

offshore safety and in large part this seems due to its lack of expertise in certain areas unique to the offshore industry. Examples of these areas are deep diving, petroleum engineering and structural engineering in a marine environment. HSE would therefore have to acquire the necessary expertise. There has been general satisfaction expressed with the way the D/Energy's PED has approached its task and this is attributed to the selection of well qualified and experienced personnel. The transfer of PED's qualified personnel to HSE might offer a solution, subject to their being augmented and assimilated satisfactorily into HSE.

4.14. The satisfactory assimilation into HSE seems to us to require that their identity as a separate inspectorate should be maintained and that there should be no major dilution of expertise. There seems little doubt that the current PED inspectorate is to a certain extent under-staffed and together with the extensions of role suggested elsewhere in this Report this means further recruitment. This should, as far as possible, be of similarly highly qualified and experienced specialists, so that the inspectorate retains the confidence of the industry that problems will be discussed between equally qualified people. Other assimilation problems of a transitional nature will no doubt occur and may take some time to be solved. We consider the tasks facing the single agency are so important and immediate that delay in dealing with them cannot be allowed.

4.15. Critics of the present arrangements have, as well as advocating that a single agency be responsible, generally concluded that this should be the D/Energy. D/Energy (and its predecessors) has grown up with the offshore industry and is in the best position to understand it and its problems. The questions raised therefore are why is the offshore industry different, and why should the D/Energy be given back entire responsibility for safety matters which it had until 1977?

4.16. Perhaps the crucial differences are the environment and remoteness of the operations. The effects of the environment are felt throughout: the structures have to withstand forces not encountered onshore, and the remoteness means men have to live on top of their workplace. Plant and equipment normally separated and well spaced out on a comparable land operation have to be grouped together in close proximity on the platform. The end result is unlike anything encountered onshore.

4.17. Accepting that the offshore industry is quite different from any encountered in normal UK industrial life we now turn to the reasons it is claimed to need separate treatment. The UK economy derives great benefits from the resources being exploited on the UK Shelf. There are differences of opinion as to how these benefits can be maximised but virtually all commentators start from the common assumption that the oil in particular is a central factor in the UK's economic performance. The offshore industry is not routine; it includes some routine features but these are put together in a variety of ways to meet the need for rapid and innovative development of installations for different locations. Flexibility of approach, speed of reaction and individual treatment of each case are therefore required in dealing with the problems encountered.

4.18. Speed of response and flexibility of approach are more likely from an organisation with only one industry whose safety matters are its concern. Con-