

EDITORIALS

From the Chairman

IADC: A SINGLE, STRONG VOICE

IT IS AN HONOR to have been chosen to serve this year as Chairman of the International Association of Drilling Contractors. IADC plays a critical role in our industry standing as a united front on issues of the day for the global drilling industry.

Whether it is gaining access to promising E&P regions, regulatory and governmental initiatives, training or HSE, IADC can be a stronger advocate on the industry's behalf than any individual member. IADC is well positioned to work not only with other



C Stedman Garber Jr, Chairman

industry organizations, but with key government agencies, including US Minerals Management Service, US Coast Guard, UK Health & Safety Executive, UK Department of Trade & Industry, US Occupational Safety and Health Administration, International Maritime Organization, among others.

Every day IADC provides service to the industry in a myriad of ways large and small—

IADC Daily Drilling Reports, the industry's principle rig data reporting format; "IADC Drilling Manual", "IADC Accident Prevention Reference Guide" and a host of other industry-developed references; accreditation programs for training in rig safety (RIG PASS) and well control (WellCAP); conferences covering diverse issues and topics; our official periodicals *Drilling Contractor* and *Drill Bits*.

Regulatory and governmental challenges are many and varied. There are "headline" issues that garner a great deal of attention in the mainstream public and media. However, many of the issues lack glamour and rarely make the headlines. Despite the apparent lack of sizzle, though, the work is vital. We achieve our goals of sensible regulation by being the experts on rig dynamics, operation and design.

A recent case in point provides an illuminating example. To meet new rules governing cooling-water intake, the EPA would have required \$1.5 million in modifications on most offshore drilling rigs seeking to operate on newly permitted OCS leases. IADC identified the problems posed by the proposed rules and built a coalition to oppose them. As a result, EPA delayed imposing these regulations on offshore rigs and other E&P offshore facilities. EPA admitted they had not anticipated the impact of the rule on offshore E&P activities!

That is just one example of IADC's work over the past year. For more, please check out the 2001 IADC Report to the Members on our website (www.iadc.org).

Currently, one of the issues that looms large is security of E&P facilities. The prospect of a terrorist attack on a US

energy target is real, whether a nuclear plant, offshore drilling or production facility, pipeline, tanker or something else. Your association has risen to the challenge. IADC is an active participant on an industry task group led by API to design a system to share threat and security information. In addition, we are also participating in the Gulf Safety Committee, a group that includes the US Coast Guard. At press time, committee met on January 17, primarily to discuss offshore security and established an Offshore Security subcommittee.

It is through the efforts and perseverance of dedicated volunteers and highly skilled staff that IADC's advocacy efforts and initiatives have won the small battles that create real savings for drilling contractors and pave the way for advances in our industry's efficiency. ■

From the President

GONE FISHING

2002 STARTED WITH a bang! On 1 January the *New Orleans Times Picayune* and the *Mobile (Alabama) Register* each ran a story declaring: "Gulf Rigs Islands of Contamination". The author of this distortion alleges that drilling rigs and production platforms are a dangerous source of mercury pollution in the Gulf of Mexico. Noting that the 4,000 platforms in the Gulf are "widely known as hotspots for commercial and recreational fishermen" he construes that "consumption of fish associated with the rigs may present a unique and potent pathway for toxic mercury contamination in humans". Even though the author notes that coal-burning power plants "have long been identified as major sources of mercury pollution" and that "federal researchers have... compelling evidence that airborne mercury from smokestacks... works its way into even the most pristine and isolated aquatic environments", it is the offshore rigs and their fish friendly eco-systems that are the culprits. Despite citing several scientific studies, the journalist (?) relies on an unscientific newspaper-sponsored "fish testing" on 65 Gulf coast residents who "said they ate fish at least once a week." Most, he says, "were... over the EPA's safe limit for methyl mercury in the human body." You can't help but wonder if any of these folks live near a coal-burning power plant, but that apparently was not part of the unscientific newspaper study!



Lee Hunt, President

In responding to this journalistic bombast, the Acting Director of the US Minerals Management Service sent a letter to both newspapers stating flatly that the allegation of mercury pollution from oil and gas drilling in the Gulf "... is simply not true." The Acting Director concluded by chastening the papers for not first checking with MMS before citing MMS studies, noting that as a result "... the public was provided serious misinformation and needlessly alarmed." MMS offered to work with the newspapers to "provide your readers the true facts—they deserve no less". Well said. We don't know if these particular papers care about going the extra step to get the true facts to their readers by contacting MMS for a follow-up. My guess is probably not. ■