

energy



# OUTRAGE

offshore energy workers speak out **FLASH BULLETIN 3**



Don't just  
complain...  
campaign!



## We need to get active

**OUTRAGE 3**

Our front cover is RMT National Secretary, Darren Procter, leading a march and campaign to secure justice for workers back in 2022. The company P&O Ferries had sacked over 800 seafarers and replaced them with lower paid workers. The campaign for justice and changes in law to protect workers started the day P&O took the action. Changes to law should be implemented this year, improving protections for all workers in the maritime and offshore energy sectors.

The P&O case was extreme and, thankfully, events like this don't happen often. With the coming changes in law, the risk of mass sackings and attacks on pay like the P&O action should be reduced. We will fight all unfairness and injustice across the offshore energy and maritime sectors, and together we can make a difference. Let's not wait until something happens, let's stop it happening!

To make a difference we need a change in thinking. We've all heard the complaining in tea/coffee shacks on installations and vessels. Workmates going on about rotas, accommodation, holidays, contracts, health and safety, and so on. Please, don't just complain, get active and campaign.

**Change and improvements don't happen overnight, but nothing will change by just moaning in the tea shack.**

Join the union, write to the union, get active and campaign. And don't think campaigning is always about marching, or carrying banners. Send information we can use, maybe attend a meeting and tell us about your issues or ideas. Get your 'complaint' to us and we can take it up with Politicians, the HSE, OEUK, Renewables UK, whoever. Together, we can make a difference by campaigning, not just complaining.



## Fighting for rights in Norway - UK workers striking in Norway!

UK workers employed by SLB UK (formally Schlumberger) and working in Norway have been in a tough fight for almost a year. Members of our sister union in Norway, Industri Energi and the FLT union, were striking for something fundamental in Norwegian working life, a collective agreement.

The strike was the longest ever on the Norwegian continental shelf. The fight had not gone unnoticed to workers across the Norwegian sector who were prepared to implement sympathy actions. The legality of the sympathy

strike was challenged by SLB and the case ended up in the Labour Court. A landmark victory went in favour of the workers! A few weeks later the trade unions achieved Norwegian working conditions for the Brits, notably just a few hours before the sympathy actions were coming into effect.

The UK workers were on strike because their pay and working conditions were far worse than industry colleagues doing exactly the same work. SLB UK had refused to deal with the workers, refusing Norwegian

pay and working conditions on the Norwegian continental shelf.

SLB's actions were an attack on the Norwegian model and everyone who works on the Norwegian continental shelf. This historic strike was important for workers across the sector. Industri Energi and other Norwegian Trade Unions will not accept companies denying Norwegian pay and working conditions! RMT and Industri Energi have a Memorandum of Understanding in place to protect our respective members in the UK and Norway.

## The wizards of Oz!

*RMT working with our Australian colleagues*

We recently met with our Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) colleagues regarding offshore work for seafarers, crane operators, etc. in Australia on short-term contracts to cover shortages in the local workforce.

Our MUA colleagues are determined there will be no watering-down of terms and conditions. There will be no exploited seafarers on poverty wages brought in, visas will be strictly controlled, and workers employed from the UK will be RMT members and temporary MUA members when working down there. (If you are currently unemployed and interested, get in touch at: [oilc@rmt.org.uk](mailto:oilc@rmt.org.uk))

Compare this to the UK, where government policy has seen work permits issued like confetti to exploited workers. Companies dictate what is happening in the sector, and governments are lobbied to ease restrictions on terms and conditions. Meanwhile, anti-trade union government policy has restricted what the trade unions can do to counter this.

We can only hope that when this Tory 'parcel of rogues' are finally and thankfully voted out, the next lot at least have the balls to meet with the trade unions to work out a fair and sustainable policy. If they need any inspiration, they can look at what our Australian cousins have achieved, real wizards in Oz! Alternatively, and even closer to home, Norway. RMT will be signing an agreement with MUA in May.

## Agencies - the good, the bad, and the ugly!



### The ugly *Not the best to work for!*

Following on from Outage 2 we continue with our naming and shaming of agencies considered by members to be – ‘**not the best to work for**’ – being as polite as we can! There are common themes running through these and the culprits named are -

**NORTHERN MARINE MANNING SERVICES;**  
**WORLDWIDE RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS;**  
**GENESIS PERSONNEL;**

The common themes are – demanding copies of all certificates and insisting the workers refuse any other offers of work, only to be told several days later the job is cancelled. Worse still is the reaction when you tell them you are not available, or no longer available! Members say, don’t expect any calls from this lot any time soon if you have the cheek to say ‘no thanks.’

### The bad *Wishing for dinosaurs*

**Dear Outage,** Thanks for your article about agencies.

Once upon a time, when you worked with agencies, the recruiters were nearly all ex-seafarers or rig workers, or at least someone who had learnt from them. They got it, they knew the nature of the job and what was involved in working away from home. A fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work was the covenant between the recruiter and the recruited.

Sadly, it was decided these recruiting ‘dinosaurs’ had to be replaced and everyone needed ‘professional qualifications’ to do the job, the main one being CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development). People never previously involved in the sector could do this diploma and automatically become ‘recruitment professionals’ in the offshore and shipping industries. No matter they don’t know one end of a rig or ship from the other, or the special circumstances for

working in these industries. Now, instead of basing placements on experience and knowledge, algorithms are used based on age and courses completed; why employ someone with 20-years experience and competence in a job, when you can get a greenhand with a ream of courses completed (but absolutely no experience) for £30 less a day?

The whole thing has become nothing more than a scam. I don’t know about you, but I hark back to the days of the dinosaurs!

Regards,

### The good *Not all bad!*

**Dear Editor,** read with interest your ‘naming and shaming’ of bad agencies and agree with all you’ve said.

However, I believe in giving credit where it’s due. Recently I was working for Global Resources Network. In February, I was travelling to work when a close family member was taken seriously ill. I phoned Global straight away who said to go home as family comes first. A week later, after the family member had stabilised, I was again heading for work. The night before check-in I received a call again saying the same family member had deteriorated dramatically. I had to travel home again and, just as I was approaching home, I got news another close relative had been taken into hospital and was also in a serious condition.

I decided I had to take a month or so off until this was all sorted out. I phoned Global, who were more than supportive, even though I’d had to turn back twice in 8 days! They said once I was ready to come back, to give them a call and they’d look at getting me back offshore.

As said, credit where credit is due, so I thank Suzanne Laing and her team at Global Resources Network.



## Feedback and opinion

**Aramark** – In Outage 2 we reported a members concern about a job advert for Aramark with rates well below those in the COTA Agreement. Our Regional Organiser, Ann Joss, contacted the company and questioned the job advert. Aramark HR Director Donna Vass wrote to RMT to assure us the job-ad had been placed on to a third-party job site and contained incorrect information in contravention of the COTA agreement. The HR Director asked us to assure members that Aramark are fully compliant with the provisions of the COTA agreement.

**Stork to Altrad** – The news that Stork has been bought by Altrad has caused some concern for members. There’s obviously questions about the impact on employment, although Altrad insist there will be no job losses. There’s also

questions about the jobs market getting squeezed, as Altrad and Bilfinger will be the dominant players offshore. RMT will be involved in discussions about this transfer and members will be briefed as things develop. If you’ve got concerns email us at: [oilc@rmt.org.uk](mailto:oilc@rmt.org.uk)

**Smoking!** – I saw the news about a potential smoking ban offshore and had to write. I’m a lifelong smoker and appreciate the risks of smoking, but with all the controls in place they are my risks, I’m not endangering anyone else. I think what Harbour Energy is proposing is a denial of basic human rights! I am at a workplace and believe I have the right to smoke should I wish to. We are in danger of becoming a nanny state, I am not in a prison or detention centre where rights are denied as part of the punishment. I think every smoker should register a complaint about this... the day I can’t get a smoke offshore will be my last day offshore!



## FOET - a refresh too far?

Is it really required at this frequency given none of it is relevant to a chopper ditch in a cold North Sea, probably jammed into a cheap and nasty H175 or even worse a 225 if they re-appear! Waste of money, waste of a day, and it says it all when folks offshore measure retirement in how many more FOETS they can endure? Pre-flight video briefs more than enough for offshore based employees travelling on fixed rotas or on +168 days per year ad hoc.

Who knows maybe one day after doing 6+ of these in my career I might get a suit not torn to bits and knee or hip deep in water all afternoon – Never know? The first, and maybe second one, were relevant – since then just a 4-yearly slog of a day learning nothing bar a hatred of mundane irrelevant offshore training held at basic first-time levels. The container smoke walk, and setting off fire extinguishers to fill day in, are just as tedious and not required to refresh. [ NOTE: RMT will resist the 225!]

## HSE failing!

The 2+1 cabin sharing scourge continues, it could be this industry's "asbestos" in the future! The 'H' in HSE is Health, but let's be honest, they couldn't give a s### about our health! No one is looking into the dark impact of limited privacy, disturbed sleep and rest periods. Same shift sharing should be outlawed. We also need the "2+1" terminology to change to - same shift sharing - this is where the sleep and privacy deprivation lies.

The regular overcrowding of units never built for the populations is a sad and painful way to treat folks! We only want to do an honest shift, eat a decent meal with no time duress, recuperate, rest and sleep around 8-9 hours with adequate privacy, again under no time or people duress. And if it's good enough for some it should be for all!

It's time for HSE to man up and revoke all same shift sharing. Alternatively, HSE, Operators, and Employer HR departments, should all just be honest and state that; wellbeing, care, respect, and health are irrelevant in the offshore environment.

## Equality?

Read your bit on equality in Outage 2 and thought I would highlight the CEO of Harbour Energy, Linda Cook, earned £2.4mn in 2023. This was down on the £3.12mn of 2022, and the bumper £5.97mn in 2021.

Ms Cook's income stacks up against the Equinor Boss, Anders Opedal, with £1.5mn, but is dwarfed by Shell and BP top brass. Wael Sawan at Shell was slightly under £8mn in 2023 and BP's Murray Auchincloss picked up just over £8mn.

Apparently, Ms Cook's pay was £850,000, with £615,000 of tax benefits, a bonus of £816,000 and pension for the year was £125,000 (more than my entire pension pot!). I wouldn't mind some of this 'equality!'



## What is the GWO priority? Are we denying another generation?

The recent death of Scottish cultural colossus John Byrne leaves a massive hole in the artistic talent of the country. His death reminded me of the play; "The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil," for which John Byrne designed the set. The play is basically a warning to future generations of how Scotland was stripped of national resources and culture, 3-times in 3-centuries. Thinking about the play, and having worked in oil and gas and renewables, I think a 4th act should be added called; 'And the Whirling Subsidised Windmills.'

The industry, government, and even environmental NGOs, support our call for a Just Energy Transition and certificate passports. Stumbling block - the Global Wind Organisation (GWO). Despite the sector receiving vast subsidies, GWO have tried everything to block the transition of domicile oil and gas workers to the offshore wind industry. They lobbied

for the continuation of the Offshore Wind Workers Concession, and to have it reintroduced when it ended in April 2023. They sponsored posts, such as one on energypeople.com on 11/10/23 saying; "Inflexible Visa Rules Pose Challenges for Offshore Wind Industry" and they are still resisting the Certificate Passports.

I waited 12-weeks in 2023 to be fully paid for 4-weeks work with a GWO member, then I got offered a supervisor's job from another. A 10-week trip, on £108 for a 12-hour day, with the chance of 50-Euros a day bonus! I can safely say the problem is not the lack of UK talent, it is the GWO employer's total reluctance to pay a decent wage or issue fair contracts to UK workers! You can't go moaning to governments about a lack of national talent if you're putting barriers up to them transferring over, by offering pay for offshore work below the rates of supermarket or bar workers.

The only priority of the GWO seems to be maximising profits, made on the back of subsidies provided by taxpayers. If the Scottish and UK governments are serious about a Just Transition, it's maybe time to stop subsidising those who have maximising profits as their main priority. Run the industry for the benefit of our country, don't deny another generation!

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