

## Join with the likes of Greenpeace?

**There is a need to debate the pros and cons of co-operating and working together with environmental groups like Greenpeace**

**N**ow is the appropriate time to debate a proposed 'code of collaboration' with environmentalists—not only Greenpeace—since it coincides with the so-called 'tuna war' between mainly French and Spanish fishermen in the Bay of Biscay in the summer of 1994.

As a friend of a number of French fishermen, my reactions reflect my own 'involved' point of view. But I do not claim to speak for the fishermen themselves.

We do need to find ways of working with environmentalists, even if it proves difficult to do so in some regions. I feel that such regional difficulties need to be carefully considered by both ICSF and Greenpeace, in order for a credible *global* strategy on management of fisheries resources.

At the same time, we are also obliged to address the regional difficulties 'on their own merits', as separate issues, since it is often a question of life or death for fish-workers affected both by environmentalist prohibitions and administrative regulations.

In Europe, since fishermen in many places are fighting for their survival, ICSF needs to address the drift-net issue as the tip of the iceberg of a deep-seated resource management problem. Only then can we progress with any promotion of sustainable fisheries in Europe.

In the South, too, the environmentalist approach often tends to ignore the constraints of fishworkers' efforts to survive and confront change imposed from outside their community.

In the long term, however, it is surely counter-productive for fishworkers and

environmentalists to be on opposing sides. After all the protection of the resource must be the ultimate guarantee of fishworkers' survival and development.

That there should be confrontation is hardly surprising when the environmentalist passion is based solely on the need to protect fauna and flora. Generally speaking, there is a need for reciprocal analysis, education and negotiation.

Can ICSF play a role, considering its interaction with both sides involved? I believe it would be very worthwhile to try. On the 'tuna war' issue, ICSF could help to pour the proverbial oil on troubled waters.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that Greenpeace is presently training the 'ecological weapon' on fishworkers in Europe, and no distinction is made between long-distance fleets and local fish-workers. This reflects the position which seemed to be taken for granted—by both Greenpeace and the EU at the New York United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The EU was actually upholding the interests of the long-distance fleets.

### **Clarify distinction**

The distinction needs to be clarified both by Greenpeace and by fishworkers themselves. This is important in order to advance the principle that international fisheries agreements do *not* resolve fisheries management problems in Community waters.

Greenpeace appears to limit its defence of fishworkers' participation in resource management to indigenous peoples, like



Eskimos and some other traditional fishermen in the South. This kind of reduction does not properly address the essential problem of how fishworkers' participation in the management of resources on a global basis can be compatible with national sovereignty over access to resources.

**M**oreover, there needs to be a greater focus on the weaknesses of national sovereignty. This is ultimately responsible for resource depletion. Both regional management schemes and fishworker involvement surely require that national sovereignty be more flexible enough to recognize the potential of fishworkers to *organize* in an autonomous fashion, world-wide.

In Europe, banning drift-nets is of questionable justification, with regard to the long-term protection of natural resources. Some happenings induce cynicism: 2.5-km drift-nets are *de facto* equated with 100-km ones in the Pacific before the ban; pictures of captured dolphins (are they even of European waters?) are used over and over again on TV; Greenpeace's campaign dates back to the call for a UN ban on drift-nets in the Pacific, meaning that Greenpeace wanted to scare off the EC from backing Japan; and now the drift-net campaign is closely tied to Greenpeace's fund-raising strategy. Pitching fishworkers against dolphins in the public mind is a lousy trick, especially in the context of the suffering caused by the present fisheries

crisis in Europe. It reinforces the idea that fishworkers are basically red-necked hunters, incapable responsible organization.

The environmentalists' campaigns also tend to project amalgamated stereotypes in the press. For instance, a recent article in the Swiss magazine **24 heures**, dated 4 August 1994, refers to '40 to 45 small fishermen from Senegal dying each year caught up in the meshes of large seiners'!

Unfortunately, by enhancing anti-fish-worker sentiment, Greenpeace effectively prevents fishworkers from taking on board positive ecological options on resource management. The fact that fishworkers' organizations have taken some initiative in denouncing the loss of toxic wastes from merchant vessels has not been taken up seriously by Greenpeace.

Greenpeace's focus on the alleged ecological drawbacks of drift-nets in the Franco-Spanish cod war may unfortunately be clouding the issue of resource management in Community waters, since the main problem is that of the much too large Spanish fleet. This is a very thorny social problem.

Nonetheless, the Spanish are using the 'ecological weapon' against the French fishermen, while being the principal beneficiaries of the EU's policy on fisheries agreements with ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) states. It should be considered that the European decommissioning scheme is probably hurting mainly the unorganized local fishermen of Europe, who are the least likely to go off fishing in ACP waters.

#### **Diverting public attention**

I am not sure whether Greenpeace itself is supporting the Spanish fishermen on the grounds that rod-and-line fishing is more ecological than drift-netting. It would appear, though, that the Greenpeace campaign is diverting public attention from the fact that no amount of international fisheries agreements will be sufficient to improve resource management in Community waters. For the time being, at any rate, it is just causing much bad blood among fishermen in Europe.

**I**t ought to be in the interests of the vast majority of European fishworkers to take a stand, on the amounts being spent by the EU on monetary compensations for access rights—941m ECU out of total payment appropriations of the European Common Fisheries Policy of 1,743m ECU between 1987 and 1992. But the media is a lot more interested in the fighting at sea.

I also regard the French government's attitude as quite cynical. Greenpeace is so badly regarded in France that it gives further justification for the government to send gun-boats to the fishing area in the Bay of Biscay. This helps the government tell the fishworkers, 'Look what we're doing for you!', while, in fact, it is simply exercising control over the fishermen without offering them greater responsibility in the management of their affairs, and especially without itself taking more blame for the overall fisheries crisis. The French government is more ambiguous than the British over this, even if it appears to be doing much more at the Brussels level.

It should also be borne in mind that the Senegalese government is using the ecologists to discredit the CNPS's campaign on fisheries agreements, by spreading the message: 'the campaign is basically ecologist (that is, uninformed and emotional), and the CNPS is just being used and has no valid demands of its own'. This follows the pattern of previous official opposition to the CNPS, through political or religious considerations, to discredit the CNPS's efforts to be recognized as serious actors in the fishery sector, both nationally and internationally. While the CM's is refuting this strongly, it is all the more wary of the ecologist drive because of the friendly relations that have been built up with the Breton fishermen over the years, which helped gain international recognition for the CNPS.

There is a real risk that the Greenpeace drift-net campaign (or any other blanket condemnation of European fishermen) could discredit ICSF's campaign on fisheries agreements in Europe (which is also backed by Greenpeace), especially in France. The CNPS needs to maintain its support in Europe, rather than see it

divided. This is why, at the press conference on the renegotiation of the EU-Senegal agreement, which was held in Brussels on 12 July, it was necessary to insist that the conference got a Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA) stamp, rather than a solely Greenpeace billing.

How can Greenpeace, and other ecologist organizations, best serve the fishworker's cause? If Greenpeace is seeking ICSF endorsement as a South-based organization, there should surely be many clarifications. But a lot will depend on how fishworkers' organizations can represent their own views on ecological issues.

As far as Europe is concerned, the present anger with Greenpeace could, paradoxically, bring some fishworkers' organizations closer together to define a common position, at least on drift-nets, resource management and perhaps even on fisheries agreements. It should be discussed with Greenpeace how the 'ecological weapon' can be used in favour of the participation of fishworkers' organizations in resource management and more autonomous organization among fishworkers. Although the Spanish and Greenpeace are calling for a complete ban on drift-nets, it is not a foregone conclusion.

#### Co-existence

A recent report by Pierre Gillet of ICSF states that 'it should be clearly said once again that the drift-nets (involved in the Bay of Biscay tuna war) are passive and selective and that the accusations regarding their anti-ecological nature are false. To enable co-existence between different fishing techniques in the same fishing areas, there must be discussion among fishermen, *and a desire not to be provocative. Moreover, it would seem that we will have no peace until there is a proper European coastguard service*'.

These views have been articulated by James Smith a member of ICSF and the Manager, Programme Mer, CCFD, Paris