

# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

The Bulletin of  — The offshore energy branch of 

## Subsea7's No1 asset becomes their No1 nightmare

### Super exploitation of Far Eastern labour spells misery for all

**W**ell finally it's out there! One hundred and eighty five (and still rising) Subsea7 employees on the ROV fleet have told their bosses a few home truths. These RMT members have written and delivered an "open" letter to the company. The depth of feeling is all too apparent. The guys wrote;

"... Enough is enough! If you think that we will idly sit back and allow you to remove our livelihoods without a fight you are very much mistaken. Isn't it time that you at least had the courtesy to tell us what the future holds for everyone onboard your vessels? Is any discipline onboard safe from eventual replacement by cheap labour, or is it your intention that the whole industry will end up on Far Eastern wage rates?"

You are labouring under the misapprehension that . . . (we) . . . are not capable of organising resistance to this policy? Please believe me when we tell you that the last thing that we would want to see would be damaging industrial action. Please also believe us when we tell you that we will take whatever actions are necessary to stop you destroying our livelihoods . . ."

The letter from Subsea7 employees is accompanied by a hard hitting message from RMT, by General Secretary Bob Crow. He says:

"We must insist as a matter of urgency that the Company Representatives meet with this Union at local and national levels to discuss your intentions for those who are still fortunate enough to be employed."

The OILC/RMT Branch has co-ordinated the campaign. OILC Branch Secretary, Neil Rothnie said,

"This is just the beginning! The branch is now going to open up the list for solidarity signatures from the rest of the membership. The focus will initially be on those members employed in the diving and ROV fleet on the UK North Sea. And then we're going to campaign for our colleagues in Norway and Australia to show their support for the Subsea7 guys. Ultimately what these workers need is an agreement that will extend the kind of protection that the divers already have, to the rest of the workers in the fleet."

### RMT slams major North Sea engineering and construction company Subsea 7 over "race to the bottom" on jobs and pay

**O**FFSHORE ENERGY union RMT today slammed the major subsea engineering and construction company Subsea 7 for engaging in a "race to the bottom" on pay and conditions through the hiring of cheap, overseas labour which has put jobs and conditions in the North Sea field under threat.

Subsea 7 delivered global pre tax profits of \$425 million in 2008 with the bulk of the money - \$235 million - being delivered from their North Sea operations.

Now the company are re-paying the hard work of their North Sea staff by threatening to dump them out of their jobs and hiring in cheap labour from overseas.

RMT have pledged an all-out fight to save jobs and to protect pay and conditions in the North Sea field and have warned Subsea 7 that they will mobilise a global trade union fightback against the company. RMT are demanding immediate talks with Subsea 7 on the attack on jobs, pay and conditions.

In a letter to Subsea 7 management, RMT members say clearly:

"If you think that we will idly sit back and allow you to remove our livelihoods without a fight you are very much mistaken."

Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary, said:

"RMT members employed by Subsea 7 are clearly angry at what is tantamount to social dumping regarding the decision by the company to replace them with cheaper labour from other countries.

We will not sit back while this highly-profitable, global company replace our members with cheap labour at the stroke of a pen. As well as causing anger and resentment within the Subsea 7 workforce these actions are setting alarm bells ringing right across the offshore industry.

We will have no hesitation in mobilising a global trade union campaign exposing the activities of Subsea 7 and would urge the company to make immediate arrangements to meet with RMT representatives to discuss their intentions and the impact on their UK workforce."

# Angry caterers have had enough

By a COTA shop steward and RMT/OILC member

I feel that the catering workers from both RMT and T&G on my rig are probably the angriest I have seen them in the 20 years I have been offshore. The anger is bubbling away and getting hotter, with even the most mild-mannered union member venting their anger over the way they are being treated. This goes for members from “ad hoc” steward to chef manager. The word “strike” has been mentioned several times to me over the last few weeks and I must admit I don’t want to go down that road as it can be very damaging to the employer and unions. But if there was a ballot tomorrow I believe it would be in favour of our first strike in many years, and we must try and avoid this if we can. It’s not just a pay rise that they are concerned about, it’s the terms and conditions in our agreement. We want to see an end to “straight time” for weather bound situations as we feel as if we are being treated like mugs when the drilling personnel beside us are getting premium rate for the same thing. All extra time offshore should be at the overtime rate.

There has also been talk of nightshift allowance, increased travel, especially for those further afield like Liverpool, or who have a late check in on the rig and can’t get home and have to stay the night in Aberdeen. The offshore workforce, not just catering, is waiting for the outcome of the Working Time Directive appeal, which should be in the summer of 2010. We feel very angry on this subject and would hope that all the companies will give the workforce their 4 weeks paid leave sooner rather than later as this is bubbling away too. Looking back 10 years ago very few caterers were in any union. Now “ad hocs” to chef managers are joining up every day and there is only one reason for this. They have been treated unfairly and now they’re telling us, “enough is enough”.

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## We’re all in this together

RMT members employed by Subsea7 are showing the whole offshore workforce the way forward. An “open” letter signed by our members using their membership numbers may not be the route to go down if you’re in “construction/engineering” or “drilling”. Being slowly replaced with slave labour hired in the Far East who are being paid £48 a day and working 12 weeks on 6 weeks off is slightly different from 30 odd years of bullying abuse and disrespect.

And if you’re in “catering” you’ve got a fight coming up anyway unless you’re going to allow it to be “business as usual” at COTA.

But if your employers refuse you the minimum respect of speaking to you, then you need to speak to them – somehow – and fast.

To date Subsea7 are staying true to type. No answer so far to the “open” letter and no answer to Bob Crow’s letter either. This is just contempt! So we’ll just have to step it up.

Recruitment to the union amongst offshore workers throughout the subsea fleets is way up. Morale is rising as the guys “self organize” and stop waiting for someone else to solve their problems.

The OCA and UKDCA agreements are a sham. Your employers need to talk to YOU not the monkeys in the sweetheart unions that they have on the end of a chain. The OILC Branch of RMT is resolved to give you maximum support and encouragement as we have tried to do with the subsea guys.

## Election Result

I would like to thank all members who voted in the recent election for Regional Organiser, Scotland. The result has been announced and the candidate that the OILC branch supported through this process has been declared the winner - Michael Hogg.

Michael has been in contact with the OILC office to thank all the members of our branch for their efforts and support. We wish Michael well in his new role and look forward to him and Jake Molloy developing a close working relationship so that the RMT can move forward in these testing times.

The Oil/Offshore Energy Branch has now come of age within the RMT structure and our members have shown that they can use their democratic vote, to maximum effect. It sends a strong message.

I urge members to continue to participate in every election within the RMT structure, your vote counts. A strong OILC Branch with members who vote in every election can be a positive force in the RMT.

OILC/RMT/Chairman

## A call from the OILC Branch to all RMT members who are divers and “subsea” workers on the roV and construction fleet

If you log on to [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) (Go to General Subsea Discussion Board and open the post: ‘Subsea7 – Open Letter and Docs for Download’) you can download a blank form and use it on your unit to collect “signatures” in solidarity with our members in Subsea7 who have written an “open” letter to the company. At the same location you will find the full text of this letter, the list of “signatures” so far, and the hard hitting letter to Subsea7 from our General Secretary Bob Crow in support of our members facing the disastrous effects of “social dumping” and a report from myself on progress so far.

Please download the form. (Blank Form for Solidarity Signatures (SS7 Open Letter) Print it off and get your colleagues to include their details. Please then scan the form and email it back to me at [oilc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:oilc.secretary@gmail.com) Then please dispose of the paper list sensibly.

**Note:** You need to be a member of the EiE bulletin board to access the above information and files. For RMT offshore energy workers, joining is a simply on-line signup process. Please have your RMT membership number to hand. Your account will require activation by a human before access is granted.

# Letters

**NO PAY RISE AND WE'RE  
COMING FOR YOUR HOLIDAYS  
NEXT THROUGH CONSULTATION  
WITH OUR PARTNER UNIONS!**



**How much of a pay rise will Bill Murray head of the OCA get this year?**

Well you can be assured that OILC/RMT will be investigating this on your behalf, and engaging the RMT research department to do just that.

While the price of oil goes up your wages go down. The contractors are pleading poverty, but Bill Murray and the other fat cats at the OCA want more, much more, from their employees. Not content with giving you a zero% increase this year, they are getting ready to clobber you further by attacking your 4 weeks holiday, and changing your rotas to 3 on 3 off.

Just look at PSN on the Ninian/Murchison. Only 3 weeks holiday for their men, and PSN are signatories to the OCA.

And now we have the final "coup de gras". Apache, led by cowboy Chief Executive Mr James L House, are informing their contractors that a change of work schedule is on the cards. And rumours are circulating that 3 weeks on 3 weeks off is going to be the order of the day.

Well the workers on the Forties should tell Mr James L. House to get the first flight back to the land of the free and take his union busting tactics with him. They have no place on the UKCS. The Rmt/Oilc Branch will support all the workers on the Forties in whatever action they decide to take on this matter.

Workers on the UKCS have had enough of the OCA and their bully boy tactics. Our members are under attack from every corner of this industry -

from Subsea 7 to Apache. These companies are hell bent on trampling our members into the ground and using every trick in the book to smash their terms and conditions of employment, and reduce their wages even further, so that the boards of directors of these companies can get bigger bonus payments and more share options.

The offshore members of RMT have had enough of this. Bob Crow has had enough of it. Our membership is growing rapidly and the time will come when the employers will have to deal with us whether they like it or not.

*Oilc/Rmt Branch Chairman*

**Read more letters at  
[www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com)**

**I have just finished up with Subsea 7 in Brazil** and it's getting filtered through to me that the incident/accident rates have started to escalate already. SS7 have put in place a draft letter circulated around the fleet prior to Filipinos starting, and from memory it said.

"we are willing to accept that safety may be compromised in the next quarter due to inexperienced personnel but we are willing to accept that".

That's the main reason I found things unacceptable and quit. Not only have SS7 accepted responsibility for their actions by issuing that statement, but clearly it goes against everything I believe in about a safe system of work.

I might add that Technip adopted this strategy, but quickly shelved it when their safety standards dropped to such a level it was affecting their future contracts and clients. They decided to bring back experienced British workers. Their order books are full, not like SS7 who are and will be struggling for the foreseeable future.

*M0102898*

**A couple of years ago** we liaised with Jake Molloy to hold a union meeting onboard our vessel when it was in Aberdeen. It was quite successful and at that time we gained almost full union membership onboard. Sadly some guys are a bit disillusioned as all the RMT Comic seems to have is engine/bus driver news. The last round

of insults heaped upon us by S7 seems to have created another round of recruitment, which has to be a good thing.

S7 Management, with their present cavalier attitude to loyal personnel, are doing far more to increase union membership than any enthusiastic member could ever do, and we can hope to have near full membership quite soon!

I joined the union at the time when you could only be an engine driver/guard/ bus driver or diver, so I have always been registered as a diver in the NE Shipping Branch! I have had pretty close union ties for a long time and have had good support from Steve Todd in the past, when recruiting new members.

I have absolutely nothing against Filipinos. I know a bit about the country and have a great sympathy for the people. I think they are mostly, lovely, hardworking people. Employers know that they have a reasonably well educated, yet poor workforce, desperate for jobs. So, they exploit them in every possible way, with no benefits, low pay and long trips. Employers have tried to justify their actions by arguing that, "In order to remain competitive we must drive down labour costs". Technip tried using Filipino riggers a couple of years ago and found that trying to instantly replace experienced UK riggers with inexperienced and largely untrained Filipinos resulted in accidents, which the oil companies will not accept. So, now they are going back to European riggers again and fortunately it is providing employment for displaced S7 riggers. Basically Subsea 7 is in the process of replacing all deck crew (riggers) on S7 vessels and vessel coordinators (secretaries) with Filipinos, and also introducing a small trickle into ROV operations. The latter will be a bit slower as it is a highly skilled job and it takes several years to train new-starts.

S7 love to boast that "People are our No1 Asset", I think that is a conditional statement. They are until a viable cheaper alternative becomes available! As far as I am concerned, the thin end of the wedge is already in place, and we need immediate action



# Letters



[www.rmt.org.uk](http://www.rmt.org.uk)

before it is too late to save riggers' and co-ordinators' jobs. This year S7 has had its best year ever. The CEO had a huge bonus, yet they are unable to give the workforce their annual wage increase "due to the poor economic climate".

It is time that we had some action that would shake them in the way that the divers did a few years ago.

**C932259**

**I enjoyed reading the branch bulletin.**

I've been working offshore for 5 yrs. I've been on an accommodation barge [North Sea] over 3 yrs. We work our butts off [stewards], but still our employers don't want to pay us for the work we put in. With oil prices now up at about \$73 dollars a barrel, things are looking better, but the only way to see change is by standing together and speaking up together. **I've joined the union. And my friends offshore have now joined the union.** Hopefully we can see changes in safety and pay and sooner rather than later.

**M0114255**

As an ex employee of Subsea 7 it is great to see the backbone of the company standing up to management in this way. It has taken a long time. I have many friends on the vessels that are represented by signatories to the open letter, and I have heard the attitude of the onshore management remains it's normal aloof way - and that right from the VP of HR to the global personnel manager. They believe, "everyone wants to work for Subsea 7". This is what they have to deal with!

**M0114596**

**This is the first time that I have actually emailed you all.** I have though really enjoyed reading all the communications, it is so obvious from the emails that you all work so hard and contribute so much to your companies' success.

I am not a union rep on my platform, but I do play my part by taking a dozen copies of the Enough is Enough bulletin out to the platform for the lads to read. They were all very impressed with the last one. Even the T&G lads were excited about Bob Crow making

a commitment to our cause. We all think that with a major figure like Bob we can do well.

Now for the reason I wrote.....

The other day our Catering Manager placed a newspaper cut out from the Press and Journal on our notice board....it read....."North Sea remains a lucrative region for Sodexo Remote Sites".

We were obviously very pleased that the company that we contribute so much to is doing well and securing new contracts. BUT we did feel it wrong that we have been refused our annual pay negotiations due to the recession.

With the price of oil now good again and with our very own company bragging in the national press about how times are actually lucrative. When are our pay talks for this year going to begin?

All your views please!

**D073385**

Reply to letters at  
[www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com)

**I am a new member of RMT** working for iTech which is a division of Subsea7. I first worked for this company when it was Subsea Offshore. The company have always been rumoured to be completely against unions, and to my knowledge, still are, for obvious reasons. I have heard about the hiring of overseas staff, ie cheap labour, and of course it worries me even though, as yet their policies in this respect have not affected me personally. However I feel that it is only a matter of time till we are all affected right across the board. With this in mind I feel that I should like to be active in opposing this type of behaviour by a company, that as you correctly state in your article of 7

October, makes a great deal of profit already from its employees. However I am concerned that any activity would be negatively received by the company and I do not wish to be ousted from my job because of it. I would like to know what options there are available to people like myself and my colleagues to fight these practices and safeguard our positions. I hope I am making sense, this is the first time in my working life that I have been concerned enough to join a union although I am somewhat ashamed to admit that it has taken me so long. There comes a time though when enough is enough and I feel that that time is now upon us.

**M0120787**

**I am a chef.** Shop steward is not for me as I don't have the patience. Two catering stewards have been asking me about various situations and my advice has been to join the union. One has since done this and hopefully the other will follow suit. (*this is what shop stewards do - give the guys the best of advice - ed*)

Only strike action will get the money we deserve and the same time off as the company staff get. I have said all along... down knives etc on the 25th and 26th December, followed by 1st and 2nd January and, as the movie goes, the rest is history. We are usually running about preparing fancy meals and buffets while all the rest are playing pool, darts, crib, doms. Time for us to do feck all (although no pay) It will be worth it. We are a very important cog in the oil industry, Lets bloody use it. Nae food, nae work and it's GIRUY.

As I'm due out for both the festive times (just like last year and then every year until I retire) I'm more than happy to down blades. The talk has finished for m. Industrial action is the only way forward. Better to die standing up than to live life on your knees. May you never drink or surf alone. Never hurry, never worry and stop to smell the roses.

**M0105331**

**Apache moving contractor staff to "3 on 3 off"** is a safety initiative we're led to believe. That would mean 8 or 9

rotations per annum. Yet Apache staff would still have 10 or 11 rotations a year. Do Apache expect us to believe that they care more for their contractors' safety than their own men's?

M0104379

### **Serious concerns about S-92 resurface**

**Just came offshore on Friday** and during our OIM's welcome talk in heli-admin he asked if Bristows had spoken to us prior to leaving Scatsta about a gearbox mounting issue.

Bristows had not mentioned anything, therefore the OIM brought us up to speed on the issue. Apparently this fault has been known about by Bristows since January, however they have only just passed this info onto the companies operating out of Scatsta in the last week. Therefore we have to commend TAQA with the speed with which they have passed on this information to their workforce.

Apparently there have been cracks and failures on gearbox mounting feet and bolts have been found sheared, with one such failure occurring in under 70 hours flying time. (ie not a long period).

Bristows are not too concerned about this as there is "built in redundancy" in the number of mounting feet/bolts so if one goes the others take the load comfortably. We don't think this is good enough really, as if there are failings they should be investigating why, and recalling S-92s to correct them. There is considerable vibration on the S-92 as can be observed by the air stair door which seems to be doing it's best to wrench itself free of the aircraft.

Bristows have said they will up their inspections to every 10 hours of flying. However we don't know what this inspection consists of. Is it just a visual look see? (probably!) or are they doing NDT Dye penetrant testing? (doubt it!).

This is beginning to sound like the Bond gearbox failure incident. Metal particles being found and increased checks being performed to mitigate against failure. Unfortunately we all know how this ended. With multiple fatalities.

Obviously the lads out here are very



concerned and angry with (A) the length of time Bristows took to divulge this information, and (B) Their proposed monitoring of the situation.

Our OIM is going to forward a list of questions the lads out here had to the beach for response.

We believe that unlike TAQA other companies, eg BP, Shell etc may not have passed on details of this issue to their troops. Perhaps you could do a bit of digging to see if this is the case as surely everyone travelling by S-92 has a right to know of any problems. I think this issue needs a bit more profile within the offshore population and also perhaps the local press, as there is more chance of this issue being resolved in a proper manner. Surely no one wants a repeat of the helicopter incidents which have occurred in the last year or so. Once again someone is taking a gamble with the lives of the offshore worker and making decisions which could have a tragic result.

M0106805

### **Confession time!**

**I have worked in the northern North Sea for almost 30 years**, mainly in the Ninian Field. I worked through the heady Chevron days with lots of booms and a few slight busts! I have seen this field bumped from pillar to post through the nineties with Oryx, Kerr McGee then CNR, each milking the profits and doing virtually no maintenance other than that essential to pump oil. In the early days I watched the stumbling baby steps of the OILC with Ronnie & Jake, still firmly believing that we didn't need a union. After all, we had a job for life!

Now I've seen the true face of the oil operator. I see the platforms seriously falling to bits and issues that would have been jumped at before, even safety issues, are basically back-heeled for the "better days ahead". Installation managers and supervisors are terrified to spend money on anything and the cost-cutting has

become such an obsession. I've no doubt in my mind that safety is being compromised and disaster looms. Arrogant and aggressive management, no pay rises, no bonuses, no training, no biscuits – the list is endless. A constant flow of negative and frankly distorted information to the men simply aggravates the situation. CNR have now invoked a long-buried clause in their Petrofac contract which allows them to remove anyone from their platforms, if they were absent for over 90 days (over the life of the contract!) for any reason. Consequently anyone with a medical or domestic problem which would need over 90 days to sort, simply keeps quiet and struggles on to keep their current job. It's NRB by any other name. CNR clearly do not seem to understand that an increasingly unhappy crew is an unproductive one.

Having enjoyed the halcyon years of the oil industry and having been very loyal to my companies, I've now had an uncomfortable change of heart. I now see the bullying, the poor competence, the short-sighted decisions and the every-man-for-himself attitude of management, coupled with the falling interest and commitment of employees and I'm very glad I don't have much time left in the industry. In the meantime, I see OILC as the only light at the end of the tunnel for us all. If you don't sign up now, you are blind to what's happening around you. I have never been a militant person but I have joined, feeling an increasing defensiveness and resentment against employers who just want to shaft me and my colleagues under the guise of the "credit crunch".

Get signed up – you're a mug if you don't.

M0118112

**As we enter the future**, we seem to be going back in time! Rumour has it that a lot of companies are considering changing rotas from 2 weeks on and 2 weeks off to 3 weeks on and 3 weeks off, to cut costs. I have to ask at what price? Safety of the workforce in all aspects should always be looked upon as top priority. Maybe 3 and 3 prevents you flying as much, but so also would 2 on and 3 weeks off.

# Letters

After your normal 2 weeks you are ready for home, but with 3-3, instead you are hit with an extra week. So instead of 168 hours you will have to work 252 hours before you get home. But on the contract that you signed for 2-2 anything that you work over the 168 hours is at time and a half. Does this mean that they are going to pay you the third week at time and a half? I don't think so!

I think this may lead to more injuries, as the work force will be more vulnerable due to lethargy and tiredness. Speaking to the workers on this platform, most have families that they miss already, and they think the stress of more work may put more pressure on their home lives.

The credit crunch seems to have affected the economy, but the price of oil keeps going up, and despite record profits on the cards, there are still pay cuts, pay offs and no pay rises!

The younger generation is getting exploited as they don't know any better. Also - why are companies getting away with exploiting foreign workers eg Subsea 7? No one objects to working with other races as long as liberties aren't taken with them.

There are so many contracts, and contractors, on the North Sea - some issue bonuses and extra paid leave, whilst others scrape to the bone! This is where I admire the way Norway is run. Everyone gets the same and they look after their own first.

Its ok for people who sit behind desks to think, "Its OK! They don't know what they are moaning about. They get time off" - but we work the same amount of hours per year as on shore workers (more -ed) yet their weekends aren't counted as their holidays. So away from home with stress of job cuts, no pay rises or holidays, working in a dangerous environment in which most have to work Christmas and New Year for nothing extra! I have to ask you all - who gets the better deal?  
name and address supplied

**Further information.** SS7 are going to pay the Filipino Coordinators \$110/day and they will work 12 weeks



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on 6 weeks off! They are also seriously considering merging the roles of medic and coordinator. Now that is a worry as the coordinators' job is indeed a busy one. Also, both the coordinators and the riggers are to sign onto the vessel articles, in other words they will be Filipino Rigger/Able bodied Seamen and Filipino coordinator/medic/able bodied Seamen! SS7 have gone quite mad.

**M0099375**

**Keep up the good work fellas.** Our industry needs the power of more voice to stop all this bullying by so called skint oil companies. Your work is appreciated.

**W003678**

**I've been speaking to the Branch Secretary recently**, by email, about Subsea7's decision to take on Filipino ROV Crew and pay them \$48 a day. As an ROV Pilot working for Technip, I'd read about this in emails (and in the RMT's EiE), and find it very worrying for the industry. It seems the massive profits the oil companies are still making aren't enough, and they are obviously getting set to destroy the UK's offshore workforce the same way that the merchant fleet was taken apart

years ago.

There seems to be a push now around some of the ROV personnel to get organised and try to hammer out an agreement with companies. We can still remember how successful the divers were just a few years ago.

I've emailed around the Technip ROV fleet, to try and encourage guys to join, and I'm also trying to gather information on all the systems and crews around the fleet.

I'll hopefully get this information to the branch in the near future, but it takes time as half the guys are at home, and probably won't take much notice until they're back onboard the boats.

What I'd like to see from the RMT is more public and visible support for the ROV industry, and a firm push to get organised and start coordinating things. Leadership has to come from the top, and that's you guys.

Unfortunately ROV guys have always been an isolated and lone group, so getting people out of this isn't easy, but people are starting to turn now.

We'd always been lumped in along with the divers agreement, but we got removed before there big pay rise... which wasn't a surprise! That was the first big push to get ROV guys to join, and now the threat of losing our jobs will motivate a second. But we need more RMT support.

At the moment, five of the six guys onboard the system I'm working on are members, and I've had positive feedback from others.

We just need to see more happening, and once the ball is rolling, more people will join. At the moment I don't know how many Technip/Meridian guys are members of the RMT, but the Branch Secretary is working on this, and I'm trying to get a list together from our side.

I'm also trying to get a Union rep sorted, but at the moment. I'm doing the job until we find someone better.

ROV guys are joining the RMT - we need to start seeing and hearing about the RMT working for us! Loud, visible and public support!!

**M0103414**

# Letters

Having a recruitment campaign is all fine and well but when the sh\*t hits the fan, which it has already for quite a few Subsea7 employees, the union needs to do more than it is at present. I had an e-mail from a colleague a month or so ago and he tells me that yet another Subsea7 coordinator has been told that they would do two weeks more (training their Filipino replacement) and then it's out the door. They are picking them off one by one and there doesn't seem a lot we can do about it. Mind you, I spent a half hour with an employment lawyer yesterday afternoon who seems to think that there is a good case for claiming unfair dismissal. Certainly it would be interesting to see the outcome - especially with the negative publicity it may well cause Subsea7. One other thing has come to light in the past couple of weeks which pretty much sums up the difference of working in the UK Sector and pretty much any other region. Case in point - a coordinator gets replaced by a Filipino on a SS7 vessel operating in the Gulf of Mexico. A month or so later there is a phone call asking the same coordinator to come back. Now at that point, and it just goes to show how naive we are, we actually though Subsea7 had seen the light and had stepped back from this but no, they are having all sorts of problems getting visa's for the Filipino's working in the Gulf. Why on earth do all the other oil producing nations have protection for their offshore workers and we have absolutely nothing. I would have thought, with UK unemployment rising at an alarming rate, our so called Government would be looking to protect jobs where they can. Why are UK work visa's seemingly so easy to obtain? I wish I knew the answer to that one but if we did enjoy the same protection Subsea 7 would not be even thinking of pulling this sh\*t.

The OILC Branch Secretary's take on ODIA riggers could well be off the mark. One thing that did come out of a discussion with management on my vessel was that yes, riggers working in the North Sea (covered by the ODIA? - ed) would, for the time being, not be affected. However, Subsea 7 do have staff riggers and as the majority of the

guys working onboard are day rate - well you can see where this is going. The jobs will still be there but the current personnel may not.

Another case in point is the Skandi Seven where it looks like both coordinators have been landed with a Filipino trainee and it is expected that once trained these guys will move across to the new build, Normand Seven to replace the coordinators on there. So the jobs are "safe" at the moment. But SS7 are being quite cute with this. Once the Normand Seven is up and running she will take up the work currently being undertaken by the Skandi Seven and as far as we can see, once she does, there is nothing work wise for the Skandi Seven which will allow SS7 to say "thanks very much" to the guys currently onboard and get shot of them. The pattern is emerging now - fill up the coordinators positions on the new builds with Filipinos and get shot of the UK workforce when these come live as there is little or no work for the vessels they are replacing. I would suspect that it will be a similar position with the riggers although I can't confirm that.

It's pretty clear that Subsea7 is operating a classic divide and conquer strategy which appears to be working well for them. I'm just wondering how long it will take them to realise that having got away with replacing coordinators, riggers and ROVs that there is really nothing to stop them hitting the other disciplines in the same manner. If the divers can't or won't help, and Subsea7 continues with its policy, I can't see it taking too long before Acergy, Technip et al start doing the same - they'll have to if they want to remain competitive.

I'm currently on my 28 days off but will certainly start talking to our riggers and ROV guys when I get back onboard - if I get back onboard . . .

99004821

**I am a freelance ROV supervisor.** I have, in the past, done contract work for SS7 and was extremely concerned to hear about the methods they appear to have adopted lately, with regard to employing 3rd world nationals on very low wages. The knock on effect for our

industry could be disastrous. I presume that their low price policy does not pass on to the client companies who are using their services.

Another aspect of this particular case is that we are going to be expected to train up the guys who will potentially take our jobs. The industry is such that training courses are very minimal and the onus to train new ROV pilots rests on the shoulders of those already in the industry. Although the IMCA scheme is now beginning to try and formalise a training structure, and meet certain competences, it is very much a bottom up approach and relies very heavily on those already in the industry to witness and sign off competences. But what then will become of those of us who do the training once we have outlived our usefulness? Will we be superfluous?

I also saw, quite recently on ROV World, a posting regarding Oceanering employing low paid guys (in India) based on the fact that the cost of living was lower and they therefore needed to earn less. This is a reflection of what SS7 are trying.

I have read a lot about the RMT, OILC and S100 providing a union service for ROV pilots and there are many people, in a similar situation to me, who have no idea where to get information on joining the union. Being ex-military, and being around during the hassles in the 80s with the miners' and firemen's strikes etc, I am not really familiar with the workings of union affairs. We were not allowed to take part in a union and the propaganda and crap we were fed, by the media and government about various groups was very confusing, and it made little difference to us. We still had to go do what we were told to. What is obvious is that we need to be unified and stand together. Individuals will be seen as troublemakers and gradually removed, this makes it even more important that we form some form of group and quickly too.

It is my understanding that usually a union represents a group of workers from a particular trade in a certain area - ie miners in Yorkshire - but then through co-ordinated effort that expands to unite all miners in UK. How do ROV pilots, who live, say, in



Italy or Thailand, stand within the RMT - or is this going to be a groundbreaking group? Is it sufficient to have a UK address to become a member? We are after all a global industry without the traditional boundaries associated with the work place - are there any lessons that can be learnt from other groups? My thinking here is the massive leaps that the Australian Offshore Union made.

I will distribute your info to all my ROV colleagues. It seems to be a simple matter of common sense if we wish our particular specialisation to flourish in the future.

#### *Membership Number pending*

**Having spoken to a few people lately,** they are under the impression that because we are not working 2/3 and lost the last court case, the OILC/RMT is a waste of time. They have no punch. Trying to argue against this is hard work. As we need numbers to get things changed offshore, maybe it would be a good idea to stick in Blowout, EIE, the website etc, what has been done to help people, changes in law...compensation payouts... help with family matters etc.

**M0104937**

**A letter to Bob Crow from a COTA steward.**

Greetings from the night-shift. I am an RMT shop steward on the North Sea working under the COTA agreement. I was hoping to come along to the airport/heliport on the 10th at Aberdeen but was offshore at the time. We the caterers have suffered long enough under the cozy Cota agreement which, to put it mildly, is a load of nonsense. I will give you an example: Transocean personnel onboard our rig would get triple time for being fogged on the rig and we get straight time. They get 1 weeks full pay for paternity. We get £126. The list goes on. And they are under a "sweetheart deal", so you can see what I'm on about when I talk about our Cota deal.

Can I ask what your plans are for organising the oil industry, as we need to keep moving forward. To become any kind of force we need to maintain a high profile to the offshore workers. We need to push for further and more

intense training for shop stewards. Are we the only industry that does not allow shop stewards to go on TUC training? And finally we need to show the oil companies that things are going to change and we will not be harassed or bullied any more. But to do that we need your ongoing help.

**D036389**

PS Another 5 new members on our rig joined because of the campaign at the airport on the 10th.

**Out here we have received copies** of a document with a series of questions and answers regarding the proposed new terms and conditions. This is on Cape headed paper. Some lads on our platform working for PSN have exactly the same questions and answers on PSN headed paper. Isn't that a coincidence? One of our guys has been speaking to a reliable source sympathetic to our plight. He reckons that BP asked to see the questions and answers before they were sent out by our HR department. If this is true it would appear that BP, with all the legal and human resources clout, are dictating the process from behind the scenes. This may be a whole crock of shit, but there is some collusion, whether that be Cape and PSN, or BP, Cape and PSN.

**M0105569 Southern North Sea**

**Seems to me that as soon as ROvers are involved,** there is widespread consternation. But this sort of thing has been happening to riggers for years, and the ROV fraternity didn't bat an eyelid. Same goes for divers. Would they strike for riggers, like the riggers did for them? I don't think so! I am no longer employed by Subsea 7, but will sign the open letter anyway, as I feel very strongly about the way my colleagues are being treated. Also, the unions where informed of what Subsea 7 where doing as long as nine months ago, and chose to do nothing. When we see the power the Norwegian and Australian Unions have, it just goes to show how useless our unions are. You have no power, and companies like Subsea 7 are laughing all the way to the bank, whilst skilled British workers are being sent to the dole office."

*Name and address supplied*

*EiE policy is not to answer letters from our members in the same issue as the letter appears. The letters can now be challenged on [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) or in the next edition. But when we get a letter from a non member (which we welcome) but which attacks the union we retain the right to reply immediately. There are unions and there are unions. RMT/OILC is far from "useless". There is a big difference between sweetheart unions picked in a beauty contest by the employers, and RMT/OILC, until now locked out of meaningful negotiations with most employers. RMT/OILC members, among them riggers and ROvers ARE the union, and are letting the employers know it.*

**I agree 100%** with what the union are saying. As I highlighted at the meeting in McGinns in Glasgow the lads will have to stand up and be counted. My main concern is no official union recognition. Can we take this one to Brussels under the banner of human rights?

If I personally end up in this situation I would not trust 90% of the workforce who would be involved as their self survival instinct would kick in. And when did the option to disregard TUPE, arise? I am under no illusion. After September 2009, on the question of redundancies, the goalposts will not only be moved but replaced by BP and all oil companies.

**M0111614**

**It is now official** that the great masters Apache Corp are talking to (telling) Aramark and Entier about possible rota changes for next year.

This has been looming since the Wood group lost the contract to Petrofac, who were told to quote for a 3 and 3 rota to start at the beginning of the year when the copper contract is up for grabs. Again to save money etc. Yet the Norwegian sector have less flights and have more time off and pay a hell of a lot more candy and would you believe it... still make a load of dosh.

I take it all the contracting companies will be asked to follow suit and the unions have been informed. It is obvious the sweetener they will



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offer will be: instead of 2 weeks holidays they will give you 3 weeks. This will suit them mainly with the flight rotas. This could also benefit workers travelling from afar, as it cuts down on travel costs and lost time getting to and from the heliport.

I've spoken to a few of the other contractors who are not happy but say they will just accept the new conditions whatever! This is not a general opinion as I'm on night shift and not many human beings about-mainly Apache guys and they do what they are told. I wonder if they are going to move from their 2/3 rota or just keep "the us and them" class system going.

Looks like the catering mob will be left to do the business. You know the dates for industrial action, get the forms sent out. It's now or never.

**M0105331**

**Would it be possible** to get some application forms sent to my home as I have had quite a few people enquiring about joining the Oilc. I have told some of them they can join online but a few are not too good with computers and would prefer to fill in a form. It seems that people out here are starting to realise that the other unions do not hold their best interests at heart. And they are fed up with the attitudes of the companies, not only over the wages but in management's attitude to us. They speak to us like we are sub-human and have no lives outside working for their companies.

**M0111619**

**As an ROV member** of the new OILC EiE bulletin board at [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) I am impressed with the number of ROV personnel that have joined the board. On 22-10-2009 I counted 57 members! These are only those that have joined the forum. There must be many more that have joined the RMT OILC branch over recent months and have yet to join the forum. Input on the Subsea7 cheap foreign labour issue, a running poll and associated discussions on a blanket Subsea offshore employment agreement and other ROV related topics are being freely added to on a daily basis. It is truly heartening to see ROV crews coming together like this

and I feel Subsea7 will soon rue the day that they took such a hard nosed line with their most valuable assets; ROV employees and regular ROV contractors! The other ROV operating companies need to take heed. In the North Sea, ROV are well on the way to becoming a cohesive force to be reckoned with!

**W003223**

**I was onboard the Safe Scandinavia in Invergordon.** On Saturday the 27th June the Captain stopped all shore leave for Marine crew. Here is the background

The rig arrived in Invergordon on 14th and there was shore leave for everybody. I joined on the 23rd. and on the 26th some contract scaffolders had an altercation with some of the locals. One person was hospitalised and 3 scaffs arrested.

The police asked for a list of who was ashore. The captain reviewed the list and found some of the marine crew had been ashore and two of them had not returned until 1.30 am.

There was a fire alarm around midnight which proved to be false (there have been quite a few during the day and night). The next morning the captain, along with a director from Prosafe's office, called a marine crew meeting. He told us in no uncertain terms that all shore leave was cancelled and stated that Prosafe had a drink and drugs policy and said he did not have enough men for the fire team. As far as we can figured out only one member was missing.

During the time the vessel has been in port no member has missed turning to or has caused any problems. After our meeting all the contractors including the catering were called in and given a similar talk by the project leader and given a 9.0 pm curfew so they could buy necessities.

Since then crew morale has plummeted and though the captain was still on board, doing an extra week, the normal shift captain arrived and has been unapproachable. He stated to safety officers that he doesn't care about crew morale. He had a fire drill on Sunday at 1 in the afternoon and insisted the night shift get up. Basically he has got a S\*\*\*\*y on with

everybody. We feel we are being victimised for something trivial i.e. the two lads getting back late.

At present as you know it is very hot and there is no AC in the accommodation, and after a 12 hour shift it is not very comfortable. In fact you can cut the atmosphere with a knife.

We have tried to find out Prosafe's procedures (in printed form not verbally) for when a vessel is in port but no luck. How do you think we stand on this issue?

**W001192**

**"With regards to the SS7 situation** - who is actually training these guys up to be riggers & ROV? Is it a UK national who has set up a training school and approached SS7 with a cheap work force solution and in doing so is trying to undermine the people he used to work with? Maybe someone needs to do a bit of investigation into who is training these people, and if need be, name & shame them.

Just a thought"

**M0114253**

**I recently arrived back offshore** (BP Magnus) but the news that I came back to is not very great. I found out that the proposed wage cut that Wood Group want to implement, only applies to the BEARS, and not to any of the supervision, the OCS or to non working foreman. I find this amazing and I feel that I have now been beaten with one stick too many. I have been offshore for over 20 years and this is the thick end of the wedge for me, and I can't see anything getting any better in the future. BP and the like are not going to be happy until the drive all the so called experienced workers away and take on more cheap labour from overseas. I also find out that in these difficult times, BP are willing to pay Wood Group workers on the Schiehallion a bonus of £10 grand per person per trip. Times must be hard on there. We have got a couple of boys out here just now that have come from the Schiehallion, and for the 3 trips that they did they earned £30,000 which was also linked to a bonus, The job was only for a short time, but the fact of it being that BP could still

afford to pay out this ridiculous money to all the guys that were on the job. This comes as a bit of a slap in the face to the boy out here on Magnus. This job now is a F\*\*\*\*\* JOKE a lot of the boys hope that Wood Group loose the contract when it is up for tender in October. But we will wait and see. The stupid thing is that if PSN take over, rumour has it that they pay even less than Wood Group, which will fit in nicely with BP. I have been on Magnus for over 5 years now and what I see now is BP are driving everything by money at the expense of safety. Should it not be the other way around?

*M0105742 A very pissed off member.*

I'll distribute the info about the Subsea7 campaign amongst my ROV colleagues both on the vessel and those I know within the ROV industry. In a past ROV life I worked for Subsea Offshore for many years before leaving shortly after it became part of the US Presidential campaign i.e. Halibuton/Dick Cheney. As far as I can see SS7 is not a global company but is in fact a vast United States one, milking the rest of the world.

*W003172*

I have been putting everything that the RMT/OILC have been sending to me on the notice board, and in all the tea shacks. But what really pisses me off is when you hear the bears spouting about this, that and the next thing. When you ask them if they are in the RMT the response you get is,

"I'm not joining that lot, they've never done anything for me."

To which I respond,

"They have never done anything for you because you have never asked them to do anything for you and you are not in the union. So stop talking a load of bollocks and join! We need a united body of members. Then they will do something for you."

*M0105036*

The reason the union are getting a good response from the roV side, as I see it, is because riggers and co-ordinators and bridge engineers are covered in the divers' agreement. That

is the case with Technip who we work for.

The riggers get the agreed pay rises etc that the divers fought for. ROV crews have been left out of this agreement. That's why we need our own agreement that's been drafted and which most of us have seen. At present our members at Technip are trying hard to recruit new members so that we have the numbers for union representation for our discipline. As I see it this issue is not just an S7 thing, as roV members in other companies want to push this roV agreement through. By making this a Subsea 7 issue we are maybe going down the wrong road. Surely with riggers etc in the divers agreement (if that's the case at S7), there should be no problem opening talks with the company and oilc/rmt. Their people, if they have a spokesman, also need to speak with other companies' union members so we can back one another on the issue of cheap labour and an roV agreement.

This may take time to gather strength, but in general I don't think the employees in one company can do it on their own. We need to have enough members in Technip, Subsea, Sonsub, Fugro and Oceaneering etc, to have union representation first, before we will be able to make headway in any direction without us falling on our arses. If not, the damage it will do in putting people off joining the oilc/rmt will take years to reverse, as it will look as if it's a complete waste of time, and members will end up blacklisted as before. In general we need to organize together, not just in one company, for anything to work.

There will need to be a lot of dialogue between different companies' union members to see if we can do this together. But first we need the percentages to get our union delegates through the various company front doors. I have no problem in speaking with any union members in other companies so we can organize ourselves, as we need to do this together.

Presently we all know we have members scattered all over the place. We all need to know how many we have in all these companies I've listed, and a massive drive will be needed to

recruit if more numbers are needed to get these percentages across the board.

As the OILC Branch Secretary has mentioned on several occasions, we need to organize ourselves. There are several of us trying to organize our own boys at Technip. That's our first priority before we can move on. We are at present making a list up of ROV members throughout Technip. It would be a good idea for all of us to do the same, and share this info. We also have an email address made up to contact one another. If any other members would like to contact us pass on this email address.

techniprov@googlemail.com.

*H0020828*

Recently I sat my RGIT refresher, and got talking to the others on the course. To cut a long story short, this person used to work for Arcadion as a DMT, but who's now working as a steward with Aramark due to not enough work. (Arcadion are the technical services part of Aramark, but their name was changed due to several botched jobs I believe)

He told me that whilst working with Arcadion he received £21.00 per shift extra for working nights. (this calculates to £294.00 per trip and over 13 months accumulates to £3822.00)

As soon as I came offshore I asked the onboard DME and he confirmed this, but also asked me to keep this quiet. His initial answer to me was "we are not in COTA - we do not get paid leave." I replied, "but you still get the two weeks pay added to your wage throughout the year". He confirmed this.

Aramark are refusing to pay nightshift workers any overtime when they are stuck on board, yet Arcadion give their nightshift personnel inconvenience money - Where is the justice?

Why do Aramark workers not get the same? Seems like Aramark want two different playing fields for their staff!

Now we've been told this morning by Aramark, that if we are signed off for any reason, then when we come back we have to have an interview with the onboard management as to the reason why you were off. I feel that this should not be the case, as Aramark

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should already know your welfare through your doctor. Any personal information should be discreet and not disclosed to other people. It almost feels like entrapment and interrogation as you are briefing your management on your personal welfare and well being.

**M0106821**

**Morale is low on the vessels** at the moment. The only topic of conversation is the replacement of all disciplines by cheap foreign workers.

I have no objections to anybody, from any country coming to work for Subsea7. I could be deployed to Africa, Brazil, USA, Norway for Subsea7, so I can hardly complain about foreign workers. However, if these foreign workers were the best person for job, and paid the same rate as a EU worker I would have no point to argue.

**M0117723**

**All subsea 7 employees** have just had a letter from the company. It tells us all that there will be no bonuses or pay rise to anyone within the company.

Then we hear that ROV jobs are going to Phillipino crews (nice). Next we hear that the CEO of Subsea 7, Mel Fitzgerald has had a £600,000 bonus on top of his £350,000 wage.

He also received shares in his name that were paid for by the company.

And do Norwegian oil companies know that Phillipino ROV pilots are working aboard the Seven Sisters in Norwegian waters for \$20 to \$30 u.s. per day?

I wonder what the UK and Norwegian press would make of this?

Food for thought?

**M0120805**

**I work as a caterer on a BP platform** off Humberside. I just came offshore on Friday. I brought with me a few copies of EiE and placed a few around the rec rooms and sent a couple of copies over to the other BP platforms. I have had 7 or 8 lads contacting me, asking for info about joining the union. This was after them reading a letter from one of their colleagues, that was published in the last EiE. Which to me shows what a great recruitment tool EiE is.

We have just been informed that BP are thinking of bringing back a bonus scheme for the OCA lads to make up for the short fall in wages with their new wage agreement.

Now it has been brought up that the caterers should be involved in this scheme - which would be nice. But my way of thinking is that, if the OCA lads let them get away with them dropping their wages this time - who will be next?

Also if they can afford to pay out bonuses to make up for the short fall in wages, why are they dropping the wages in the first place?

I haven't heard of any of the BP personnel being asked to take a cut in their wages.

**D061876**

**"I have just received a new contract from Perenco.** To put you in the picture we got a new contract in November last year putting us on a two on three off cycle as from January first this year. This contract contained all the usual details as regards payments and terms and conditions etc. They have now sent out another contract which puts us back on, "two on two off", as of January first 2010. This in itself is unacceptable and a step back as far as I personally am concerned, but they are only giving us two weeks holiday plus paying us for two weeks at the onshore rate. We had three weeks paid holiday before we went two and three so how can they go back to less now?

There do not appear to be many people in the union down here (SNS) so a lot of the others are moaning in the T shacks etc but do not take it any further. The ones who are union members seem to be in Unison or Unite so do not see them getting much support.

The reason given for this going full circle is the economic climate but, again personally, I think that is a load of bull and just the company jumping on the bandwagon.

There is one specific phrase in this new contract which really gets to me, and that is that they are, "gifting" me two weeks holiday. Who do they think they are? Santa Claus?" Since then I have received a letter notifying me that

I should delete the word "gifting" from the contract and initial it and sign it and send it back.

Maybe I can do this with any other parts of the contract that I don't like? (I don't think so).

There is a member of the company's HR team out here today to do the one to one meetings with us all. This will be the first time that a member of the HR team has been out here (on my shift anyway) since all this started back in April. Consultation? Too little too late.

**M0104650**

**I read the letter from the electrician** with no back to back, who likes hill-walking. I used to do quite a lot before I went offshore 8 years ago. If any of the lads are interested in forming a hill-walking or trekking group/club then I for one would be up for it, rota allowing of course. By the way nice to see Bob C. and Jake on the news. This publicity can only be good for us and I'm sure will create more interest with the boys offshore who are still sitting on the fence. Also when I went out to the forties 2 weeks ago it was full of new faces, I had mixed views on this as many of my WG pals had disappeared (hopefully to better contracts). I will miss some of these guys and wish them all the best. It was good to see that Wood Group had not totally abandoned all these experienced guys to the clutches of Apache and Petrofac. Apache are not having things all their own way as the Forties is now full of green hats and Petrofac appear not even to have experienced or regular supervisors. I hope this teaches Apache in future not to try to scupper the various agreements which are in place to protect us all. Keep up the good work,

**M0106816**

**I have just heard a quiet rumour** that someone (maybe SS7, maybe it's come from elsewhere) is looking to get rid of medics onboard vessels with less than 100 crew. Apparently there is no legal need for a trained medic unless you have more than 100 people onboard. But how many lives will be lost/affected by the half-arsed application of medicine from an uninterested first officer?

**W002909**



## They are workers like us and don't take strike action unless they have to – like us

Support the posties by Chris Webb, CWU union divisional rep for South Wales/South West

Royal Mail bosses are determined to run down the postal service, making it slower, more expensive and less reliable. They hope that if it gets bad enough the public will support another effort to privatise the company.

Many post workers have been in the job all their adult lives. We are committed to delivering a service based on need. The bosses and the government are in this for the short-term, and are only interested in profits. Royal Mail is slashing thousands of full-time jobs. More than 50,000 posts have been cut since 2002 and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Ultimately, they want to replace almost all full-time jobs with workers on part-time or temporary contracts.

But part-time work means part-time pay, part-time pensions, part-time sick pay – and part-time rights. Royal Mail boss Adam Crozier is Britain's highest paid public servant. Since arriving at the company in 2003 he's pocketed £6 million in pay and bonuses.

Post workers, on the other hand, are among the poorest in Britain. We earn around £100 less a week than the average skilled worker and many of us can only survive on overtime.

Now Royal Mail is telling us we have to accept a pay freeze – and that at least part of our overtime should be compulsory and free. Our union, CWU, is the biggest barrier to those who want to cut jobs, services and pay in the post – and that's why the company and the government are trying to drive us out of the industry. To get their way they are bullying and intimidating our members, and using managers and non-unionised casual staff in an effort to break our regional strikes.

Bosses everywhere are watching what happens in this dispute. If Royal Mail can drive the union out of the postal service, others will try to do the same. If the postal workers win, every

## OILC Conference postponed – watch this space

The OILC (Offshore Grades) Conference planned for October 22 and 23 has been postponed by the National Officer Steve Todd because of organisational problems. The conference has been rescheduled for early in the New Year. The venue will be the Carmelite Hotel, Aberdeen (round the corner from the OILC office)

Details of the dates, eligibility to attend, expenses for attendance, etc, will be announced just as soon as these details have been decided by the Shipping and Offshore Committee of the Council of Executives and relayed to the branch(es).

All grades have the right to be represented at the conference. Members from catering, construction/engineering, the diving and ROV fleets and drilling, are invited to consider applying for credentials. The branch will endeavour to accommodate all who want to attend, subject to rule.

We need to develop a strategy for achieving effective unionisation of the different sectors of the industry. An overall strategy needs to be hammered out and individual strategies developed to meet the different challenges of the different sectors.

It has never been so obvious that these strategies, and the practice which will have to flow from them, and the resources that will have to be provided to make them work, will have to be hammered out by the offshore membership. The OILC Branch must determine how we organise 26,000 workers with the support of the entire union. The leadership of the union must give effective leadership.

Two resolutions from the grades conference will automatically go before next year's AGM. If we are to get the fullest support for organising the North Sea from the leadership of the union we need to debate and decide on our priorities – and what leadership we expect from the National Union.

My sincere apologies to those of you who made plans to ensure attendance on the original dates. I hope you will make every effort to accommodate the changes. Please contact the branch secretary, [oilc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:oilc.secretary@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending and he will contact you as soon as the information is available.

## Allowance of £140 a year before tax

Derek Moore, the leading “rep” amongst RMT divers, has recently clarified with HMRC that offshore “constructional engineering” workers claiming flat rate expenses against their employed income (PAYE) are eligible for a tax allowance of £140 a year before tax. Those entitled to this allowance include riggers scaffolders, burners, erectors, fitters, platers, sheeters, template workers, turners and welders.

See [www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/eimanual/EIM32712.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/eimanual/EIM32712.htm)

For a 20% tax payer this is a saving of £28 per annum or £56 if you pay 40% tax and you can make a claim for the preceding 6 years.

Rigging personnel who claim SED (*guys on the ROV and Diving fleets - ed*) would not be eligible for a rebate in the year of the claim as you claim exemption from tax under SED rules and any unused relief cannot be carried forward to following years.

worker wins. Our battle is one of the first in what will be a wider war. All political parties are preparing massive cuts in public spending and if the Tories win the next election, they will be absolutely ruthless.

The post workers' strike is about

drawing a line in the sand and telling any future government that we will not accept the smashing of our services.

If we are beaten, bosses everywhere will say: if we can take on the CWU and win, we can break you too. We must not allow them to do that.

## Enough is Enough at [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) The bulletin board for RMT members offshore

The biggest thing to hit the North Sea in years (well in trade union terms anyway) was the OILC Branch Bulletin, "Enough is Enough", that appeared when OILC merged with RMT. EiE kicked open the door and let offshore workers talk about what's going on on their installation and just how they feel about things.

Well it's all change again and we are looking at a giant leap in terms of how trade unionists on the North Sea are going to be able to communicate and organise from here on in.

A couple of our members have appeared from "left field" and taken the whole concept of providing a platform for offshore workers to a whole new level. (No! - that's not the "left wing") I think one of them is an ROVER but the other one seems to be quite smart. So we now have our own dedicated bulletin board, also called "Enough is Enough", and this edition marks the beginning of our branch bulletin morphing into a hybrid - a paper come electronic event.

The paper is still here as you see. You'll recognise the format. It will still drive the branch out towards the offshore workforce. We'll still need to get it to the heliports, and our activists will still have to carry it onto the rigs. The branch will still have the opportunity of looking for and confronting all offshore workers, members and non members alike, with information they wouldn't necessarily have gone looking for. But now, for those of you who want more, you will be able to download the electronic version at [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) and at [www.oilc.org](http://www.oilc.org). This edition will have a "bonus" section carrying as many letters from our members (or indeed non members) as they can get in to us.

On top of this our members will be able to interact with all the articles and letters. If you think an article is good, then come on line at [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) and add your take on the issue. If you think it's off the mark? Well you can do exactly the same thing, and set our correspondent straight. (but show a little respect to fellow workers - they don't get any from their employers and you don't want to stoop to that level).

## You'll have to be in the OILC Branch to continue getting the paper edition of "Enough is Enough"

One of the underlying benefits of the new hybrid "Enough is Enough" is that it gives us flexibility, as we are not now tied to 4, 8 or 12 pages. Once we have filled the paper edition, our electronic version can have 1, 2 or 3 extra pages if necessary. But even more important than the flexibility is the cost. It has allowed us to stabilise printing costs while allowing us to expand the content in line with our expanding membership, and allow many more of our members to express themselves in each edition.

Printing and posting "Enough is Enough" is by far the major expenditure of the OILC Branch, and this cost came up for discussion at our last meeting, when the branch took the decision to stop sending out the paper copy to offshore members out with the OILC Branch. Against these financial considerations, it was argued that stopping EiE to a section of the offshore membership was a retrograde step, and that it was potentially divisive. However the branch insisted that this was not the intention, and that RMT members in other branches could still get "Enough is Enough" sent to them from the branch in electronic format if we have their email addresses. Or that these members could download it from [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) or [www.oilc.org](http://www.oilc.org)

The 1200 or so RMT offshore members who will be affected are mainly members of the Aberdeen and North East Shipping Branches. They are mostly caterers, divers, and "subsea" workers (guys on the ROV fleet). Neither of these branches were ever asked to, nor never did, contribute to the production costs of "Enough is Enough" which have always been borne by the OILC Branch. Both had been asked to contribute to postage costs for sending EiE to their branch members. The NE Shipping Branch had done so for some time but stopped. Aberdeen Shipping never did. The OILC Branch fully respects the decision of both of these branches to decide how to spend their branch money and if it does not include helping the offshore energy branch service offshore workers in the Shipping branches then I suppose that has to do with the priorities. But it's a pity nevertheless. **STOP PRESS** - Newly elected Regional Organiser for the Scottish Region, Michael Hogg sends his thanks to OILC Branch members who voted for him in the recent elections - more in EiE10.

## OILC Branch of RMT Annual General Meeting Cafe 'Dag, Crown St, Aberdeen Wednesday November 18 at 13:00

At the OILC Branch meeting in Aberdeen on October 7, all serving branch officials were nominated for re-election to their respective positions. If there are no further nominations before, or at, the branch AGM, to be held in Aberdeen on November 19, then these officers will be returned for another year.

The current branch secretary Neil Rothnie, while thanking the branch for the undoubted honour of a nomination, and before accepting it, pointed out that the job in its present form was ultimately untenable despite the fact that a large part of the secretary's duties were being undertaken by the Branch Chairman.

In large part the secretary's job is victim of the OILC's success since it became the offshore energy branch of RMT. In the 18 months since the merger well over 1000 members have joined the branch, more than double the amount who had left the union at the point of the merger.

The vast majority of these recruits were taken into a branch mailing list that has swelled from 200 to 1800. These members receive regular updates and information. And as part of the 4200 offshore workers organised by RMT have received all nine editions of the OILC Branch Bulletin "Enough is Enough", the production of which has been a main responsibility of the branch secretary.

Neil pointed out that if the aim of the RMT was to organise the bulk of the industry's 26,000 workers then it was obvious that new organisational units would be required, possibly along the Norwegian Klubb model or perhaps mirroring the way our new bulletin board at [www.nokernok.com](http://www.nokernok.com) is set up. But this certainly cannot not be done with the resources accruing to a single branch of the union. And if it is indeed to remain the aim of RMT to "organise" the North Sea, then a major task of the secretary in the coming year would be to investigate how this task could feasibly be progressed.

The secretary was able to welcome onto the branch committee a member active in the campaign to halt Subsea7's attack on wages and conditions. And the secretary was authorised by the branch to approach a number of other members who had become active in the work of the branch in the recent past. If you want to join the OILC branch Committee, contact the Branch Secretary at [oilc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:oilc.secretary@gmail.com) and he will offer you every assistance. **BUT PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND WHETHER OR NOT YOU WANT TO JOIN THE BRANCH COMMITTEE.** The branch cannot conduct its business unless the members attend.