

option4 Update #4
NZ Spearo magazine

June 2010

High stakes at risk for sea-lovers

Selling off access to New Zealand's natural resources has almost become a national sport. But privatisation is a high-stakes game with only one winner, the buyer, and the public is the inevitable loser. Fishermen and spearo alike witness the downstream impacts of these changes every time we fish in the sea.

In just one lifespan we have witnessed the loss of both free and reasonable access to fundamentals such as fresh water, foreshore areas, and fish for food.

The good news is that option4 remains determined to stop this insidious, creeping death and ensure we leave our next generation access to a healthy marine environment and abundant fisheries.

Public versus private good

When old guys like Norman Kirk and even Robert Muldoon stood for public office it was with a clear view that they represented the public's interests. Great care was taken to ensure no commercial relationships would give rise to accusations of bias or preference. The well-being of the people, in the broadest sense, was carried on their shoulders, visible to all.

It is the collapse in ethics of the public servant, in the face of changing politics from public to private good, that sees the public finally stripped of representation. It is now fashionable to only consider one's own wellbeing - sod the rest.

As fisheries become increasingly privatised and political influence is captured by the private owners the public is left disenfranchised. With political masters now more openly skewing resource allocation processes to favour their new found best friends in the commercial world, yesterday's public servants are replaced with political servants.

Although remaining behind a smokescreen of public service, ministries managing New Zealand's assets are increasingly becoming the servants of private owners and their economist leaders.

Back-door deals with a focus on economic outcomes have replaced policy considerations of the public's social, environmental, and cultural well-being.

<http://www.option4.co.nz/Comments/articles.htm>

Privatising fisheries – precursor to licencing

A recent proposal to amend the Fisheries Act, to enable the formation of a mandated body to represent all marine recreational fishers has met with substantial opposition, and rightly so.

Fishing in the sea for food is a centuries-old human right. In New Zealand it is an individual right not a collective one. So, unless a statutory authority is formed that supplants your mandate, no single entity has the right to negotiate away your access to our common marine resources.

There has also been intense debate around the proposed self-funding mechanism to sustain this organisation. If legislation is successful a "membership fee" could be mandatory for every man, woman or child who fishes in the sea. In simple terms, this means licencing.

Any such scheme may not be presented in such blatant terms, but whatever terminology is used a statutory authority to levy members means a compulsory tax for fishers.

At this stage option4 is not aware of any political party that is prepared to put its popularity at risk and support a licencing regime. But as next year's election draws near fisheries management needs to be a priority for all New Zealanders who value access to our marine environment.

That is because money drives politics and fisheries barely rates above defence in the political realm.

http://www.option4.co.nz/Your_Rights/overarching_body.htm

Hokianga Accord

option4 representatives eagerly participated in the recent Hokianga Accord hui held in Ruawai, near Dargaville. The Accord is the mid north iwi fisheries forum, which includes the commercial and non-commercial interests of Ngapuhi, Ngati Whatua, other northern iwi and hapu, environmental and fishing groups.

Other regular contributors to this forum are Greenpeace, the Environment and Conservation Organisations of Aotearoa New Zealand, Forest & Bird and NZ Sport Fishing (ex NZ Big Game Fishing Council).

Several resolutions and a commitment to work together to achieve 'more fish in the water' are the spin-offs from the hui.

Coastal communities managing their local fisheries and having a wider say in marine protection were popular themes throughout the two-day hui.

There was general agreement that locals were more attuned, than Wellington-based bureaucrats, to what measures were required to protect marine life and prevent on-land activities having an adverse effect on their inshore fisheries.

Controversial issues such as the Crest Energy proposal to install underwater turbines in the Kaipara Harbour, aquaculture reforms, and kahawai mismanagement were also discussed.

Sustainable development of aquaculture was a priority. Pending government reforms had the potential to expand shellfish operations beyond current management areas and introduce industrial finfish farms.

Support was also given to advocate for Ministerial approval of the Te Puna mataitai application for the northern Bay of Islands. There was increasing frustration that the process had stalled, despite considerable community support.

After a four-year Court process the fisheries Minister is due to make fresh decisions for managing kahawai. There are fears that the available science will be manipulated to enable more of these valuable fish to be purse seined and exported.

Little regard has been given to fishers' concerns that there are now few and smaller kahawai available, due to historic commercial exploitation.

Ministry management proposals are expected before the end of June and a collective response from the Accord will be developed.

This forum is continuing to advocate for more abundant fisheries and a healthier marine environment for the benefit of non-extractors, spearos and regular fishermen.

Abundance will enable all New Zealanders to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being. The fifteenth overnight Accord hui is expected in October. www.HokiangaAccord.co.nz