

Fisheries vs. environment

Liberal economics not the answer**The social conditions of fishworkers are not easily placed on the agenda of industrial fisheries or liberal economics**

There is a serious shortfall in information reaching fishing communities in France—and Europe, in general—about the debate over improved resource management to end the present fish stocks crisis.

At the recent UN sessions in New York and Rome (on high-seas fishing and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries), European fishermen were represented essentially by the high-seas fishing lobby and by para-public officials. This partly explains the information shortfall.

Moreover, the social conditions of fishworkers and their families, much aggravated by the crisis, are very inadequately addressed in Brussels, the headquarters of the EU. Although the interests of European fishworkers differ widely, the industrial fisheries lobby and the predominance of issues prescribed by laissez-faire liberal economics are really the main obstacles in any progress towards a more human fisheries policy in Europe.

As regards the use of the 'ecological weapon', it should be discussed with groups like Greenpeace what can be done to:

- promote an environment-development approach, with regard to support for sustainable fisheries—the FAO's Code for Responsible Fisheries could help here—combating pollution and other environmental degradation, etc; positive efforts by fishworkers' organizations should be highlighted
- respect the right of fishworkers' organizations to be represented and get more involved in resource

management and allied debates, including in Europe: how can the issues being discussed during the UN Conference in New York be seen to be meaningful by fishworkers' organizations?

- devise a clear strategy during the rest of the UN Conference with regard to how the EU/ACP fisheries agreements campaign is referred to. This requires inputs into the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements about the issues being discussed in New York and their relevance to fisheries agreements. Support for monitoring of long-distance fishing (in West Africa, South Asia, Klondike, etc) could be appropriate, as well as for setting up regional management schemes (for example, in West Africa), and the distinction should be made between European long-distance fisheries and local fishermen
- do research on the impacts of international trade on fishing effort and the marine environment: would this not show that a precautionary approach for the exploitation of a limited resource requires market regulation (thus countering simplistic liberal allegations that defending a local fishery is tantamount to protectionism)?

This addition to the earlier debate with Greenpeace (SAMUDRA No: 10 & 11, December 1994) comes from James Smith, Charge de Mission, Programme Mer, CCFD, Paris