

ITQ Advocates Out to Lunch re Changes to Fisheries Policy

Written by Scott Parsons/Joseph Gough
Thursday, 15 March 2012 07:57

Earlier this week John Ivison writing in the National Post waded into the debate over the Tory plans to "modernize: Canada's fisheries policy. This is widely regarded by Atlantic fishermen as code for "selling out coastal communities and fishermen to corporate interests." Spokesmen for the corporate sector on the other hand see this as their one great chance to overturn policies they have fought for decades. John Ivison has unwittingly been duped by economists who believe that ITQs are the answer to all fisheries ills. A fisheries colleague of mine has provided a crisp rejoinder to Ivison's meanderings in a letter which I heartedly endorse.

Dear Mr. Ivison:

In terms of pure logic uncluttered by reality, one can make as good an argument for Individual Transferable Quotas as for most of the other over-simple theories applied to fisheries over the decades. In the early 1980s, a cadre of economists celebrated the new ITQ-based schemes for Atlantic cod and other groundfish. The historic and colossal collapse of those fisheries ten years later failed to discourage the external experts on fisheries, and one must salute these gallant champions of the simple solution.

Not all ITQ fisheries fail, nor are ITQs the only factor in failures. Moreover, even in a failed fishery, some quota-collectors may profit. But endorsing ITQs as a blanket solution defies experience.

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Meanwhile, the lobster fishery seen as backward by many economists has continued to use traditional management methods such as gear and effort regulation. It also goes by the fleet-separation and owner-operator rules that some would banish. Today it stands as by far the biggest and most successful fishery on the Atlantic and a chief asset for coastal communities.

Regards,

Joseph Gough

TAGS: fisheries, sustainable, ITQs, individual quotas, coastal communities, Atlantic fishermen, John Ivison, Joseph Gough

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