Hon Jim Anderton
Minister of Fisheries

11 September 2008
Media Statement

This document is a dissection and rebuttal of the Minister of Fisheries' media statement in response to the joint non-commercial media statement expressing concerns about the Fisheries Act 1996 Amendment Bill (No.2).
http://option4.co.nz/Fisheries_Mgmt/documents/Media_Release_Fisheries_Act_amendment_908.pdf

The black text is the Minister's original statements and marked as [Minister].

Blue text represents the early analysis of the same information by the joint submitters to the Amendment Bill, the Hokianga Accord, the New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council and option4. This analysis is marked as [Hokianga Accord].

More information is online at http://option4.co.nz/Fisheries_Mgmt/section13.htm.

Non-commercial fishing interests mistaken

[Minister] Non-commercial interests opposing the Fisheries Act Amendment Bill are mistaken about what the Bill proposes, Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton said today.
[Hokianga Accord] On the contrary, the Hokianga Accord, the New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council and option4 jointly made a very well informed submission and a comprehensive supplementary submission on the proposed amendment to the Primary Production Select Committee.

[Minister] "The whole point of the bill is to enable the Minister of Fisheries to make decisions to change the quota to ensure sustainability of fishstocks in circumstances where the courts have currently ruled he can't because he doesn't have rock-solid scientific evidence of the status of the fishstocks involved.
[Hokianga Accord] No, there are other provisions within the current Act that can be used. The passing of the proposed amendment will legalise what the High Court deemed was unlawful practice while lowering the sustainability threshold.

[Minister] "Currently, taking a precautionary approach when there is not enough "scientific research" available, and lowering the quota to ensure sustainable fisheries continually puts the minister in court."
[Hokianga Accord] Nonsense. It is poor advice from the Ministry of Fisheries that puts the Minister in court.

[Minister] Jim Anderton said even when certain fishstocks were in trouble because there wasn't enough scientific evidence available, he could not lower the quota.
[Hokianga Accord] In orange roughy the necessary information was available, it was just that the Ministry of Fisheries did not go and get the information and therefore the Minister could not use section 13(2) of the Fisheries Act 1996 to reduce the quota.

[Minister] “Getting adequate research done to satisfy the latest court rulings would be hard and prohibitively expensive in some cases. In the case of orange roughy, it might not be possible to get the required information until the species was entirely fished out!
[Hokianga Accord] Just use another part of the Act, or make meaningful long-term changes that will not compel the Minister to set maximum catch levels irrespective of the quality of information.

[Minister] “Research is cost-recovered from the industry, so when much more research is required, the bill to the industry to comply with the court's ruling would be enormous. It would almost certainly result in many businesses going out of business.”
[Hokianga Accord] Hence the reason why the fishing industry has written the amendment in the way they have, to put the Minister in a position of always having to set a maximum harvest strategy with the least amount of information required and at least-cost.

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