

Q&A - WITHOUT THE SPIN!



A great deal has been written up recently by the OCA employers as we move toward a potential industrial action situation. The tactic the employers have used is a Q&A approach which employees are told is – “designed to help answer your questions”. Really? So it has nothing to do with scaremongering or intimidating and certainly nothing to do with trying to divide workers, right?

As part of the feedback we have received from workers during our “Road Shows” and our recent Webinar, we have been asked to provide our version of a Q&A. We’ve chosen a selection of the same Q’s used by the employers to enable you to consider the ‘alternative’ opinion.

Q. Why is an industrial action ballot taking place?

A. *Because offshore workers and members of the trade unions voted to reject a pay offer.*

Q. What offer did the OCA make to Unite and GMB members?

A. *The offer equated to £0.39 pence an hour on the Basic OCA rate which equals £4.68 a day offshore. However, for most salaried staff there would be **no increase** meaning for those who have had rota’s changed and pay cut and a freeze on pay for 3-years with inflation running at over 3%, there will be no review.*

Q. Does the ballot affect me?

A. *The ballot, the negotiations, the outcome; it will affect all workers employed by an OCA company in some way which is why every worker should get involved, join a trade union and stand with their colleagues.*

There are one or two questions, or more importantly answers, that we wish to highlight and the first of these refers to; “What does industrial action involve i.e. what does it mean to go on strike?” We doubt whether this was

submitted as a genuine question but the answer provided by the employers speaks volumes about the real purpose of this exercise as it states;

“Any employee who participates in industrial action will be in breach of their contract of employment and will not receive pay for the period during which they participated in strike action, their period of continuous service will also be reduced by the equivalent time. Employees who participate in unlawful industrial action will be the subject of disciplinary action which will be taken into account for future employment and for any future redundancy activity.”

We see this as an appalling attempt to scare workers and a clear threat of blacklisting. All of the trade unions have been clear with all workers; if you are not a member of Unite, GMB or RMT and you are not involved in the ballot you should **NOT** get involved in any industrial action. However, if you wish to support your colleagues in their fight to improve YOUR conditions, you should join one of the trade unions involved.

We then see the question; “Will I lose my job or be blacklisted if I strike?” The employers are of course compelled to confirm that it is unlawful to blacklist workers, and they equally confirm that employees are in fact protected in law while taking lawful strike action. But again they cannot resist the veiled threat as they state;

“It is worth bearing in mind that you may also be putting your job at risk – strike action could result in the loss of your employer’s contract with it’s client.”

It would take this entire edition to explain the protections workers have when contracts change and the law is complex, but our simple reaction to this suggestion is – it would be a

foolish and reckless “client” that terminates a contract and puts all contract workers off their installation. And we would say it is ‘worth bearing in mind’ that this veiled threat could not be enacted where workers stand together as to do so would almost certainly mean the shutting down of an installation. Nevertheless the employers can’t resist having yet another go at it when they run the question; “Will people on strike offshore be removed from the installation? Can they refuse?” Another threat comes in the answer provided;

“Workers on strike may be removed from the installation. If they refuse to do so voluntarily legal action will be taken. This is necessary to maintain the safety of all individuals on the installation.” As we indicated above, it would be a reckless and unsafe act for a client to remove the very people who ensure the installation is operating safely. The easy way to prevent this is to stand together, protect each other and yourself, protect the contract, protect your job – join a trade union.

The trade unions involved in this dispute and across the industry generally are all too aware of the difficulties the industry faces, we’ve been dealing with it for nearly 3-years now. We have been representing thousands of workers facing redundancy, or significant cuts and major changes to working practices. We are still dealing with many ruthless employers who continue to force through more and more changes with the threats of more cuts and more lay-off. Members of Unite, RMT and GMB, a section of the offshore workforce, have said “enough is enough” and we support them in that because that’s what we do, we support workers.

Stay updated on all things OCG by registering your details with Nikki on ocg.project.coord@gmail.com

General Election – excuses excuses!

You should by now be aware that a General Election is pending and the country will go to the polls on June 8th. We are told by the press and all political commentators that it will be a landslide victory for the Tories and they will command a huge majority in the Commons. We are also told this is going to happen because of one thing, or more accurately, one person – Jeremy Corbyn.

As representatives of workers we find this difficult to believe, but if there is indeed anyone who says they are voting Tory because of Jeremy Corbyn, we would suggest this is a pretty poor excuse to justify where their vote is going. If this is you, why not just stand up and say;

“I am a Tory! I WANT the NHS to be privatised; I WANT our schools to be underfunded; I WANT Nurses to pay for their own training; I WANT austerity cuts to continue; I WANT Police numbers to be cut further; I WANT our armed forces to be at the lowest level since the Napoleonic Wars; I WANT the well off and big business to avoid paying taxes; I WANT to work until I drop dead despite the fact I have been paying for a pension all of my working life!” It is your vote and your right to cast it where you want, we wouldn't suggest otherwise.

But please find a better excuse for voting Tory than “Anyone but Corbyn”.

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY - 28TH APRIL 2017

Throughout the world on 28th April each year, Trade Union organisations arrange memorial and wreath laying services to pay our respects to workers who have lost their lives in the industry.

It's very important that we remember those workers who have lost their lives at work due to accidents or industrial diseases in the offshore Oil and Gas industry.

*We will always
remember the dead.
We will continue to fight
for the living!*

It's our task as Trade Unionists to ensure that all work on oil and gas installations and the transport to work is carried out in a safe manner. Far too many offshore workers have died going to and coming home from oil and gas installations around the world which is why all Trade Unions in

the UK are still campaigning for a full public inquiry into all the helicopter accidents in the North Sea!

Good Health & Safety practices are good for workers and they are also good for employers because absence from work due to accidents or industry related illness is very costly to any business.

Therefore financial investment in good Health & Safety training and adopting accident prevention measures is always in the interests of both employees and employers.

We need to ensure that all Health & Safety laws are protected and any criticism of Health & Safety rules as “too much red tape” needs to be constantly challenged.

We will always prefer the “Red Tape” rules to “Red Bloodied Bandages”.

We prefer to see families attending birthdays and other happy family gatherings instead of attending premature funerals of their loved ones killed at work through accidents or dying because of industrial related diseases.

Untimely deaths can be avoided by good Health & Safety practices that are the result of meaningful engagement with workers and their Health & Safety Representatives. We give our commitment to be continually organising for improved Health & Safety practices when we gather at the Memorial and Wreath Laying Services organised by the Trade Unions held in various towns and cities across Scotland, the rest of the UK and also around the world on International Workers Memorial Day on the 28th April each year.

We will always remember the dead.

We will continue to fight for the living!

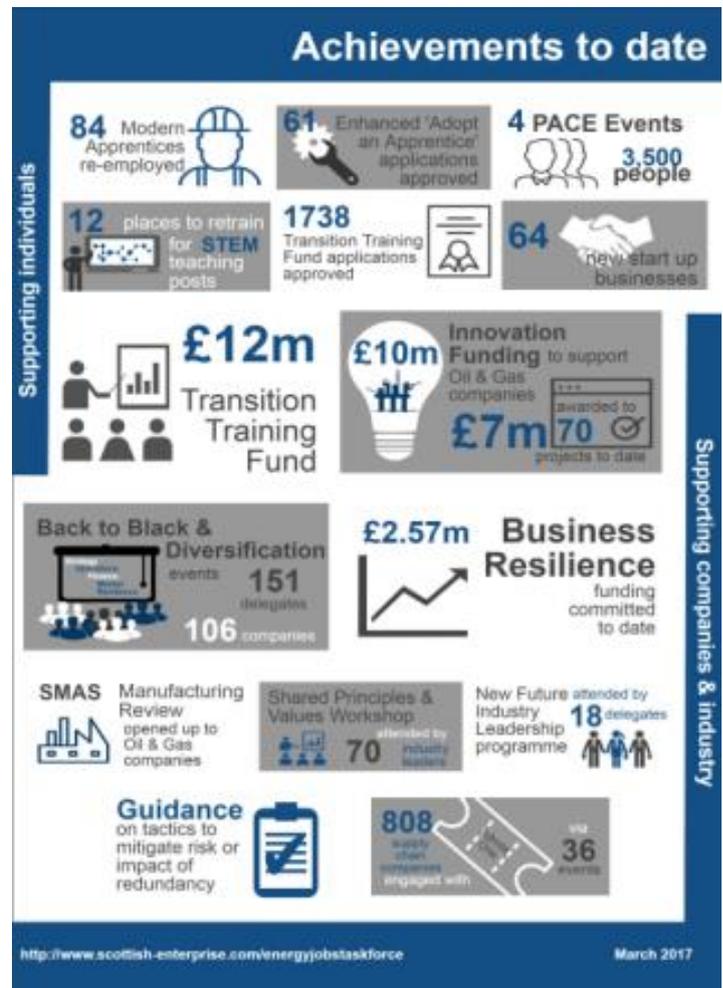


“Energy Jobs Task Force”? Really?

During our recent road shows the Trade Union officials have been giving reports on their activities out with the industrial relations forums. The trade unions are involved with a wide range of groups and meet different organisations as part of their efforts to protect and promote workforce issues. From the obvious Step Change in Safety or the Offshore Helicopter Safety Group to meeting with Governments and regulatory authorities the TU's provide a voice for offshore workers. However a few questions have been asked about one particular group the Trade Unions sit on, the “Energy Jobs Task Force” (EJTF) and the question has inevitably been – what have they done?

The graphic to the right was produced by the EJTF as an illustration of the key scopes of work undertaken and provides you with a snap shot of why the group is important. The EJTF was set up by the Scottish Government and involves a wide range of stakeholders. The aim is to provide support to those unfortunately out of a job, while trying to create and promote other initiatives which might sustain jobs, develop skills, provide new training and opportunities. The STUC and offshore TU's have been involved since the group was created.

It's important to point out that oil and gas operations in terms of regulation, licensing, taxation, employment rights, health and safety and revenues etc are not a devolved matters. These issues and many more such as social dumping remain completely under the control of Westminster. We mention this because many members are from other regions of the UK or Europe and may not see the work or benefits of the EJTF. What the EJTF have done may still seem very little in the bigger scheme of things, but for those who have benefited their work has been invaluable.



WEBINAR IS A SUCCESS!

On 9th May, the OCG held their first webinar for offshore workers to log in from home, work, or anywhere they could access a phone, tablet or computer! Trade Union officials present were Tommy Campbell (Chair of OCG) and Jake Molloy (Vice Chair of OCG). With nearly 40 people registered to log in, there was an array of different questions asked providing a healthy and at times lively debate.

You can tune in now and watch the debate in full using the link below, but here is just a sample of the question posed on the night

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B5u-3V4mUrw5SkdxZFVKTtBzZDA>

Q: As a supervisor will I have union protection when on strike?

Q: OCA and COTA send out Q&A's, will the OCG put out counter arguments to these?

Q: If a non-member joins up for the union during the ballot period, will they be protected from their employer? Will they get a ballot paper and will they be allowed to take part in the industrial action?

Absolutely fantastic way to kick off the webinars and we will be back very soon, look out for the next date!

"Join a trade union?
I don't know if I can
afford it"

OCG

Can you afford
not to?



WHY JOIN A TRADE UNION?



WHAT ARE THEY ABOUT?



Representation at
grievances and disciplinary

Greater job security



Legal advice and
representation

Equal pay and equal
opportunities



Employment issues advice

Fought for NRB guidelines,
fighting blacklisting



Protecting pay and
conditions

Fighting zero hour
contracts



Campaign on
the issues that
matter to you

Fighting
social
dumping



Giving you a
voice

Pension
provisions



Help when
things go
wrong

Bullying &
harassment /
discrimination
policies



Health &
Safety support
and advice

Holiday
Entitlement



The typical cost of a solicitor
in the UK for ONE HOUR is
more than the annual
subscription cost of a union.
That works out at the same
cost as your daily
newspaper.

Flexible working, family
friendly policies



Workplace learning and
better benefits

