

Letters Of the Month

I have been away for the last several weeks, as I did a cruise to California in a last ditch effort to catch the last tuna. I found that most tuna fishermen were smarter than me, and had gone home for the season. The tuna had also gone and as they left no forwarding address, I found that most of the success of my voyage went to the fuel companies. That's fishing.

Returning to the soap opera and reviewing my 150 emails, I found that I had encountered a great deal more insight from the wondering fishers and ex-fishers at the dock. One talked about things like quota trading in carbon credits, and the possibilities of produce and chicken prices going through the roof as a result of agriculture for fuel or carbon credits, rather than food. Another individual who used to be a director in the Pacific Trollers Association in the late 70's, when I was president, said, he walked out of the advisory process never to return again, as it was nothing short of a farce. My hero!!!!

The many letters and articles that I read, continue to point out that the processes we engage in are always without resolve. The treaty settlement process is not closed after treaty ratification. It will create more and more problems in the future for natives and non-natives alike. There can only be one rule that provides equal opportunity for all. Most problems in native communities are a result of segregation. If any group, individual, race, or religion, has some exclusive opportunity over another, it closes the door to equality for all and more often the price of the exclusivity comes at a higher price than equality.

We attempt to fix big wounds with small band-aids (political solutions) that we often take out of the garbage that may have more bacteria and cause more suffering than the wound itself. We continue to be governed and directed by economists that have no concept of social values, but simply economic efficiency. Peter Pearce believed that nothing short of having just enough fishing vessels to harvest all the available catch, was the only solution to rationalizing the fleet. The government continues to institute policy that continues to accomplish this belief. If this were the case in other industries, we would all be eating in the same restaurant.

Single gear and area licensing has reduced the fleet by at least half. Quota fisheries have reduced the halibut fishers from over 400 to 150. The trawl quota has reduced the trawl participant's from 160 to about 60. The license and quota regime and the cost associated with and in, the Integrated Fishing Plan continues to send participants into other jobs or retirement or

worse. The salmon fishery will gobble one another up with diminishing quotas until there is but a few. The sport sector will become the target in the future while they cheer their victory of economic preference over the commercial sector. The government supports the lobby of the sport industry numbers, both in voters and value of fish being related to all recreation expenditures and attaching it to a price per pound of fish. The commercial sector would be more than willing to sell would be sports fishers their halibut and salmon for a far more reasonable price and they could save themselves the trip. Isn't that economic efficiency? Of course they are not paying for the fish, they are paying for an experience, so why does government support recreation, or a commercial sport industry, at the expense of an existing industry and the fisheries resource itself.

While we continue to try and protect our own individual existence or allow our greed or desperation to extort or cannibalize our fellow fishers, we have turned our back on protecting the existence of the industry itself. There is little or no recruitment or financial capability for a level entry into the industry. There is only the old folks syndrome, of dying with the most money. Our children are no longer provided personal opportunity in the fishery, but are rather beneficiaries of their parent's historical opportunities. If all the fish species were divided equally between all license holders we could support three times the number of participants, and all the spin off benefits to supporting businesses.

My pick for fishnet letter of the month came from Bob McKamey. His views could be expanded to cover all fisheries.

7. All Advisory Boards are more of a problem than a solution.
8. The fish come first.
9. One commercial fishery that we all share responsibility for and we all benefit from.
10. One commercial fishery managed by ONE management process.
11. One set of conservation and rebuilding goals.
12. One open and effective process to count all fish caught.
13. Simple solutions.

Though I agree that one size doesn't fit all, one set of principles does. We can't allow ourselves, or our interests, to be segregated into race, species, areas, or accumulated quota holders, as we all need equal opportunity to access all species areas and quota to maintain a healthy industry for all. We all need to work together to enhance protect and

rehabilitate our fisheries where needed, coast wide. The only segregation that we need to achieve is, to segregate fisheries management and protection from the political process.

The present and past advisory system is simply a process of instituting government policy and agenda. This effectively transfers the responsibility for results to the industry when the industry had no input into this government policy.

Though those that take part in the advisory process believe that if we don't have this process that the department can do what they want. Believe me, they already do what they want. The best thing that all advisors can do is, **refuse to take part in any advisory process until such time as a result based industry management and advisory can be established whose mandate is to protect the industry and the resources.**

Every species, species license and quota has been established with some different criteria. In every case it has had some adverse effect on some of the participants. None of this equates to equality. If one policy for resource distribution is consistent in all policy making, there is no dispute.

Chief Andy Amos, a Japanese Canadian Ross Matsuba and myself fished together with admiration and respect for one another's ability. Success wasn't measured in net worth, but in our ability to successfully provide for our families. We didn't realize that we only had two choices. We could either buy into the accumulating quota and license fishery process, or no longer continue to be successful. Now Andy's only access to continue to provide for his family is the treaty process. He has one more chance, which many of us don't, but if we don't change the process this chance for Andy will end with the same result, diminishing opportunity and diminishing resources.

Gerald Dalum
Fishing For Freedom