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## H.A.B. Meeting

On Monday May the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007 I attended the Halibut Advisory Board meeting in Vancouver. I was unable to stay until the conclusion of the meeting because of flight times, but I would like to present some conclusions and observations.

Advisors participate in the process on a volunteer base. All of the participants are fishers or license holders of one form or another and are not paid for their time. Some have been reimbursed for their out of pocket expenses prior to Larocque, but nevertheless, do not have the time to participate in all the meeting requirements, or research requirements and as a result, could be considered little more, than damage control. Some of the participants like myself that haven't been involved in the existing advisory process for some time, become frustrated with those that are willing to put the time into this ineffective advisory and committee process, (to which I am not one), responsible for the resulting chaos. The political policy makers, that are circumventing industry involvement, or minimizing their input through these advisory processes, are funded through various forms of government agencies, to which we, as an industry, have no capacity or authority to hold these government funded bureaucracies accountable. There is no advisory process that allows industry to take any meaningful responsibility for management results, other than the term "consultation." Here are a couple of examples.

There was a presentation on the possible listing of a number of species of concern to which the consequences to the fishing industry could be devastating. The government passed a Species At Risk Act that to my knowledge industry had no input and has no input. The Committee On The Status Of Endangered Wildlife in Canada is a Committee to which industry can only participate at the approval, or invitation of the committee members and of course without funding. All members of the committee are funded through some government agency, or some environmental organization. All participants involved in listing species under the Species At Risk Act are also funded through government agencies. The process of evaluating a particular aquatic species is accomplished through funding for the examination of catch statistics, which of course varies with regulatory policy, and has little bearing on actual biomass. Some of the species up for review are Yelloweye Rockfish, Canary Rockfish, Vermilion Rockfish and Dogfish. It was also pointed out that dogfish play a very important part in the eco system, to which there seems to be no definition of what a very important part means. Vermilion Rockfish have always been in low abundance in British Columbian waters. What will be the consequences to industry of protecting this species? There are no analyses of the effect of increased population of one species over a decreasing population of another. One species is, or can be, a predator of another and by protecting one there can be a decline in another. The existing advisory processes have little or no influence over this process.

Another presentation revealed the continuation of Marine Protected Areas, or Rockfish Protected Areas. There are presently 163 RPA. The newest proposal is Gwaii

Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve. This reserve encompasses much of Moresby Island from Inglefield to the end of Gray Rock Spit and up the inside of Moresby to near Reef Island most of which appears to be offshore to 10 miles. There is also another Southern Strait Of Georgia, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve proposal, to which parameters are yet to be defined or at least revealed. This process is funded through government agencies such as Parks Canada. The suggestion of consultation with HAB as the answer to industries input, to which there is no funding and little time to participate, communicate, or evaluate, is nothing short of absurd. The HAB advisory Board then provides representation to the CIC, International Halibut Commission and all the other advisory boards to which the delegates volunteer their time. At one time the Fishing Owners Guild represented the halibut fishers, and the IPHC managed the fishery. Now we have added HAB, PHMA, and the CIC and many others in the advisory process, and DFO, Parks Canada, and COSEWIC, a host of environmental organizations to the Management side. All government and environmental representing groups are funded and are paid on a full time basis to lobby for protection of everything. There is no paid fishing management representation, and there is no database or requirement for result based accountability by either government or environmental organizations.

There are five Provinces to which there is a significant dependence on commercial fishing activity, and an ever-increasing population dependent on this activity for food. Unfortunately however, the government spends the public funds inappropriately, to protect species rather than a balance in funding for both the resource protection and the needs of public.

The government spends \$1,488,492,000 on Fisheries and Ocean, which includes around \$800,000,000 for harbors Coastguard; management of waterways etc. There are \$393,564,648 on Fisheries Management of which \$113,710,027 of that goes into employees benefit contributions. The government spends \$71,389,561 on science (Health and Aquatic eco-systems) \$69,239,034 on Habitat Management, and \$195,533,360 on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. In addition to this, prior to Larocque, there was an approximate additional 170 management and science projects that were, or still are, being funded by Industry directly, or through use of fish. The government does not use the Canadian Taxpayers funds nor the Industries contributions, in appropriate result based management.

## **A Proposal for Change in Management**

If government were to restructure the industry management policy and create a Management Commission sanctioned by the fishing industry that was responsible for result based management, and appropriately funded, the costs of management would be significantly reduced. This structure would allow for proper stock assessment, reduction in bureaucratic confusion and eliminate much of the chaotic requirements of fishers that presently exist. There would also be willingness on the part of industry to develop mechanisms to enhance fisheries habitat, protect species to which they are dependent, and establish appropriate stock assessments based on proven principles. There would also be a reduction in costs for these assessments through in kind participation on the part of industry.

The government cannot use fish to pay for fisheries management, an industry sanctioned Commission could, through identifying and setting harvestable TAC's and identifying by-catch requirements over and above these TAC's. This would remove by-catch from TAC allocations and provide funding for science through relinquishments by those that don't have quota. Present fisheries Groundfish Management Plan, has the principle of a willing buyer or willing seller, to which there is no requirement to do either, or no reasonable fixed price for such transactions. This process requires a fisher who has caught one or all of the many 27 species of rockfish in one of 8 areas, to which he doesn't have quota, to acquire many willing sellers, and perform many transfer transactions, which is neither logical nor workable. In addition to this, the crew of the vessel must be paid in a timely manner, and the expense or cost of acquiring quota is unknown, until such a transfer transaction can be secured.

The most important aspect would be to remove fisheries management away from the political lobbying process. This would provide the management of the industry by the industry with responsibility for results. This would provide a vehicle for appropriate use of funds, for both enhancement, and assessment, outside the political influences of other financial, political or emotional interests. This Commission would be responsible for setting stewardship criteria, species protection areas, and areas for Marine Parks. Other agencies would be required to receive approval from this Commission prior to implementation of any legislation that adversely affected the fishing industry. Where such adverse effect on individuals or groups, would or could be approved by this commission for the benefit of other interests, appropriate compensation arrangements would be a requirement. This authority would be granted to this Commission, with the understanding that this Commission would be required to achieve sustainable, or improved results.

There are a number of methods, which could be employed to improve sustainability, improve habitat, and improve fisheries. To establish areas of protection in trawl, to limit areas of bottom trawling, to implement a no discard policy in high mortality species, could provide funding through relinquishments. This could also provide a financial benefit to industry and Communities for some high mortality under utilized or wasted species. These species could be used for reduction in the creation of farm fish feed. There would be no incentive on the part of fishers to target any species to which he did not have quota, as a result of the handling time and unloading costs, as well as the relinquishment initiative. Rockfish species, particularly those of species in low abundance could be protected and enhanced through strategically placed protected areas to which larvae distribution was most profound.

Farm fish could be moved to close containment. Reallocation costs could be offset and would reduce transportation costs by relocating closer to processing areas. Development of a feed processing plant from otherwise unmarketable species, would provide benefits to Canadians and reduce the dependencies on feed from offshore or foreign suppliers and perhaps reduce costs.

**The government passes bills such as Bill-C 45 to circumvent government's responsibility to the people's legal rights, and use these bills to transfer costs and responsibility to the individual. These bills are tabled and passed with little or no input by those that are affected. It's time to reform fisheries management. It's up to the representatives of these existing boards to say enough is enough.**