

# **IRISH ISLANDS FISHERMEN.**

## **EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT SALMON GROUP (OCTOBER 2006)**

### **Introduction.**

**In December 2006 we, the fishermen on the Islands of Ireland asked for consideration.**

**Consideration for our way of life, our culture, our financial well-being, our future and our hopes and ambitions for the children of future generations. Consideration was required because all of these things were about to come under threat by the report by the independent salmon group (October 2006).**

**We asked for exemption from the report believing that it would be destructive to our way of life, our communities and to Island inhabitants generally. Despite sterling representation from many quarters, we were ignored. The report was upheld, no exceptions, no exemptions, no special consideration.**

**Let us look at what has happened since.**

## **EFFECTS OF THE REPORT.**

### **Effects of the report on Island fishermen.**

**For the purposes of this report we shall concentrate on Arranmore Island and use figures and statistics from there.**

**In 2006 we argued that fishermen on the Islands would be left with no choice but emigration, the argument has, in three short years, proved prophetic.**

**Since the ban became effective three boats have completely stopped fishing because it was no longer viable to continue.**

**Three of our most able and highly qualified skippers Have left the sea and the Island. Their crews left without work.**

**From 15 full time fishermen in 2006 we now have 2.  
From 18 part time fishermen in 2006 we now have 10.**

**There have been no young men leaving school to become fishermen.**

## **Effects of the report on island life**

**We warned that the demise of the fishing fleet would have a knock on effect on Island life we take no pleasure in being proved right.**

**Our Population has decreased as families leave to pursue an alternative lifestyle, one that will provide employment and prospects.**

**Our school population has decreased accordingly and we are now threatened with the closure of one of the two Island primary schools.**

**Island businesses are being affected as the population drops and the Island economy loses the money brought in from fishing. One Hotel has closed taking with it 10 jobs. One bar and three shops have also closed down during this period**

**Our tradition of boat building on the Island is gone – there is now no one on Arranmore engaged in the trade.**

**The Lifeboat has lost 25% of its first choice crewmembers as logically these men traditionally came from the fishing community.**

**There are no sea faring skills being passed on to the youth of the Island and logically these skills must eventually be lost entirely.**

**In addition to all of the above, due to the lack of fishing the fisherman's co-op in Burtonport has been forced to close with the loss of 6 jobs.**

## **Effects of the report on fishing stocks.**

**We highlighted the danger in 2006 of the effects this ban would have on fishing stocks. As men were prevented from fishing their traditional species they would naturally turn to species allowed under the law.**

**Lobster was selling at an average price of 20 euro per kilo in 2006, brown crab at an average of 2.50 euro. These prices have dropped to 14 and 1 euro respectively as supply considerably outstrips demand.**

**It should be pointed out that despite the difficulties imposed on the Island fishermen they continued with the conservation policies and are happy to continue this policy in the future.**

## **Effects of the report on finance.**

**The well anticipated financial effects come as no surprise. When the fishermen were effectively banned from working, Arranmore Island's economy suffered to the tune of around 800,000 euro per annum from the fishing ban alone. This has to have a devastating effect on the community as a whole. There is really nothing to add to this statistic, the effects are obvious. Think about that for a moment – 800,000 euro – from an Island of 600 people.**

**These figures are not ours they are accurate assessments produced by The Gaeltacht Islands Fisheries.**

**Lost – 140,000 on crayfish, lost - 150,000 on whitefish, lost-190,000 on salmon, lost - 260,000 on brown crab (due to reduction in boats fishing), other losses have occurred on velvet crab and the price reduction effect**

## **Effects on future**

**It would be very easy to say what future? And leave it at that but this is not a flippant or frivolous argument. When the future of our Islands is at stake, we are duty bound to present serious defences. The children of coming generations will not be afforded the option of an occupation on the sea, unlikely to be afforded an option of an occupation on their Island. The crafts associated with the sea will be lost, the ability to man lifeboats, the knowledge and tradition of the Island men in work, in sport, in leisure - the ability to sustain family life on any Irish Island for any but the few. These are the consequences of the fishing ban, and they are not possibilities, we all recognise the certainty of change.**

## **Summary**

**In three short years since the implementation of this report we have witnessed changes on the Islands that were unthought of 5 years ago. Fishermen on the Islands were earning or supplementing their income fishing salmon and other species now forbidden under the ban. The situation has been outlined above; this however is only the beginning. Logic will spell it out loud and clear, without some radical thinking our way of life is finished, dead, gone.**

**And it will never return.**

**... so what can be done?**

**Look forward to the not too distant future to an Island life that does not include fishing of any kind, an Island life where there are no boats, no nets, no pots and no hope of increasing the population, no schools, no employment no hope.**

**The Island fishermen have refused the compensation offered to them, there are far more important issues here, we are sending out a message, we do not want compensation we do not want financial aid, we do not want equipment, assistance, education or training. We do not want to be patronised we do not want to be ignored we do not want to be pushed into a different way of life we do not want the enforced emigration inflicted upon so many.**

**We will supply the equipment, the vessels, the know-how, the training, the manpower the spirit and the education of future generations, all we ask is the opportunity to return to the only way of life that some of us have ever known.**

**This way of life is not ours to sell or negotiate away, our fathers passed it to us; we must in turn pass it on to our children.**

**We on the Islands of Ireland acknowledge the efforts that several of our elected representatives and administrative bodies have made on our behalf to sustain our way of life. It is devastating to us as it must be to them that we must stand by and watch all that fight and funding flush away in the wake of one destructive and negative piece of legislation. It cannot surely be beyond our combined will to achieve forward movement on these issues.**

## **The proposal.**

**We propose that a pilot scheme be introduced along the following lines:**

**1.**

**That those salmon fishing licence holders on Arranmore and Inishbofin Islands that refused the compensation package be granted the right to fish salmon for 40 days per annum on a days at sea basis. This takes into consideration the changing availability of the fish and the safety of the men concerned. (Quotas and seasonal based arrangements often forcing fishermen out to sea in dangerous conditions.)**

**2.**

**That all Donegal Island gill net fishermen be granted the right to fish spurdog and whitefish all year round within a 30 mile radius of their home port. This would pertain to all fishermen within area 6a.**

**3.**

**All fishermen connected with the proposed pilot scheme would be open and available to assist fisheries personnel with issues of conservation, information and records.**

**All we ask is the opportunity,**

**Thank you.**

