

STOP THIS DESTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY!

“From many points of view we are at an historical cross road today. While there is a political regrouping of forces taking place, it is certain that the constraints of the existing development process have led to this juncture”.

With these words, Nalini Nayak, sociologist and coordinator of the ICSF, situates the setting and responsibilities, inviting the participants to the Bangkok Conference to analyse the present developments in the fishery sector from a global perspective. Even if these developments are not directly linked to this sector they nevertheless have its bearing upon it.

In 1989 the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), India, undertook a month long national coastal ecological march called the Kanyakumari March - because it culminated at Kanyakumari, at the southern tip of India on worker's day May 1st.

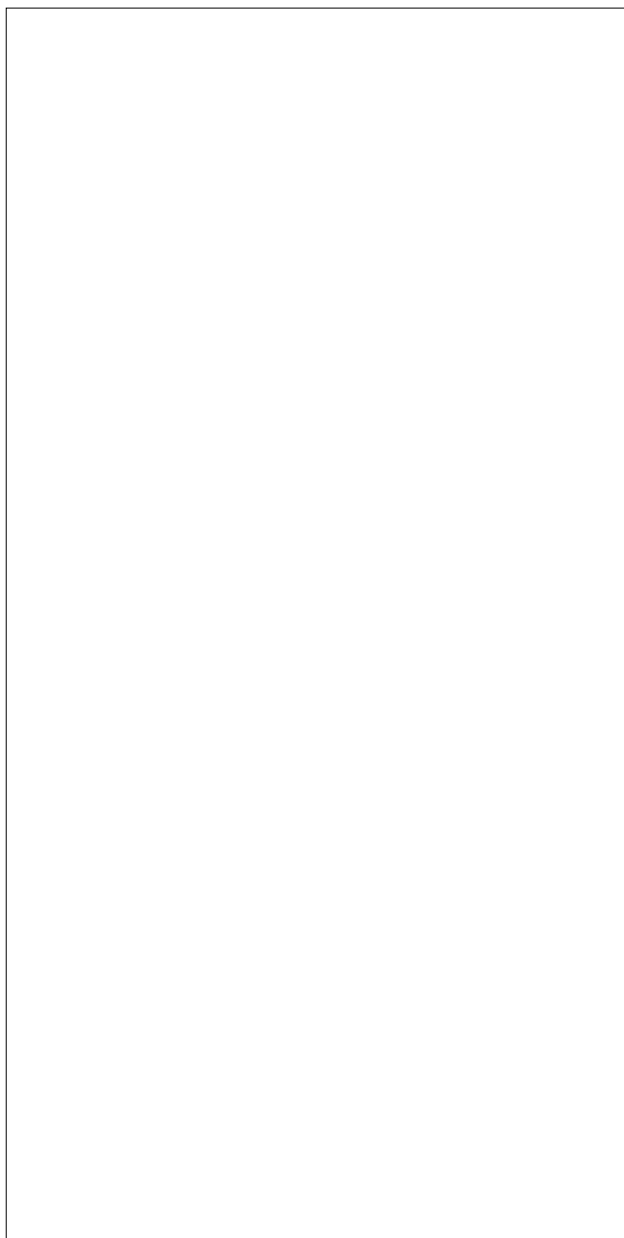
The reaction from other Trade Unions was: “What on earth does a worker's union has to do in an ecological march that is for the environmentalists?”

For all of us who work with fishworkers, we are fully aware of the fact that the depletion of fish resources is a biological phenomenon which has to do with the adverse effect on the eco-cycles caused by the use of over efficient technology, the pollution of the water and more broadly, the greed of capital to reap fast profits.

Working beaches converted to tourist beaches

National fishworkers unions in The Philippines, Thailand, India and Chile have led to struggles demanding the management of the resources so that the small fishworkers will have their space in which to operate and so that the regeneration of the resource may be safeguarded. But while we are all busy with our day to day struggles and organisational work, more violent development strategies are wiping us off our feet and threatening the very existence of the small fishworkers on land.

The Kanyakumary March highlighted some of these growing land based trends. Local people flocked to meet the marchers expressing their problems which were far beyond the imagination of the marchers before launching on the march. Thousands of fisher people gathered at Kanyakumari, particularly women



in large numbers, as they felt the march highlighted their problems of survival. Although I do not intend to give the details of the march here I feel the concerns expressed at this march will be the concerns of fishworkers all over the world and I would like to relate them here.

Most of the new issues relate to the displacement of the small fishworkers in the name of land based development. They are being displaced because of tourism. The working beaches have to be converted into tourist beaches, some of them making way for five star hotels and others of a cheaper nature encouraging druggies and sex tourism which ruin the local rural cultures.

The development of tourism is one of the ways in which the developing countries hope to increase their foreign exchange earnings and diversify employment avenues. A study done on the beaches of Goa, India, shatters all these dreams. The Indian tourists who come from the upper classes outweigh the foreign ones. On the other hand the hotel industry grows to be so self contained that no local skill is employed. The avenues for alternative employment of the local people is therefore a myth. The local people may have to provide the ethnic attraction which is anyway underpaid and is very seasonal.

There is large-scale displacement also taking place in the name of nuclear installations which carry with them the danger of radiation health hazards. We see the Pacific being made the base of the advanced countries for all their nuclear testing and they are aggressive about it too. The "*Green Peace Organisation*" suffered fatally because they tried to question this. The people of the Pacific Islands are considered less than human and therefore need no protection against these barbaric encroachments on their land, environment and culture. We know that the cost of producing one unit of hydro and solar energy. Yet the investment in research made to harness the energy of the sun is so meagre that it is not yet competitive enough to be considered an alternative source.

Who pays for the oil spills?

The fast depletion of the forests also has its impact on the fishery. Some of the most precious rain forests of the world have been destroyed. Other forest trees are mindlessly felled and large amounts of developmental are then spent on presences of social forestry. As a result of this depletion the rivers are drying up and with less nutrients reaching the seas, the regeneration of the stocks is also hampered. Together with this, the indiscriminate clearing of the mangroves, turning them into prawn fields, is a destruction of the

rich nursery grounds for the fish. We know that in many parts of the world and especially here in southern Thailand, fishworkers who took for granted that the sea provided them food, are starving today because this is not so.

Then again, who pays for the oil spills in the oceans? When the Union Carbide Company in Bhopal, India, caused the gas tragedy, at least the inhabitants of the area could sue the company for damages. Although this is no solution to the problem, at least the companies have to learn to take measures of precaution. Who can react to the oil spills in the oceans? Do we always get to know about them? Whom do they affect? What effect do they have on the future regeneration of the fish stocks?

The future of the fishworkers has to be seen in the context of modern development and the pressures that these developments make on those who subsist on the common property resources, I need not mention in detail the various kinds of pollution that destroy our waters today. While the fish kills that result from toxic pollution are recognised but not seriously monitored, the impact of this pollution on the health resistance of the fishworkers is nobody's concern be it in the first, second or third world. We hear how certain third world countries have to barter space to dump toxic waste of a developed country in return for food.

This waste is dumped in the territorial waters of a third world country thereby polluting the waters and ruining the ecology. SAMUDRA Review n° 2 - informs us of how West Africa refused to accept this in Guinea Bissau which was offered \$ 120 million for the same.

Then, aspects we are not allowed to speak about publicly are the defence installations. Most of them are situated near the sea. In India, instance, these are on the increase and new bases are being established leading to displacement and privatisation of coastal lands and waters. Since the main reason given for these installation is national security, the local people have no scope to react. Displacement is justified again in the name of progress so long as those displaced are compensated. Compensation means being paid off or given an alternative site. Neither of these meet the life needs of those displaced as employment and sources of livelihood are not guaranteed.

The determining role of women

These are other cases in which the oil and mineral wealth of the oceans are being exploited indis-

criminally and we still have not been able to know of or assess these in any detail.

We see from history that modern technology has already taken its toll on women. Besides ousting them from the labour force, it has relegated them to the homes where their labour is not remunerated and not assessed in the calculations of the gross national product. Today, in the third world especially we see how the processes of privatisation threaten the subsistence economies and thereby increase the burden on women. Women have to walk further away for water, fuel and fodder to keep the home fires burning.

In the developed world, women have to manage the home and households alone because their husbands are away at sea for long stretches of time. In the southern countries women bear the burnt of the increasing indebtedness of the fishworkers. It is they who have to struggle to make two ends meet for the survival of the family and again these costs of her deteriorating health and overwork are not calculated.

The concept of production for the market which becomes more and more capital intensive finally makes meeting daily needs more and more difficult. As capture fishery gets more aggressive and culture fishery more privatised and capital intensive, isn't it time we begin to think more in terms of a nurture fishery where men women and nature matter?

Nurturing, we will accept, has grown to be socially a women's role in society. While women have painstakingly nurtured human kind, men have ruthlessly plundered nature, and now realise there are limits to such exploitation and growth. A model of sustained development has to include the task of nurture and in fisheries it implies recreating and respecting the aquatic ecosystems and the respect for life as a whole. The cry for survival of the fishworkers today is a cry for a new model of development - a model that will first produce for need and not for want.

These present trends raise many questions to the supporters of the small fishworkers. What positions do we take on these questions? If we do take a position how do we act at the international level? Gone are the days when we could believe that modern development strategies would show us a way of meeting the survival needs of the millions. Gone also are the promises of our men folk that they know what is best for the development of our planet. Where do we place our hopes for the future? What should be our priorities?

Nalini NAYAK