

SIMPLER, SAFER, FAIRER SYSTEM ON THE WAY

Dear Sir

Thank you for the invitation to respond to last month's editorial, which posed the all-important question "just how unsafe are we?"

Overall, the New Zealand maritime industry has a very strong and healthy safety culture. The vast majority of operators are meeting, and in many cases, exceeding safety standards. There are many excellent operators out there who are leading by example and continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to improving safety.

But there are also valid concerns, as you note in your editorial. In recent years, various independent reviews and reports have highlighted concerns over the delivery of the commercial vessel safety system.

As you point out, we must address this to ensure that the system is improved so it is simpler to follow, more consistent, and works fairly for all. It is also important that we do not hesitate in continuing to take appropriate and direct action to address unsafe practices or operations that may put vessels or lives at risk.

With these principles in mind, Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) has launched two wide-ranging and important reviews – one directed at ensuring that we have a world-class seafarer qualifications framework – and the other aimed at strengthening our commercial vessel safety system.

Early in February, MNZ issued the "key issues from the community engagement programme" report, arising from the Qualifications and Operational Limits review. Thanks to the contribution of the many people from across the industry who gave up their time to give us their feedback, this has provided an excellent platform from which to build on the review. We are looking forward to receiving further comments and feedback on the report.

We will also shortly be releasing consultation documents relating to the review of the safe ship management system, and we will be actively seeking industry review and comment on that process as well.

I am confident that at the end of these comprehensive and important reviews, we will have a system which is simpler, safer and fairer for all.

Catherine Taylor, director, Maritime New Zealand

GOOD LUCK – YOU'LL NEED IT!

Dear Sir

So there you have it all you small commercial fishers. Once again, a Minister of Fisheries does a Pontius Pilate – to quote from your interview with Minister Heatley "... the welfare and management of the fishery is my concern, not the business environment."

Once again, no-one gives a damn about what is happening out there to our fishery resource, and the consequent deprivation of millions of dollars every year to the New Zealand economy, and therefore all New Zealanders.

It is a disgrace that foreign factory vessels are still allowed in our waters, paying their crews third world wages, with the full knowledge of those in power, and able to regulate to stop this practice.

So long as the fish survive, to hell with our own – let anyone catch it, and a few corporate's make millions while the many suffer. It's a national disgrace.

What also makes me mad is that our resource is being abused while the so called regulators turn a blind eye to the wastage of this resource.

Soon after my documentary was screened I received a video, shot recently on board a foreign vessel. It shows a 60 tonne bag of ling caught at midday. It sits on that deck until midnight when they can start processing it, by which time the value has dropped from \$8000 a tonne (fresh HNG) to \$3900 a tonne (second grade frozen). The fillets coming off the line are dull and flaccid, a complete waste in monetary terms of \$135,300 for that 60 tonne bag – money that would keep many a Kiwi fisher afloat when one considers how often this sort of wastage occurs, and I am assured by those who know first hand, that this goes on daily. But what do the foreign skippers care? They are paid by the green weight they catch, whereas Kiwi factory vessel skippers are paid by the quality of the end product, not the amount they catch.

This is a scandal, and the companies that charter these vessels obviously know what is going on as they have a representative on board these vessels 24/7, yet don't give a damn, and this goes on out there on an almost daily basis I am assured by those who know. What baffles me is surely these companies are loosing out on massive annual revenues as well, and yet they are obviously not concerned. ▶

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PROFESSIONAL Skipper



The winner of the traditionally framed painting of the *Endeavour* running before the wind by artist Paul Deacon, drawn under the supervision of Ian McDonald JP. RRP \$1500.

Congratulations to Henry J Nee of Kaikoura

www.marineartgallery.net.nz

The foreign skipper's motto seems to be "better we catch this fish as it prevents someone else benefiting from it," even if it means a massive financial loss on each catch. Why, when a factory can only process 4-5 tonnes an hour, are 60 to 100 tonne nets allowed on foreign factory vessels in the first place?

These large companies use the excuse that they need these vessels to catch the low value fish to make any money (which incidentally surely confirms that they know foreign crews are paid much lower wages than Kiwi crews) but I have spoken with Kiwi fishers who, given the access to enough quota, would buy a boat tomorrow especially to catch these fish, and when you look at the annual Seafic Export Data Base figures for these species, it's not hard to see why –

- blue mackerel \$10 million
- southern blue \$17.5 million
- barracouta \$29 million
- jack mackerel \$51 million

and they call these low value species! This makes a mockery of the companies defence.

What truly baffled me was that no-one in politics or the media was interested in what is happening to our important fisheries resource. Two hundred DVDs were sent to all politicians and related officials, and 55 DVDs went to the editors of the major daily newspapers and regional newspapers, as well as radio stations. I have yet to hear from anyone! I was lined up to be interviewed on Marcus Lush's morning show, and got bumped off for an item about a trapped cat!

So I wish all you smaller operators the very best of luck for this year, as apart from *Professional Skipper* magazine, no-one seems to give a stuff about you, and you will need all the luck you can get to survive another year.

It would seem that there are no votes in fishing!

Guye Henderson, producer/director
The Great New Zealand Fishing Scandal

IT'S GOT TO BE GOOD

Dear Sir

I like the option of the aquaculture supplement being pinned into the centrefold as this ensures that this useful publication is not lost. I note more and more in the news of late about new aqua areas and many boatie folk and the greenies getting their knickers in a twist.

Can someone please open the debate and put the facts in order as from what I can see the new area off the South Island and Bay of Plenty with their hundreds of job prospects has got to be good for all.

J Smith, Wellington

FISHERMAN MISSES SNAPPER

Dear Sir

Just a quick note to ask where have all the inshore snapper gone in the Hauraki Gulf? I am an avid reader of *Professional Skipper* magazine as it is one of the true boatie mags that still can say it as it is and not be beholden to advertisers whims or corporate editorial influence.

Seriously, I read today in the *Herald* that the commercial fishers want more snapper quota, saying there are heaps of fish out there. I now hear that they are also converting trawlers to seiners faster than an amateur fisher can launch his boat with someone saying there are now 20 seiners working the inner Hauraki Gulf inside the trawl lines. No wonder the boaties cannot catch any fish this summer.

I say it is now time to ban all power fishing in the Hauraki Gulf

and to shift these commercial boats out to where they are saying there are heaps of fish.

What with the unacceptable high price of snapper, no one can afford to buy fish and must now rely on catching it themselves. I say kick commercial out.

Steve Lang, amateur fisher, Auckland

THAT BELL WAS STOLEN!

Dear Sir

Every mariner knows the ship's bell is an essential part of its compulsory safety equipment.

To hack a piece of safety equipment from a ship (laid up or not) under the cover of fog and darkness and to refer to this action as "liberating" is wrong.

I am pleased *Professional Skipper* shares this view and (unlike the *DomPost*), correctly opened the article with, "The ship's bell STOLEN from the ... *Rangatira*."

Steve Blom, master MV Kent

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

Dear Sir

Another fantastic *Professional Skipper* magazine, which only gets better all the time. I know others have told you so but the quality of the magazine only grows in strength as it matures.

You have raised the question of just how unsafe are we? When one thinks about it, we are a significant industry and lets include the ports, our port workers, the fishing industry and our coastal shipping industry from the inter-island ferries to the small charter boat.

Our New Zealand maritime industry has got to be a large employer in a hostile environment, so your question is valid and deserves a considered answer. Unfortunately I do not have the answer. Maybe you do or at least have access to he who does. I believe if we were to consider our safety record with other similar sized industries with similar risk levels, I think we will find, as you say, that while our safety record is good, we are one of the most over regulated industries around.

Unfortunately until someone does the numbers and comes up with the stats, MSA/MNZ and the many SSM companies will continue to over charge and the SSM dogs breakfast we now have will allow them to continue to feast on us all as we have no choice but to pay heavily for our compliance costs.

Keep up the good work Keith, what you have said about Terry Reynolds is pretty much how it is. He's a good guy and knows boats, but the fishing industry has shat on him. Without you standing up and saying it as it is, we would all just have to suffer the consequences.

Dave Banks, inshore master

ALL IN A NUTSHELL

Dear Sir

Your article on the *Princess Ashika* further demonstrates the huge depth of your maritime knowledge and why *Professional Skipper* is a must read magazine. You have hit the nub of the issue on the head and I only hope our politicians are reading this magazine as well, because you have said it in a coconut shell.

Keith where and how you source the vast amount of information you bring to us each issue is a credit to your ability to listen and then give informed information to even raise debate.

Please never lose your ability to say it as it is and speak on behalf of the silent and oppressed. Your voice is your mana.

Graeme Henry, Port Vila 