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## Lest We Forget

Posted by Clare - 2008/07/05 23:42

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Twenty years ago today 167 people perished in the North Sea following gas explosions on the Piper Alpha. They died terrible deaths. Can any of us ever forget the moment pictures started to reach our television screens of that rig burning?

And isn't it simply unbelievable that even now, twenty years on oil rig workers are still sacked for raising concerns about safety? Well, I say sacked, what happens to them is that once they raise a concern they are somehow no longer needed and are "let go".

This is an industry that makes billions for Oil Companies and for this country. How scandalous is it that even now safety isn't the first priority?

My brother worked on the Piper at one time. He knew many of those who died. I recall his frantic efforts phoning round to make sure friends from those days were safe. I remember his grief on learning about the ones who didn't make it. But I will never forget watching the pictures of that rig burning. What choices were before those people? To stay and burn as the explosions came or to jump into the burning sea below them and hope for the best?

Our family is Catholic and my brother had given up attendance at mass many years earlier however my sister and I used to find it amusing that on the day he would be due back on the rig he would go to mass before heading for the train up to Aberdeen. He said quite simply if the journey over the North Sea on a chopper out to the rig didn't get you praying nothing ever would.

There is simply no excuse for the fact that today safety isn't THE major issue in the Oil Industry. The Piper was the worst ever accident in the industry and yet people are STILL being "let go" for raising safety issues? That is something we must address now. That so many governments have failed to deal with the issue over a twenty year period is an insult to those who died.

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## Re:Lest We Forget

Posted by Clare - 2008/07/06 20:37

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Does no one care about this?

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## Re:Lest We Forget

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/06 21:03

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Yes, Claire I am sure they care; the death of these men shows just how lacking in regulations these rigs are.

I probably cannot imagine the anger of these families.

Most of these men were family men.

I spent some time trying to find articles about the employment regulations on these rigs and found nothing. I know this is an issue as is union membership, holidays, and sickness benefit.

I am trying to imagine what the families must have felt when losing these men in terrible circumstances and then to discover no protection for families.

The families were probably aware that safety regulations were not adhered to as the men most likely discussed this. How must the families have felt when they realised how the full extent after the men died?

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## Re:Lest We Forget

Posted by dws - 2008/07/06 21:43

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Clare wrote:

Does no one care about this?

I do. I have a good friend that works on the rigs as a tool-pusher, and he is quite forthright in his opinions.

This sort of management is rife though, it's not just on the rigs...

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## Re:Lest We Forget

Posted by Clare - 2008/07/06 21:53

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dws wrote:

Clare wrote:

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Hiya dws

There is an article in today's SH where Ian Tasker of the STUC actually admits those who make their concerns about safety know are then "let go". He didn't seem to have anything to say about it. I was astonished. I wonder exactly what the STUC is doing about it. He didn't seem to have much to say. How outrageous is that? Comments on the thread included some by oil workers some of whom said they would not touch the UK sector with a bargepole because the safety is still so bad. After what happened to the Piper? Surely this is one issue where we have to demand instant action by the government (no matter what Party is in charge)? It isn't good enough. In fact given that our sector saw the world's worst accident in the oil industry it is completely shocking. I've started by emailing the STUC and asked them outright exactly what they're doing about it other than giving pathetic quotes about it to the SH and very little else. info@stuc.org.uk

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