance under the Terms and Conditions imposed unilaterally by Press on the first of April this year. To cut a long story short they want a Continental Shelf Agreement.

Mr W Murray, Manpower Services Manager for Press has written a reply. In it he says amongst other things,

"Press Offshore have no wish to restrict access to procedural arrangements but must reiterate that all personnel are deemed to have accepted their contracts in entirety.

To this extent, we feel that the present registration of a grievance is premature, and could lead to exhaustion of procedure before the full benefits of the present improvements in wages, benefits and conditions can be appreciated by the workforce"

What arrogance. It's not a mile from AOCI boss David Odling's assertion that, "the majority of employees are well satisfied with their new terms and conditions of employment". It's just that bit more cunningly written.

We'll see!

Continued on Page 8

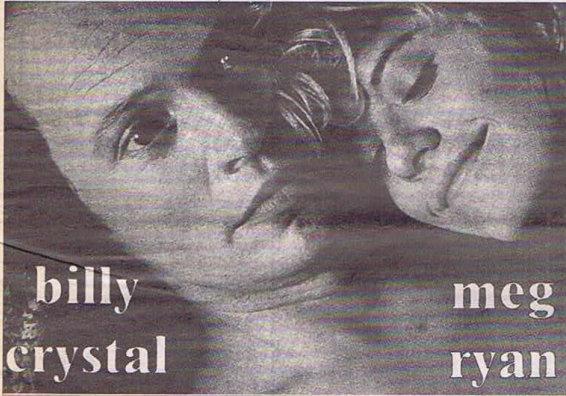
## REVIEWS.....

## VIDEO.....

**"When Harry Met Sally"**  
Directed by Rob Reiner.  
Starring Billy Crystal  
and Meg Ryan.

**"The Abyss"**  
Directed by James Cameron.  
Starring Ed Harris,  
Mary Elizabeth  
Mastrantonio  
and Michael Biehn.

Reviewed by  
George Whittaker



IF YOU'RE a Boom Baby like me you may be tempted to don a pair of shades and sneak out the latest Andy Pandy and Bill and Ben compilations - it could prove a wise move, after all, than attempting to sit through anything that sounds as bad as Mystic Pizza or Return of the Swamp Thing. Then again, you could do worse than try Eight Men Out, the story of the "throwing" of the 1919 baseball World Series by the Chicago White Sox although you probably need to know something about the game to enjoy the film properly, especially since it lasts all of two hours. You'll be on safer ground with When Harry Met Sally, a watchable and intermittently amusing tale that follows the fortunes of a couple of smart New Yorkers as their paths cross and re-cross over a period of ten years. They first meet as students in the late seventies and although they bitch at each other from the word go it's clear

he'd take her to bed at the drop of a hat. She's having none of it though, and they part. He marries, she nearly does, he divorces, she splits from her partner, he dumps women by the dozen, and all the time they're bumping into each other, phoning each other up and expending a lot of hot air on the importance of being good friends and nothing more.

On the way there are some funny moments and the occasional funny one-liner but the film is an unashamed rip-off of Woody Allen's New York comedies, right down to the moody walks in the park, the black and white titles and the Gershwin sound-track. But while the Allan persona may be paranoid about sex, he has plenty to say about sundry other matters like books, movies, parents, God, religion, death and the like. Here on the other hand the characters are defined entirely by their love lives, as if the most significant problem in human affairs was finding the right partner to lock loins with. Looked at less critically it's an easy and undemanding piece of semi-serious light-heartedness but I still contrived and irritatingly smug.

Many films, from We Dive at Dawn through Run Silent Run Deep, to more recently, the much acclaimed Das Boot have sought to make drama out of underwater crises but James Cameron's \$50 million, two-years-in-the-making The Abyss blasts everything else out of contention, and this despite the fact that its final thirty-odd minutes are as duff as its first hundred are magnificent.

An American nuclear sub gets mysteriously knocked off course and crashes into an underwater

ledge, a potentially devastating state of affairs that prompts the navy to save precious time by sending down a group of oil engineers from a nearby submarine rig to investigate, even though Lindsey (Mastrantonio), who designed the rig is furious that Bud Brigman (Harris), the crew leader and her estranged husband, should be side-tracked so easily from their own important business. She soon changes her mind, however, once she discovers that there's more down there than floating corpses and a dangerous wreck: the swirling, magical lights she encounters betoken, she insists, nothing less than other-worldly presences, a notion that not surprisingly is given short shrift by the wisecracking, no-mess'n' crew in general and in particular by Lieutenant Coffey (Biehn), a moody, half-mad bastard who decides that the lights are unmistakable evidence of Soviet snoopers. His secret intention is to blow them to bits with the nuclear warhead he's salvaged from the dumped sub.

Not the most plausible of stories perhaps, but what's on screen, for the first hour and fifty minutes or so anyway, is simply the most convincing evocation of sub-aquatic claustrophobia and terror yet created for the cinema. Even before the action proper begins the clanking machinery, chrome poles, dials, bleeps pings and flashing console lights - all part of the fun of any submarine film - look and sound flawlessly real, but once things go wrong and the metal starts to rip, the film soars into a league of its own, creating the consequent chaos and panic with an authenticity that is without parallel. When the sea begins to pour in, for instance what you get isn't hoses being sprayed through holes;

it's horizontal waterfalls that flatten the actors like neopins. Nothing looks faked: in one scene a crew member, desperately flapping through the rising water in order to avoid the rig's unmanned and out-of-control reconnaissance vehicle, dives back into its path to rescue his pet rat and misses being crushed literally by inches; in another, Brigman is trapped behind a jammed door with sea water gurgling up to his lip. When the door is prised open he shoots out amidst the froth like a ping-pong ball.

Given the obvious length that Cameron went to in order to make everything appear so real, it's all the more surprising that his judgement should have deserted him so completely in the film's last half hour. These scenes, where Brigman dives to the ocean floor to recover the warhead and finally meets up with the aliens, are simply an embarrassment. Borrowing liberally from both ET and Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Cameron nevertheless succeeds only in making his extra-terrestrial come over as a cross between Jimmy Cricket and one of the Glitter band. Hardly less off-putting are the miraculous returns from the dead, the tears of relief and the cranked-up sense of bonhomie and good will. Don't be put off though: even with its flaws The Abyss is unbeatable entertainment that you simply musn't miss.

## ALBUMS.....

**THE B52s**  
**Cosmic Thing**  
Reprise Records UK : WX 283

Reviewed by  
John Rowlinson

IT FEELS LIKE recently I've been reviewing albums I've been trying not to feel too indifferent about. With the B52s' Cosmic Thing, I have no such troubles. At £5.99 from Woolworth of all places, this one, as they say, is a peach.

Not that there's any shortage of good releases this month. Big Country have out a greatest hits anthology which is worth the purchase price just to hear the wonderful "Chance" in more even surroundings. Joan - put another dime in the juke-box, baby - Jett has a collection of modern classics out, "The Hit List", which I shall buy shortly. The surprise release must be Rory Gallacher's new "Fresh Evidence" while the biggy of the month must be "Packed" by the Pretenders. I thought of reviewing it this month but I'm not really a fan so I didn't. If you are then I guess your month has been made.

To "Cosmic Thing". You can tell straight away from the title track which opens it, that here is an album which does not rely for its effect on its appeal to the intellect:

"I was havin' this out of body experience  
Saw these cosmic beings.  
Everywhere I went up there,  
They were shakin' their cosmic things.  
Like someone gave ya' a wild goose,  
Or a freight train with a wild caboose,  
You better shake your .....honeybums."

Those of you who have had the good fortune to see the group performing live will recognise this as the basis of their choreography, where bodily movement is indeed "like someone gave ya' a wild goose" and the "honeybums" are in fact shaken to stunning affect. Rather this is an album dedicated simply to having a good time, and in places it radiates with a kind of joy which makes it seem pretty sound advice.

There is much that is quirky in the album both musically and lyrically. The dominance of the two female voices offers a melodic counterpoint to the speech-singing of Fred Schneider who brings David Byrne of Talking Heads to mind. The group's guitarist, Keith Strickland, is that rarity, a good accompanist, one who contributes greatly while hogging the limelight. Some of the more complicated rhythms and melodies are held tightly together by a solid rhythm section featuring a smashing bassist, Sara Lee, and a variety of drummers. It's made loud

to be played loud. Americana pop that's every bit as stylised as the late-sixties stage personae the group adopts, but equally, just as much fun.

To the tracks themselves, "Cosmic Thing" already mentioned, falls in with "Bushfire" and the by now well known "Love Shack" as out and out pop. Lyrically unsophisticated, they chug along in celebration of dance and love which is singularly lacking in carnality. Innocence, in fact, dominates the album. Love throughout is viewed in track after track, not simply as an escape from the blues or the bullshit, but as a gateway to sanity. The wonderful new single, "Roam", is basically a hymn on this theme:

"Skip the air-strip for the sunset  
Ride the arrow for the target - one.  
Take it hip to hip, rock it through the wilderness,  
Around the world the trip begins with a kiss."

For me though, two tracks stand out. "Dry County", the album's second track, does so much to establish the less manic moods of the album while outlining its philosophy succinctly enough:

"When the blues whump you up on the side of your head,  
Throw 'em to the floor and kick 'em out the door,  
When the blues kick you in the head  
And you roll out of bed in the morning,  
Just sit on the porch and swing,  
Sit on the porch and swing."

Don't let the blues get you down is returned to later in "Channel Z" (pronounced Zee), where the blues comes from living in a garbage-can world and love provides the only way out. Escapism? Damn Right!

The other track is "Deadbeat Club", following "Dry County", and it is musically and lyrically more subtle and a listening delight:

"We're wild girls walkin' down the street,  
Wild girls and boys going out for a big time.  
Anyway we can,  
We're gonna find something  
We'll dance in the garden  
In torn sheets in the rain."

Finally the album ends well. The lyrical "Topaz", a glimpse through the gateway, a fantasy, is beautifully done creating a mood of serenity which the album's closing track, the instrumental "Follow Your Bliss" allows you to savour

No reservations then, this is a wonderful album. Me, I'm going to tape it to play in the car, in the kitchen, anywhere my hi-fi isn't. In time, I shall see it as the album of the summer of 1990 and if you buy it, I'm pretty confident it will become so for you. Let the good times roll, it says and does. A wee gem.

### QUIZ ANSWERS

(1)THE GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, (2)NITROGEN, (3)BREZHNEV AND KOSYGIN, (4)LIGHT AMPLIFICATION BY STIMULATED EMISSION OF RADIATION, (5)SIR GALAHAD, SIR PERCIVAL AND SIR BORS, (6)POUNDED ALMONDS AND SUGAR, (7)AFTER TWO DRAWS BETWEEN RANGERS AND CELTIC THERE WAS A RIOT, (8)NEW ZEALAND, (9)PILGRIMS PROGRESS, (10)TOMMY STEELE, (11)BILLY McNEIL 1965, (12)AL MARTINOHERE IN MY HEART, (13)DAVID BOWIE, (14)THE RHINE, (15)MEDICAL SCIENCE, PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY, LITERATURE, PEACE AND ECONOMICS, (16)THE TRANSISTOR, (17)ALL USE THE POUND, (18)a)CHARM OR CHIRM, b)EXALTATION, c)MURMURATION, (19)SHELL AND ICI, (20)IN THE PURIFICATION OF LUBRICATING OIL, (21)OLIVER CROMWELL, (22)ELIZABETH AND ZACHARIAS, (23)TO REASON HIS OR HER SEAT, (24)FERDINAND MAGELLAN, (25)BIP'S DEFIANCE OF OIL SANCTIONS AGAINST RHODESIA, (26)a)VIENNA, b)HELSINKI, c)MADRID, d)BOSTON, e)CHICAGO, f)TOKYO, (27)a)FEAR OF DISEASES, b)PAIN, c)WORK, (28)a)JEFF BRIDGES, b)WARREN BEATTY, c)GENE HACKMAN AND WILLIAM DAFEO, d)HELEN MIRREN, e)DEBRA WINGER, f)JANE FONDA, (29)MERCURY AND VENUS, (30)a)1945/55, b)ABERDEEN, c)CLYDE, d)HEARTS.

**IF YOU WOULD STILL WEAR IT  
- REPAIR IT !**

A iterations and repairs to leather, siede and  
sheepskin clothing  
Also comprehensive service to goods

**THE  
LEATHERY PAIR LTD**  
(co-operative) T&WU

UNIT 9, FREDERICK STREET CENTRE  
ABERDEEN AB2 1H  
Telephone : (0224) 633 684

# GOODRICH - AN ODYSSEY ECHO?

**DISTURBING reports were reaching Blowout as we went to press.**

Thirty Two workers were evacuated from the Sonat semi submersible, Henry Goodrich, on Monday evening, 14 hours after the well she was drilling for Texaco had to be closed in.

The rig had been drilling the exploration well 23/26b-14 since early March in a high pressure/high temperature area very close to where the Ocean Odyssey burned out 20 months ago, killing radio op Timothy Williams.

The enquiry into Mr Williams death has just entered its second week some 20 months after the disaster. One of the first to give evidence at the enquiry was a "drilling expert" Mr John Bisset.

He talked about the difficulties of drilling in such areas and the strategies available when normal "Kill" procedures were not appropriate. He specifically referred to "bullheading", a procedure where the influx is forced back into the formation. He pointed out to the enquiry that this was not a first option.

It seems however that it was the option finally used to kill the Goodrich well. Texaco's cryptic press release talks of, "the hydrocarbon influx" being "successfully pumped back into the formation."

The oil industry and the Department of Energy have always insisted that high pressure/high temperature wells can be drilled safely. Although the D of E did suspend operations in these areas temporarily after the Odyssey blowout.

See editorial Page 2

## AROUND THE OILFIELDS

Continued from Page 6

### - SEDCO GROVEL

EXPERIENCED crew are deserting Sedco Forex' Sedneth 701 at such a rate that the rig is believed by some, to be barely operable. The control room is a focus of safety concern but is by no means the only department experiencing problems. Some reports suggest that this is a more general malaise affecting the entire Sedco Forex fleet.

These speculations are certainly given weight by the appearance of memorandum DMCE/AW/90/273 and dated May 15

The entire content of the memo is too embarrassing to reproduce in full, following, as it does, so closely on another internal memo from the same Dave McEwan, informing the workforce that they would get 8 hours for attending training for safety reps. (in clear contravention of the legislation)

Gone is any of the self confidence of the earlier memo. "I urge each of you not to trash the form but to take a few minutes to complete it in tones. The form mentioned being an incredible document unprecedented in Sedco's proud history and maybe even in the history of the whole drilling industry.

The attached, "Requested Information Form", lists 14 "topics which, ... have caused concern", and on which Sedco need their employees input so that they can, "... review new benefits which will best suit all employees."

Sedco employees are invited to choose three of the 15 topics "in order of preference, 1 being most urgent, 2 important, 3 can wait." The "topics" are (1) Salary Increase (annualised), (2) Private Medical Plan BUPA etc. (3) 13 months pay rather than the present 12. (4) Improved Pension Plan. (5) Travel Allowance (crew changes). (6) Travel Allowance (training courses). (7) Payment for training courses (8 hours per day). (8) Sick Pay Scheme (9) Accident Benefit raised from present level. (10) Improved rig facilities. (11) A free weekly phone call. (12) Overnight allowance both ways. (13) Introduction of Loyalty Bonus Scheme. (14) Improved catering services. (15) Other.

To Sedco we would be forced to say, - did you think of preambing the whole thing with, "Sorry we've treated you like shit for all these years."

And to Sedco crews, - You'd better get strongly organised and keep it that way because if Sedco ever get the upper hand again there's going to be all hell to pay for the indignity that they have suffered through writing all this stuff.

I particularly liked (11), (13) and (15), and would be most interested in reading the "comments (optional)" that are also asked for.

### - UNIVERSAL

THIS IS the text of a document from Universal Catering Services Ltd. entitled "Conditions of Employment".

You are hereby advised that it is a condition of your employment that you possess certificates indicating proof of successful attendance at Offshore Combined Survival/Firefighting Training Course as conducted by RGIT or equivalent.

It is therefore agreed and understood that attendance at any courses will be in your own time and entirely at your own expense. Any expense incurred by Universal Catering Services Ltd, in this respect will be deducted from your pay.

### - MAIL SHOT

PERSISTANT reports are reaching Blowout of management "banning" Blowout on some semis. A growing number of units are now taking out a subscription to the paper, but we have persisted with a mail shot to specific individuals.

As the papers have been sent in unmarked envelopes, we had no doubt that they were reaching their destination via drilling contractor offices. What the individual who is sent the papers does with them when they arrive, is of course entirely up to him.

However we took the opportunity of contacting specific individuals offshore and warning them that they were now to receive their unsolicited package of Blowouts, open wrapped in the traditional newspaper way. And we asked that, as the contents were obviously Blowout, would they contact us and confirm that they actually arrived. We would ask other individuals who have previously received copies of the paper on their rig to please contact Blowout if there is any doubt about the arrival of the last issue.

### - TARGET WHAT ?

THROUGHOUT Shell accident statistics for 1989 show that 14 employees and 63 contracted personnel died in 1989. Lost time injury frequency rates were far above target.

These figures compare with 15 employees and 55 contractors during 1988.

Shell employees and contractors need a thoroughgoing analysis of "Target Zero", or whatever Shell are now calling there safety scam

FRIENDS and colleagues of Brian Smith (OILC Standing Ctte Gt Yarmouth) wish to express their condolences to Brian and his wife on the untimely death of their son. "Our thoughts are with you both."

## PIPER ALPHA - A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

ON THE FIRST anniversary of the disaster, workers on 41 North Sea installations stopped work in a day of remembrance.

Oil company management were of course anxious that work should carry on as usual. In addition to the customary heavy handed approach to getting their own way, a subtle form of moral blackmail was attempted.

Wouldn't it be more sensible to work the day and donate your pay to the Lord Provost's fund? Just the kind of Mercenary attitude we have come to expect in an industry where everything it seems, must be equated in pure monetary terms.

It is the intention to have an offshore day of remembrance every year in memory of our friends and colleagues who died that night, July 6 1988

### - KITTIWAKE

THE INSTALLATION of the 7500 tonne Kittiwake integrated deck structure is hailed by Shell as, "one of the heaviest lifts ever made in the history of the North Sea oil industry." That's as may be.

Certainly it set some North Sea records for immorality. If reports received by Blowout are correct then HeereMac, a joint venture between the Dutch Heerema and the American McDermott, are employing Phillipino labour on their barge DB102 and are paying them as little as £8 a day for a minimum stretch of 3 months.

According to the Dutch trade union, FWZ, HeereMac are however going to get rid of their Phillipino workers, some who have been with the company for two years and go back to hiring Spanish workers. It is believed that they will be hired through an Antwerp agency to circumvent Dutch employment legislation that would protect the wages and conditions of foreign workers.

Well done! to all concerned with this impressive project

### - AOCI

AOCI INTERNATIONAL management visited their employees on the Claymore on Friday May 25. They were, they said, out to ascertain where their employees stood with regard to the "working to contract" that is spreading across the North Sea.

This amused some of their men who had already read copies of a press release from the employers organisation OCC. That statement dated May 22 and signed by David Odling an AOCI boss contained the following passage.

"Member companies of the Offshore Contractor's Council report that the majority of offshore employees are well satisfied with their terms and conditions of employment, but are being misled by false statements being circulated by a minority."

This was truly a case of second sight and no-one should draw any conclusions about the falsity or otherwise of the OCC statement.

### - BRENT

SHELL'S problems with fire pumps on the Brent led to 92 men evacuated from the Bravo on the 10th of May. On the 17th of May fire pump problems on the Alpha saw 30 men evacuated and the closure of the FLAGS pipeline, stopping gas from 15 platforms going to St Fergus.

The "accidental release of hydrocarbons" on the Brent Spar that caused 12 workers to be evacuated on May 21 was, we believe, caused when a painter needle gunned his way through a pipe.

What state are the Brent platforms in.

**Blowout Subscription Rates**  
100 papers : £25.00  
50 papers : £15.00

Blowout, 52 Guild Street  
Aberdeen, ABI 2NB  
Phone 0224-210 118

RENFREW District Council have become the first local government administration to take copies of Blowout for its libraries. Now over 200,000 people in the area have access to the paper.

This all came about after Councillor Gordon MacMaster responded to Bob McNair's request for help to promote better awareness of offshore safety and working conditions.

"The paper speaks for itself, and the more people who get the opportunity to read it the better" said Bob.

Councillor MacMaster, prospective parliamentary candidate for Paisley South and former Labour Leader of Renfrew District Council has given a lead for other councils to follow.

Contact your local MP and Councillor and get Blowout to the people at home.

## FOR ALL OFFSHORE WORKERS MEETINGS

GLASGOW : AEU HALLS  
WEST REGENT STREET  
EVERY THURSDAY 11.00am

ABERDEEN : TRADES  
COUNCIL CLUB  
EVERY TUESDAY 11.00am

DUNDEE : TRADES  
COUNCIL CLUB  
1A RATTRAY STREET  
EVERY FRIDAY 11.00am

NEWCASTLE : AEU HALLS  
HIGH ST GATESHEAD  
EVERY WEDNESDAY 7.00pm

LIVERPOOL  
MERSEYSIDE T.U.  
RESOURCE CENTRE  
HARDMAN STREET  
7th, 21st JUNE 15th, 29th JULY  
2nd, 16th August 7.00pm

HULL : G.M.B. OFFICES  
62 RUSSELL STREET  
8th, 22nd JUNE 6th, 20th JULY  
3rd, AUGUST 11.00am

GT YARMOUTH : LABOUR  
CLUB EUSTON ROAD  
6th, 20th JUNE 7.30pm

LOWESTOFT : LABOUR  
CLUB CLIFF ROAD  
13th, JUNE 7.30pm

Enquiries : contact  
OFFSHORE INFORMATION  
CENTRE ABERDEEN  
0224-210 118