

SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTERIAL INQUIRY **INTO FOREIGN CHARTER VESSELS**

For the information of the Ministerial Panel we would first like to give you a quick rundown of who we are and what we do.

The New Zealand Fishing Industry Guild has been representing working fishermen for over 50 years and over that time we have had a few name changes – through the 60's 70's and 80's we were the New Zealand Share Fishermen's Association, then in 1990 we became registered as the New Zealand Fishing Industry Union and three years later we changed the name to the New Zealand Fishing Industry Guild.

Our structure however has not changed over the years. As National President, I and all the National Executive Members are working fishermen as are the various Port Committee members. We have an office in Auckland with a full time Executive Secretary who is assisted by our Treasurer, also full time. We have an office in Nelson which is manned by a part-time office assistant and part-time Field Officer.

We were for many years part of the old New Zealand Fishing Industry Board and are still a non-voting member of SeaFIC.

We were part of the industry group that set up the Code of Practice on Foreign Charter Vessels and we are a signatory to it.

We are very familiar with factory trawlers as we have collective agreements with Sanford and Sealord.

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Our members are all working fishers who are employed mostly on company vessels. We represent everyone on those crews from skippers and engineers to the deckhands and factory hands. We also represent fishers working on the inshore trawlers, purse seiners and long liners so we have a good understanding of the fishing industry generally.

We appreciate the opportunity to make this submission and would like it noted that representatives of the Guild do wish to meet with the Ministerial Panel in Auckland.

In this submission, the Guild would like to state from the outset that we believe that the best return to New Zealand financially and socially from our fisheries resources will only come when the majority of our fish stocks are being harvested by New Zealand domestic vessels.

That being the case, we do not believe that any quota owner should be allowed to catch 100% of their quota using Joint Venture vessels (J/V's). All quota owners should have to show some commitment to the domestic New Zealand fishing industry before they are allowed to use J/V's. We suggest that they should have to catch 60% of their quota with New Zealand vessels before they are allowed to use Foreign Licensed Vessels (FLV's).

The Guild is not totally against charter vessels. There may be a need for a few but it should be a decreasing few, not an increasing number that threaten the viability of the New Zealand domestic fleet. The foreign fleet have had a detrimental effect on New Zealand vessel owner operators and we are sure they will explain this to you, so we will not go into that side of it at this point.

The fact that quota owners have to apply to the Government every year for permission to bring in foreign vessels demonstrates that it is a special exemption that they are granted – it should not be the “norm” but unfortunately it seems like it has become so. If you apply for one, you get one.

The Minister has said that it is important to give quota owners significant flexibility in how and when they use their annual catch entitlement but Government also says that our fishing resources must return to New

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Zealand the greatest overall return to our economy that is possible. That being the case, this inquiry should have a look at where New Zealand gets the best return – from New Zealand domestic vessels or quota owners using foreign charter vessels?

A few years ago, Talley's Fisheries put together a paper demonstrating the financial return to New Zealand from New Zealand domestic vessels as opposed to J/V's. We are sure they will have done an updated version for the inquiry. The earlier version showed quite clearly that New Zealand domestic vessels returned far more to this country than J/V's do. So this raises the question who has the most rights in this matter – the quota owners or the country as a whole?

If it's the quota owners, then why are other industries not allowed to bring in foreign labour and machinery to harvest their crops? Using forestry as an example, it would be much cheaper for forest owners to bring in machinery and experienced loggers from Indonesia and pay them the minimum wage on one year contracts. They could live on the job in camps or caravans, available to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as the foreign fishermen are.

The Indonesians and the New Zealand agents who brought them in would be quite happy with that, but where are we going as a country?

What New Zealand and most countries in the western world need at the moment are more labour intensive jobs for unqualified people. Our school system is churning out more and more young people who can't even read and write so it is fairly important for our future social cohesion that some jobs are available for these people. Fishing, forestry and horticulture can supply a lot of these jobs and they are real jobs that help New Zealand on the income side. We can't live on borrowed money forever, or put up with the social consequences of thousands of disaffected youth with nothing to do.

The Guild has been in contact with every Fisheries Minister since Jim Bolger had the job, requesting that more Government emphasis be put into the New Zealandisation of the deepwater fishery. This was actually progressing quite well until about ten years ago when the New Zealand domestic factory trawlers started to disappear and more foreign vessels began to be used. The breaking up of the Maori quota from Sealord to various iwi sped this up.

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In meetings with Fisheries Ministers from the last three governments, it was made clear to us that they were not prepared to do anything about New Zealandisation. They were happy with the way things were.

There have been changes in the J/V fleet over the years. Originally Korean and Russian vessels had Korean and Russian crews and there were not too many problems. Now they have Korean and Russian officers but the crews come from some third world country such as Indonesia. This has obviously led to some of the issues we are hearing about in the media.

The Guild is a signatory to the "Deepwater Code of Practice". This is a comprehensive document and if it was being totally adhered to, there would be no complaints from these foreign vessels. However, COP's only work when the people involved abide by them or they are properly policed.

The Minister informs us that the Department of Labour conducts a regular audit programme but in our opinion this is a very superficial audit. It is not funded enough to be anything else.

Finding out what hours crews work on foreign vessels or what they are really paid is always going to be extremely difficult, especially with language difficulties – the officers from one country, the crew from another.

On New Zealand factory vessels, crews usually work shifts – six hours on, six hours off, seven days a week for the duration of the trip. That's how fishing is. How does this compare with what the foreign vessel operators claim their crews work?

A disturbing fact about all of this is that it reflects very badly on New Zealand and the country's fishing industry.

As a country we have always been very quick to criticize other countries for their human rights issues and now, if even only some of these reports are right, we have had our own Government turning a blind eye to the same sort of issues happening here in our jurisdiction.

The New Zealand seafood industry has an enviable reputation as a world-leading fisheries manager, but that will not last for long if the issues that this inquiry was set up to investigate are not properly sorted out.

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welfare because that's all the Government and their own iwi leaders seem to expect them to do.

Sure, if they go deep sea fishing they have to spend time at sea. The New Zealand vessels are reasonably modern, they have good time off systems and the crews are reasonably well paid. For young people, it is easy to save money working at sea – they are not spending on food and board so all their pay is banked while they are at sea and the deepwater crews get paid on their trips off. If the Government and the fishing companies were serious about it, we are sure it would not be that hard to encourage more young Kiwis to make careers for themselves in the New Zealand fishing industry.

Our suggestion is to properly New Zealandise our fisheries as we originally proposed and capitalize on our unique position in the world as the "Clean Green Sustainable Fishing Industry" that we can be by employing a lot more New Zealanders at sea and ashore.

'FISH FROM NEW ZEALAND' – You don't have to worry where it's come from or where it's been!

The future of the New Zealand fishing industry is really in the hands of the politicians. Do they want a real New Zealand fishing industry employing New Zealanders, or do they want more of the quota owners collecting a cheque and various other foreign fishing nations catching our fish and taking it away? It might be decision time.

As previously mentioned, we would like to meet with the Ministerial Panel, preferably in Auckland, to discuss this matter further.



Sean McCann

NATIONAL PRESIDENT – NEW ZEALAND FISHING INDUSTRY GUILD INC.