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EDITORIAL

BRICKBATS AND ACCOLADES

With the television documentary, 'The Great New Zealand Fishing Scandal' still fresh in one's mind, its screening did beg for answers to the many questions raised. While it could be claimed by some that the filming was a tad dated, it never the less raised a number of concerning issues about how our fishing industry, or sections of it, are going about the business of fishing our fish.

The issue of manning and crew pay is at the heart of the problem with contracting joint venture foreign vessels to fish New Zealand quota in New Zealand's 200nm EEZ. Cheap labour and foreign vessels competing with New Zealand ships flies in the face of New Zealandisation of our deepwater fishery. Granted, the Labour Government changed the law making it mandatory for foreign crews to be paid the minimum wage of \$12.50 plus a sea going allowance of \$2, giving a base wage of \$14.50 an hour to the crews while the ships where in New Zealand's EEZ. Fair enough one could say, equal wages of sorts. But it would appear not to be so, especially when reviewing recent incidents involving crew dissatisfaction and desertion from foreign charter fishing vessels, the most recent being the *Shin Ji*.

It would appear that while our seafarers are fully found and fairly paid when on board Kiwi boats, the foreign vessels, once they pay Kiwi wages, not only charge the crew exorbitant rates for board and lodgings, they are only paying the seafarers for the hours they actually work on deck or in the factory. Rest, breakdown or steaming time is not paid for and once the owners have recouped the accommodation and tucker costs the poor old seafarer is no better off. Meanwhile, as one industry source suggested, the vessel owner and charterers are smiling all the way to the bank.

The doco focused on the inability for New Zealand fishermen to gain access to quota or ACE at a reasonable cost and blamed the companies for channelling most of the deepwater species to the foreign vessels to make it worth bringing their ships south. I am reluctant to venture into the environmental issues and the damage these ships might cause. I will equally refrain from commenting on the observer coverage, or lack of, as the case maybe. The big question remaining is associated with Maori owned quota. Who is fishing it and why? Understandably major fishing companies like Sanford, Sealord, Independent and Aotearoa want to catch their quota for the

cheapest capital cost to maximise profits. What begs the question is, how can the likes of Sealord, which is 50 percent owned by Maori and Aotearoa, 100 percent sacrifice their community, social, economic and cultural wellbeing for the mighty pakeha dollar when, out in local communities there are many Maori, young and old, busting their gut to get a job. Those who want to be gainfully employed and go to sea or work in the shore side infrastructures cannot, because foreigners are fishing our Maori fish quota. So what if it costs more! At the end of the day, the true value to the community must be considered and personal pride, self-esteem and money in one's pocket, has got to be a benefit that's worth more than just high profits. Think about it.

This time of the year is conference time and the recent Recreational Fishing Council conference in Nelson was a resounding success. With a higher than usual southern attendance, the focus of the conference was on amateur only areas. Minister Phil Heatley advised that he had spoken with the commercial fishing industry on this matter and that he was hopeful the industry would come up with a number of options where he might be able to create significant areas where the public can fish without fear of conflict with commercial fishers.

September will see the Marine Transport Association conference in Picton. Please refer to pages 58-59 in this issue or visit www.marinetransport.co.nz.

Finally it's always hard to be humble when receiving accolades that come as a result of a lot of hard work by many folk. Last month we were awarded Highly Commended, Editor of the Year, in the trade professional magazine category in the Magazine Publishers Association annual awards, which is not just a reflection on the editor. Rather it is an acknowledgement of the magazine, its print quality and all those who contribute to its editorial content and, as such, I personally thank you all. On the plus side, these acknowledgements by the MPA and Qantas Media Awards are a clear measure by our publishing peers that you, the reader, and more importantly our valued advertisers can have confidence in *Professional Skipper* as being the leading marine trade professional magazine in our industry. Thank you.

Keith Ingram, Editor