

## **The Scottish Fishing Crisis**

Today the Scottish Fishing fleet and the Coastal communities that depend heavily on fishing are facing a very uncertain future. Two years ago we warned the people of Scotland that this crisis was fast approaching and the message was largely ignored. Now with our local communities facing financial disaster on a vast scale, we must set aside party political differences and work together to find a long term solution.

The problem has come about through gross mismanagement of the Fish stocks by the European Union. Political manoeuvring and one-upmanship has taken the place of reason and logic. Peoples livelihoods are being jeopardised to satisfy narrow political points by various European Politicians notably those from France and the Iberian peninsular. Large scale agricultural interests are dictating events not the Fishermen of Europe.

We cannot claim that this crisis has come upon us suddenly. These extracts from Newspapers over the past two years bear eloquent testimony as to the numerous warnings that the Industry has received.

***From the Aberdeen Press and Journal 6th January 2001.  
'Hour of need' for fishing industry***

***Bob Kennedy***

***The Government must change its attitude towards the fishing industry if the industry is to survive, SNP fisheries spokesman Richard Lochhead said yesterday.***

***In his new-year message to the industry, Mr Lochhead said that the extent to which the Government is willing to change its attitude towards fishing communities in 2001 will determine the shape of the industry for decades to come.***

***And the North-east MSP warned that if the Government does not deliver significant emergency financial aid, thousands of jobs in the fragile rural communities may be lost.***

***Mr Lochhead added: "Following last month's poor quota deal, 2001 is set to be yet another turbulent year for the fishing industry and only a willingness on the part of the Government to change its attitude towards our fishing communities, will ensure that the industry survives and prospers.***

***"For decades under Tory and Labour governments, the industry's pleas have fell on deaf ears and our fishing communities have seen their interests relegated by Tory and Labour politicians who have concentrated their attention and their resources on other priorities.***

***"The Scottish Parliament has been good for our fishing communities but the Scottish Executive has continued the Westminster tradition of failing the Scottish***

**industry.**

**"Now it is time for Government ministers to finally recognise that if appropriate assistance is not given to our coastal communities, thousands of jobs in the catching and processing sectors will disappear in a very short period of time. There is no use Labour ministers burying their heads in the sand and pretending there is no such risk.**

**"Scotland needs more than just the usual warm words from fisheries ministers. We need the Labour Government to demonstrate a commitment to the fishing industry by announcing an emergency package of financial and conservation measures comprising new cash and innovative technical conservation measures. We need more than just task forces and talking shops.**

**"Regeneration of fish stocks must be the number one priority for the industry and the Government for 2001. This will come at a price and the Government will have to help foot the bill otherwise our rural communities will suffer enormous job losses.**

**"This is the industry's hour of need and the Government must at long last put its money where its mouth is and deliver for our fishing communities.**

**"2001 is also the brainstorming year for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and the Government will have to fight tooth and nail to ensure that a pro-Scottish CFP emerges at the end of 2002."**

**End of Article.**

Now this is what I wrote on the Internet on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2001:

The E.U. has already given the U.K. Government a 'Take it or Leave it' deadline to accept the new quota's by JANUARY 17th! (Bully Boy tactics as usual). What is not said that large areas of English Waters where Cod spawn and are regularly caught are exempt from quotas, I wonder why? Is this an E.U. stitch-up favouring the French and the Spaniards? Has some murky deal been done by the U.K. Government which as usual has thrown our Fishermen and processors to the wolves?

The U.K. Government will NOT fight our corner because there are no Votes in it. How many Fishing Ports and Villages support Labour? they are almost without exception S.N.P. Strongholds, Labour has nothing to lose! Time to wake up and face reality, it's long overdue, but the S.N.P. MUST Fight our Corner in this fight, and NOT leave it to the E.U. The E.U. C.F.P. has been an unmitigated disaster, they have no idea how to manage a fisheries policy, they are manipulated by the Danish, French and Spanish Fisheries Ministers to their exclusive benefit, aided by an indifferent far away British Government eager to use Fisheries as a bargaining chip to gain further advantages for ENGLISH INTERESTS. It makes it imperative that an Independent Scotland, gets out and stays out of the E.U. Takes FULL CONTROL of our Fisheries once more for the benefit of our Fishing Communities.

Power over the North Sea lies far, far away in Brussels. Rhona Brankin, the Minister responsible for Scottish fisheries, can grace delegations to Europe with her presence but her contribution is negligible. Perhaps this explains why she accepted

reduced cod quotas without also securing a deal which would protect the immature haddock stocks that are far more important to the Scottish fleet.

Brankin is only a junior minister - even though Peterhead and Fraserburgh are the most important white fish ports in Europe. Her UK counterpart is also out with cabinet. Neither Holyrood nor Westminster cares much about our hunters of the deep. Recently released documents revealed that the Foreign Office regarded fishermen as "**expendable**" back in 1971. (See the Article: 'The Great Betrayal' on the Clannasaor website.) Our waters were to be opened up to other European member states - a sacrifice which would, it was argued, be outweighed by the wider economic benefits of membership.

It is interesting to look at how fisheries have fared in countries which did not join the European Union. The Faroese automatically close grounds where immature fish are caught and test them each month until they are considered "safe". The Norwegians - unlike the EU - do not allow their boats to discard immature fish; they deduct the catch from their quota.

The common fisheries policy (CFP) means we do not have the flexibility or independence to adopt such sensible measures. The CFP is being reviewed and the United Kingdom Parliament says it wants more local autonomy in the management of stocks. But countries like Spain - which will be President of the EU when the final decision is taken in 2002 - are most likely to object. The SNP have the unrealistic and mistaken belief, as many in other parties have, that only a stronger Scottish voice in Europe will help. In the case of the fishermen, any such unlikely reform will come far too late to be effective.

***Extract from the "Sunday Telegraph" 27th May 2001)***  
***British Fishing Will Be Wiped Out In A Decade***

***By Christopher Booker***

***At last the European Commission has begun to reveal the masterstroke whereby, in two years' time, it can turn all the fishing waters round the coasts of western Europe into "a single European sea". And as some have long feared, this will deal a deathblow to what remains of Britain's fishing industry. The plan, recently disclosed by Commissioner Franz Fischler in Strasbourg, is to abolish the present national quota system and to allow fishing permits to be bought and sold across national boundaries.***

***This will finally allow the vast, massively subsidised Spanish fishing fleet to buy its way into that "equal access" to the North Sea and other northern waters to which it is entitled under the treaties. In recent years the Spanish fleet has received EU subsidies worth nearly £2 billion (including £230 million from British taxpayers); and with further state aid on the way, it will be in a strong position to buy out all those struggling, unsubsidised British, Danish and German fishermen who have been so relentlessly hamstrung by Brussels regulations.***

***For 10 more years, UK fishermen will be allowed a "derogation" to continue to fish within 12 miles of Britain's shoreline. After that, all waters up to the beaches will become "a common European resource". The only boats then allowed to fish will be those with enough support from subsidies to compete for permits. Almost the only boats left round our coasts will be Spanish, French, Belgian and Dutch.***

**Thus we shall see the end of the story which began 30 years ago, when Edward Heath agreed to hand over the richest fishing waters in the world as a necessary sacrifice to realise his dream of taking us into that Common Market which, he said, would involve "no loss of essential sovereignty"**

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**From the house journal of the FAL.  
Call to slash fish quotas**

**My Association is not taken by surprise at whatever measures, however ruthless the Commission may introduce for the achievement of the European ideal i.e. The political integration of the new nation called "Europe". We have been warning for years that anyone who studies the treaties is bound to come to the conclusion that the British fishing industry has to be wiped out, to make way for the introduction throughout all EU waters of the principle of "equal access" for all EU fishermen after 2002.**

**Deceit is the well tried weapon of the Commission, and of successive British governments. It has brought them remarkable results up to the present in many fields. The Brussels bureaucracy have cleverly engineered this crisis in the fishing industry. They calculated that British fishermen should be led towards the establishment of a single European Union fishing fleet, on a non-discriminatory basis, with no increase in fishing effort, without ever knowing what was happening.**

**They believed that this could best be accomplished by successive steps, each cunningly camouflaged to emphasize the need for conservation (which they thought would appeal to everyone) but which when taken together would inevitably and irreversibly lead to the annihilation of the British fleet. To bring all this about, fish stocks had to be substantially reduced if at all possible, and what better way to achieve this than to engineer the destruction of the food supply.**

**So they have deliberately encouraged and allowed the wholesale slaughter of the sand-eel biomass in the North Sea, the staple diet for most species of fish in those waters. The sand-eel stock has now almost collapsed, in spite of which a TAC of over a million tons a year continues to be set, while industrial fishermen are unable to catch 50% of it. Further drastic cuts in quotas while at the same time making demands on our fishermen to dump thousands of tons of prime quality fish all dead back into the sea, a practice which they have been forced to adhere to for years, has nothing to do with conservation.**

**It has a far more sinister objective than that. It is much more likely part of a deliberate policy of inducing British fishermen to be the unwitting agents of their own extermination. So that when the incredible recuperative capability of marine nature again reasserts itself in the North Sea, and fish stocks recover, there will be very little inconvenient British fishermen to mar the creation of a single European Union fleet fishing under the principle of non-discrimination as "Brussels" so obviously intends.**

**Thomas Hay  
Chairman FAL**

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**From the Sunday Post. July 8th 2001.**

**Spanish armada threat to trawlers**

**Exclusive By Adam Docherty**

***A Huge Spanish armada is to be given the go-ahead to invade Scotland's fishing waters in a move that threatens to wipe out the hard-pressed industry here. The European Union is to vote to allow the mighty Spanish fishing fleet to plunder the waters off the Scottish coast they'd previously been banned from. The 12 and six-mile limits around our coastline, which have offered some degree of protection to the battered British fleet, are likely to be ripped up.***

***The effect would be devastating for UK fishermen who are already being hammered by strict quotas that have forced them into a hand-to-mouth existence. The Spanish, who have Europe's biggest fishing fleet, have strong allies in the Greeks, Italians, Portuguese and French who support the EU's intentions to ease fishing limits. Scots MEPs admit they have a major fight on their hands to have any chance of stopping the Spaniards and saving the industry.***

***Rich pickings***

***UK fishing stocks make up nearly two thirds of all the fishing resources in the entire EU and the Spanish, as well as the Portuguese, Dutch, Danes and Finns, have long wanted to get their hands on such rich pickings. Scots MEP Struan Stevenson says the Spanish are planning nothing less than full and equal access to the North Sea. "At a recent meeting to discuss proposals on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, Spanish representatives stood up, one after another, to say they would not support the continuation of the six and 12-mile fishing limits". Mr Stevenson said. "Clearly we have a fight on our hands.***

***Commissioner Franz Fischler recently told a special meeting of the Fisheries Committee that he wanted to see alternative methods for distributing total allowable catches and quotas". "If this was the case, the most powerful fishing fleets would drive out small operators by the score. "Where does that leave fishing communities of Shetland, the Western Isles, the North-East or Pittenweem? "They would be wiped out by the wholesale commercialisation of allowable catches and quotas. "We did not join the CFP to see our fishing industry decimated and our fishermen impoverished - yet that is exactly what has happened."***

***Sadly, the once proud Scottish fleet which landed 400,000 tonnes of cod in 1970 is now limited by strict controls and quotas to a mere 20,000 tonnes. The fleet has been decimated and many fishermen are living on the poverty line.***

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This is what I wrote on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2001

This tells us nothing much that is new, but certainly reinforces the message to the SNP. I hope someone in the SNP with some guts will print out copies of this Sunday Post article and put them down in front of Swinney and his useless quango in the NEC. E.U. policy is destroying **TENS of THOUSANDS of SCOTTISH FISHERMEN'S and FISHWORKERS JOBS!** Can't the SNP see that this is all a DONE DEAL with Phoney Blur and the New Labourtory party in London wringing some quid pro quo out of Europe, something that will benefit only the City of London and CERTAINLY NOT SCOTLAND!

In Fraserburgh, Peterhead, Gamrie, MacDuff, Buckie and other small communities,

ordinary families are looking utter disaster in the face! I have never seen or felt such anger before, do you want to know why? I was seeing a Client this Morning. Sunday Morning when he should be out on the links playing Golf or reading the Sunday paper, no he comes out to me with his books for my opinion and I have to tell him that the Fish processing business he has built up for 27 years of hard work and risk, is BANKRUPT!

On Monday morning he will be issuing 12 P45's to his staff and then we will go to his bank together to arrange the sale of his Business premises, machinery and his comfortable home to clear his overdraft and debts. He is NOT going to crawl to Alex Salmond, because he knows Alex cannot do a thing, as the SNP do not have the power to change a broken lightbulb in the corridors of Brussels! My Client is NOT ALONE! I know of at least TWENTY firms which are teetering on the brink of DISASTER in Fraserburgh alone! Our Fishing communities have got to face the hard and unpalatable fact that 50 to 60% of their working population are facing **LONG TERM UNEMPLOYMENT?** Because that is what you will have in two years time if the Scottish People don't act now to gain our Independence and get out of the EU straitjacket.

### **Today Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2002, what is the situation?**

Many of my Clients are Fishermen and farmers, along with various tradesmen such as Joiners, Painters, Electricians, Marine Engineers, Refrigeration Engineers, Plumbers, Net Manufacturers, Management companies handling fish sales, Market porters, Port workers, Shopkeepers who supply the boats, and the like. Most of them depend on the fishing in one way or the other. I know them and their families personally, they are good friends and in the village where I live I have noticed the gradual contraction of the numbers who have lost their jobs in the trades associated with fishing, Light engineering, Ships painters, Fish processors and there are yet many more on short time struggling to make ends meet to pay their mortgages and feed their families.

The present situation is extremely serious, whenever a boat ties up for the last time, not only do the crew of 5 or 6 lose their livelihoods but another 18 to 22 more lose their jobs ashore. It is not really noticeable statistically, but like the 'death of a thousand cuts' real hardship is slowly encroaching onto our communities. A review of Fishermen's Tax returns reveals that earnings have dropped to around 47% of what they were five years ago without taking inflation into account! The profitability of Firms connected with the Fishing Industry has seen a similar decline.

Our fishermen are now suffering their worst crisis ever. Back in 1970, our once proud Scottish fleet was landing around 400,000 tonnes of cod a year in Scottish ports. In 2002, following the recent savage cuts in **TACs (Total Allowable Catches)** and quotas, Scottish boats will only be allowed to land 20,000 tonnes this year. By Comparison, The Huge Danish Industrial fishing fleet (Largely owned by huge Agricultural Interests) which catches, sprats, Sandeels and pout (to make agricultural fertiliser or animal feedstuffs with,) most usually to fatten up pigs in near total darkness in narrow steel cages which do not allow the animal to move. ( This is totally outlawed in Britain as being unnaturally cruel causing the animals to suffer.) Their total allowable by catch of Cod is 35,000 Tonnes. This is **UTTER MADNESS!**

Since Britain signed up to the EU in 1971, Scotland has lost over 2000 vessels from our fleet and many tens of thousands of jobs have been destroyed round our coastline, both at sea and on land. The Scottish Fishermen have fully co-operated in making net meshes larger only to see **the Spanish and French use meshes two thirds smaller!** The core objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy - to protect the livelihood of fishermen and to sustain fish stocks have failed utterly and abysmally. Ill considered and unscientific policies imposed by politically motivated desk bound bureaucrats and Commissars in Brussels have ensured the rundown of, and eventual ruin of our fishing Industry which in turn will destroy the unique culture and way of life of our small communities which depend on fishing.

The quota system, which forbids the landing of fish for which a skipper has no licence, has led to the **dumping** of over **2 million tonnes of healthy prime quality fish each year in the EU. 25% of all the fish caught in the EU are simply dumped dead over the side, back into the sea,** because skippers would face draconian penalties if they tried to land them. This catastrophic waste, at a time when fish stocks have fallen to unsustainable levels, beggars belief. Now the Spanish, with their huge, modernised fleet of 18,000 trawlers, much of it paid for by British taxpayers, are agitating to abolish our 6 and 12 mile limits and rape our fish stocks right up to our shoreline.

The E.U. Fisheries Commission under extreme political pressure from the Danes have actually increased the TAC for the Danish industrial fishing fleet to 1,000,000 ( One Million) Tonnes, Three years ago it was 600,000 tonnes with a by catch of white fish of some 50,000 Tonnes! To allow such an increase when it is a well known fact that Sandeels are a staple part of the diet of Cod, Hake and haddock is beyond logical comprehension. Had they thought of consulting the **University of Aberdeen's Torry research station,** they would have found the following statistics available. The research vessel Scotia examined the stomach contents of Cod and found that Sandeels were present in **100% of cod in the 3rd quarter in 1985, 97% 1st quarter in 1986, 65% and 75% in 1st and 3rd quarters in 1987.**

In addition Puffins on May Island in the Firth of Forth and Hermaness head in Shetland depend on Sandeels to feed their young. Overfishing round the 'Wee bankie' in the Forth estuary and off Shetland has drastically reduced the numbers of puffins and it is estimated that mortality amongst the puffin chicks due to starvation, has in some years exceeded 90%. Why has the TAC been increased when sandeel stocks have plummeted to an all time low? The only answer seems to be some arcane Political agenda.

Even the S.N.P. are finally starting to wake up to the disaster. Speaking at an RSPB Seminar on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, Shadow Fisheries Minister and North East SNP MSP, Richard Lochhead, said that a twin challenge lay ahead for management of fisheries.

**Mr Lochhead said:**

***"Through the reform of CFP there will be two challenges that Scottish fishermen will want to see addressed. Firstly, restoration of stocks to sustainable levels, and secondly, ensuring that the Scottish fleet retain their historic rights and will be large enough to take advantage of healthier stock levels in the years to come.***

***"On the one hand we must tackle industrial fishing and discards and on the other ensure relative stability is not compromised in any shape or form.***

***"Ideas being promoted by some MEPs like one flag for all EU vessels or the introduction of individual transferable quotas must never see the light of day.***

***"It's good to see a common agenda springing up between fishermen and environmentalists. It is important that we recognise that healthy seas can mean healthy stocks, and that can mean a healthy and viable fishing industry in Scotland.***

***"It is crucial that this agenda is not wrecked by the national interests of other EU members as CFP reform makes its way into legislation. Everyone who is interested in a sustainable future for the Scottish fishing fleet must stand together to ensure that we achieve the best deal possible."***

Thank you Richard for at last waking up to the realities of life as faced by our fisherfolk and the processors on shore. The political realities indicate that Prime Minister Blair has other Fish to fry, something he is very good at! Has a secret underhand deal been done over Gibraltar? Or as is more likely he is in line for the post of **President of the United States of Europe**. Blair will NOT wish to rock the boat to the detriment of his personal ambition! Alex Salmond did his level best to pin Blair down at Prime Ministers Questions, but Blair is more slippery than an eel. If Scottish Fishermen are looking for help from that quarter, then hell will freeze over first.

Get the UK Parliament to put pressure on Brussels to reform the CFP? Not a chance! Unfortunately the CFP is incapable of being reformed to something acceptable to Scottish Fishermen.

***As this recent report from the Daily Telegraph of the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2002 Shows:***

***Earlier this summer the director-general in charge of fisheries, Steffen Smidt, was summarily fired on orders of the Spanish government as a punishment for trying to save Europe's declining stocks from catastrophic over-fishing, much of it by Spanish vessels. The move was a breach of EU treaty law. But what most irked Euro-MPs was the way that the commission hierarchy tried to cover up the deed by presenting it as part of long-term reshuffle***

Richard you would be better employed spending some time to persuade your party that Being in the EU is not an option for our Fishermen and Farmers! The SNP's 'Independence in Europe' policy is deeply flawed and highly dangerous, especially as moves are afoot to create 'The United States of Europe.' Quote from the French Newspaper 'Le Monde'

***Idea of "European president" gains ground***

***Support for the idea of having a "European president" is now strong. Debate seems to be centred now mainly on who it should be – Tony Blair and José-Maria Aznár are among the candidates. It seems that this question is now being discussed by the European Convention which Valéry Giscard d'Estaing chairs. It now seems that the Germans are coming round to the Franco-British idea of having a president. (Chirac wants Europe also to have a "foreign minister" and both London and France are moving towards supporting a sort of "European security council" too, i.e. a militarised EU.) The Germans seem to be merely seeking assurances that the Commission will not be excessively weakened by the creation of a new presidency: some French members of the Convention want the president to be in charge of the Council as well as the Commission. [Henri de Bresson & Daniel Vernet, Le Monde, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2002]***

Large vested Industrial and political interests will ensure that any reform is to the benefit of the southern EU members alone. The E.U. are still not tackling the endemic pollution of the North Sea from the Rivers Elbe, Weser, Rhine and Waal. This must be tackled before it is too late to take remedial steps, much discussion is taking place, yet nothing concrete is being done. Each year hundreds of thousands of tonnes of toxic heavy metals continue to devastate the bottom living sea life of the North Sea, forcing the dwindling bottom rung of the sea life chain, ever forward towards eventual extinction.

Another great problem facing our Fishermen is the burgeoning Seal population. Many years ago, Seals were regularly harvested for the Pelts and Meat. The meat usually ended up in cans of pet food. However this practice has ceased due to ill thought out Wild animal protection legislation. Along with the decreasing numbers of Orcas (Killer Whales) which prey on seals, their population has increased threefold in the past 20 years. Seals now catch and eat more fish than the entire Scottish fleet. Clannasaor propose that an Independent Scotland revert to the previous practice of harvesting seals to keep their numbers to an acceptable limit. Clannasaor take the view that Fishermens Livelihoods are just as important as conserving Seals and the balance of nature MUST be restored.

**The only logical answer is for Scotland to go it alone, outside the E.U. As an Independent, neutral country controlling it's own Fishing policy and fleet with a strong Coastguard presence.**

**A Strong INDEPENDENT Scotland can enforce strict Fishing discipline amongst the unprincipled pillagers of fish stocks.** Clannasaor propose that draconian penalties be levied on all such pillagers with a range of penalties such as Confiscation of Boats and gear, Long Prison terms for the Captain and mates of the boat concerned and extremely heavy fines levied on the Companies owning the boats. Any Boat caught fishing in Scottish waters without a licence will face charges of piracy on the high seas and the Directors of the Company or Boat's owners will face extradition on the same charges.

***In the interim the Scottish Fishermen will have no other recourse but to do as the Spanish and French fleets do: Force foreign owned fishing vessels to leave their traditional fishing grounds. They do it all the time to the Cornish and Devon line boats, so why not take a leaf out of the Iberian pirates own rulebook and run them off our fishing grounds?***

***This will cause a great stushie, especially with the Westminster mandarins. The SNP could take a lead in Holyrood and Westminster by demanding that Britain withdraws from the EU! That would shake the birdies out of the tree. The French, The Italians and the Spanish use such tactics all the time to get their own way like petulant little brats. Why not emulate them? If we do not take drastic action, there will be no Scottish fishing Fleet and within a few years there will be no fish either!***

