However, a union complaint, filed in June, 1970 with the NLRB regarding safety practices in Shell's Martinez, California refinery, where workers are now on strike, illustrates the consequences of the company's insistence that workplace health decisions remain purely in its hands:

> One of the most important and dangerous facets of the practice and policy is that portion which provides that the Company will have the final say as to whether a particular job is safe or not and that the Supervisor will make the final decision and order the employee to do the job. If he declines he will be "walked to the gate." The Company has refused to allow employees to have a Union Representative present in such circumstances, even though such dispute is leading to disciplinary action. The Company has confirmed this repeatedly in numerous meetings and in writing. In the case of one employee, Henderson, he was ordered to light off a furnace ... He objected that it was unsafe. Two other Operators told the Foreman its was not mechanically safe nor had it been properly purged. The Foreman called the Department Manager at home and then told Henderson that they decided that it was safe and to light it off. All employees have been told what will happen if they refuse. All employees have been told that under circumstances they will not be allowed Union representation until after the work is performed. Mr. Henderson struck the torch and was burned to death.

Inadequate preventive maintenance of refineries is yet another example of Shell's profits first, safety second policy. According to Roy Barnes, former President of the striking OCAW local in Pasadena, Texas, Shell's idea is to "...run the plant until it falls apart, then shut it down, repair what must be repaired, and bring it up as fast as possible. The plant maintenance forces have been cut below the absolute minimum required to keep the plant in any sort of repair..." In 1968, a pipeline explosion at the Pasadena plant caused the deaths of two men and serious injury to two others. The pipeline carried sulfuric acid and propylene; it had been allowed to corrode to the thickness of a beer can as a result of Shell's run-the-refinery-till-it-falls-apart policy. A young worker named Eddie Bourgeois was killed at Shell's Norco refinery in a similar incident a number of years ago. Although it results in death, minimizing preventive maintenance is a continuing policy because it allows oil companies to increase refinery production while decreasing the size of the workforce.

Because of these policies, oil and chemical workers live in constant danger and the communities surrounding refineries are ecological disaster areas. As long as profit remains the only objective of Shell and of other companies, it is likely that environmental devastation will increase and intensify both in the workplace and in the community. It is crucial, therefore, that the few men who control Shell be forced to consider the interests of workers and the public, as well as the economic interests of their corporations.

For further information on the energy industry, we suggest the following readings:

The Politics of Oil; Private Power and Democratic Directions, by Robert Engler, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1967.

The Political Economy of International Oil and the Underdeveloped Countries, by Michael Tanzer. Beacon Press, Boston, 1969.

The Last Play; The Struggle to Control the World's Energy Resources, by James Ridgeway. E.P. Dutton, New York, 1973.