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SPECIAL ISSUE

OFFSHORE ENERGY – Minister announces New Board

Mr. Eric Varley, Secretary of State for Energy made the following written reply to a question in the House of Commons yesterday (6 May).

"I have reviewed the organisation of the Department's research and development activities related to offshore oil and gas. At present this R and D forms part of the programme controlled by the Ship and Marine Technology Requirements Board (SMTRB) which also has much broader responsibilities. The SMTRB has been in existence now for just over two years and in that time has made a substantial contribution to improving the effectiveness of the Government's R and D expenditure within its field of responsibility. However the creation of the Department of Energy since the Board was established and the increasing importance of offshore oil and gas to the whole economy have led me to conclude that some changes in the organisation are necessary. Account has been taken of the proposals contained in the report of the Select Committee for Science and Technology on Offshore Engineering.

The Government has decided to transfer from the SMTRB the responsibility for R and D in the field of offshore oil and gas technology with effect from 6 May 1975. The SMTRB's role in this area will be taken over by a new Board, the Offshore Energy Technology Board (OETB), to be established by my Department. The OETB will advise me on R and D directed both towards ensuring the safety and efficiency of offshore operations and towards improving the competitive position of British industry in the offshore field.

The Board will be chaired by Dr. Marshall, the Department's Chief Scientist, who will be personally responsible for ensuring, in the light of the advice of the OETB, that the right R and D work is carried out to support the Department's total efforts in the offshore field.

Close coordination with the continuing activities of the SMTRB will be necessary and this will be achieved by cross membership of both Boards. In particular, I am glad to say that Mr. Nigel Broackes, the Chairman of the SMTRB, has accepted my invitation to become Deputy Chairman of the new Board.

These new arrangements will enable us to call upon the best possible industrial advice in reaching decisions in this important field.

To supplement the Department's resources it has been decided to draw upon the expertise already available at Harwell and elsewhere in the Atomic Energy Authority. In particular the remit of the Marine Technology Support Unit will be broadened to enable it to play an active role in supporting the OETB."

The Board's membership is as follows:-

Chairman:	Dr. W. Marshall	Chief Scientist, Department of Energy
Deputy Chairman:	Mr. N. Broackes	Chairman, Trafalgar House Investments Ltd.
Members:		
Mr. M.M. Pennell, CBE		British Petroleum
Mr. P.B. Baxendell, CBE		Shell
Mr. D.E. Rooke, CBE		British Gas
Mr. R.J.F. Taylor		Ocean Transport and Trading Ltd.
Professor T.D. Patten		Heriot-Watt University
Mr. G. Williams, OBE		United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association
Mr. R.S. Taylor		Taylor Woodrow Construction Limited
Dr. L.E.J. Roberts		Harwell
Mr. J.P. Gibson		Department of Energy
Mr. G.F. Kear		Department of Energy
Mr. B.W. Oakley		Department of Industry
Mr. B.W. Lythall, CB		Ministry of Defence
Mr. D. MacIver Robinson, OBE		Department of Trade

Shortly after the above changes were announced, Dr. Walter Marshall held a Press Conference at the Department of Energy. Details of this will be given in the regular bulletin on 9 May.

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