

EDITORIALS

From the Chairman

JOBS: A KEY CONTRIBUTION

IT'S ENCOURAGING TO see ExxonMobil Corp turning a serious eye forward improving the industry's public image. As reported in a recent *Houston Chronicle* article, ExxonMobil plans a series of new television ads highlighting our high-technology operations in pristine environments, such as offshore Canada and pastoral Germany.

ExxonMobil is also taking aim at the longstanding perception, particularly in North America, of conniving, price-fixing Big Oil. By extension, this myth, dating to the

era of **John D Rockefeller**, extends to us in the oil-service industry, as well.

The company's Vice President of Public Affairs, **Ken-neth Cohen**, was quoted as saying, "Much of the criticism of conventional hydrocarbon energy is, in fact, misguided and, in fact, some of it is politically motivated. In truth, our industry has not done nearly enough to communicate the

essential role we play and how we go about providing energy and products that contribute to economic growth, not just here in the US, but on a global basis, and help improve the lives of millions of people around the world."

ExxonMobil is also encouraging other majors to join the effort to correct public misconceptions.

I couldn't applaud Mr Cohen's words, nor ExxonMobil's efforts more fervently. It is the responsibility of us all in this industry to relentlessly preach the gospel of the vitality of our industry.

Sometimes, however, our efforts to do just that have been at best ignored and, at worst, counter-productive. Since the 1970s, in response to lengthy gasoline queues in North America, we have trumpeted national security as the cornerstone of maintaining a "national energy policy". This was basically a code word for enhancing domestic production. That's a worthy goal and an insightful argument. However, the national-security pitch, I think, has proven itself too subtle for the oblivious public, especially as gasoline prices have generally fallen dramatically in the last 25 years. The current war-driven spike in gasoline prices shows every sign of abating, and we have not seen gasoline lines in two and a half decades.

We as an industry should step back and take stock of other vital contributions we bring to society—beyond providing a nationally strategic commodity.

First and foremost is jobs. The petroleum industry is a huge employer, and not just in Houston. In the Gulf of Mex-

ico, significant numbers of offshore production and drilling employees hail from rural sections of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama. Compared to others in these often economically under-developed regions, our industry's employees earn substantial wages. This money works to the betterment of their communities, from construction of their homes to shopping at the local supermarket.

The bottom line is that offshore workers hold good, high-paying jobs. Increasingly, these jobs involve knowledge and use of technology. We could certainly do a better job of telling this story. Awareness of our economic contribution should also help us in our political efforts to get Capitol Hill to sit up and listen.

Jobs are a key part of our good story. We should make the most of it. ■

From the President

GEDOGEN

THE DUTCH HAVE a word, "*Gedogen*", which means that although something is not legal, it is tolerated. A well known example of "gedogen" is the Dutch policy on drugs: while it is illegal to traffic in drugs, the sale and use "in reasonable amounts" is not prosecuted.

This stands in stark contrast to the "zero tolerance" policy toward drugs in the offshore workplace. Sufficient evidence exists to show that drug use contributes to unsafe work, exposing all workers to increased risk of accidents. All employees (from CEO to the newest hire) are informed of this policy and their consent to testing for drug use is secured prior to being dispatched to work offshore. It is an acknowledgement and agreement among working men to protect themselves and fellow co-workers by strict enforcement of a policy that enhances safety.

Recently, in the North Sea, authorities seized a parcel of "distribution quantity" amphetamines being shipped to an offshore facility. The company immediately sent medical personnel to the facility (in accordance with prescribed policy) and conducted drug tests to identify those violating this trust to their fellow workers.

Anguished cries of "foul" leapt from a local mouthpiece purporting to speak for labor. The company was chastised for their quick, firm response in acting to eliminate this threat to safe operations.

The UK regulatory authority constantly pressures the offshore industry to improve safety on rigs and platforms. And, rightly so. Industry and government are aligned in their commitment to protect lives and prevent harm. It's too bad that others cannot get off their "gedogen" and join the effort to make offshore a safe and healthy working environment. ■



Lawrence R Dickerson, Chairman



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