

News Round-up

From the ocean without fish...

It was no ordinary rail journey. In November 1993, the environmental organization Sierra Club of **Canada**, organized a caravan of environmental activists to cross Canada by rail on what came to be known as the 'Clayoquot Train'. They started in St. John's, Newfoundland, where the northern cod fishery has had to be shut down after stocks collapsed under the pressure of overfishing by offshore industrial trawlers.

From this ocean with no fish, the caravan set out across the country, stopping for rallies and protests, picking up more people along the way. The destination on the west coast was Clayoquot Sound—a beautiful and endangered remnant of the old-growth rain-forest of British Columbia, where logging rights are held by the giant forestry company MacMillan Bloedel. All summer, protesters were being arrested as they tried to blockade logging roads leading into the forest.

...to the forest without trees

By the time the Clayoquot Train activists reached the clear-cut, scarred west coast—the forest with no trees—over 500 people had been arrested. The first ones to be dealt with by the courts were jailed on sentences of 30-45 days.

When the police moved in to clear the blockades, many activists remained on the road to face arrest.

Among them was Bernard Martin, an inshore fisherman from Petty Harbour, **Newfoundland**, who had been sent on the Clayoquot Train by the Canadian Oceans Caucus.

He explained his decision to stand firm and face arrest as a spontaneous act. But his subsequent actions have been deliberate and carefully considered. He has chosen not to plead guilty, though it might have led to more lenient treatment.

Instead, he chose to plead 'not guilty' and have his day in court. This was to be a forum to expose the plight of Newfoundland's coastal communities.

According to Irene Novaczek, chairperson of the Canadians Oceans Caucus, there are distinct parallels between the ecological disaster in Canada's coastal zone and the on-going unsustainable destruction of Canadian forests.

Filming the fishing

Such ruining of a fishery has rarely been documented powerfully in the visual medium. One person who has attempted to do so on celluloid is Canadian David Coole. His recent short documentary film **Long Line**, produced by the Atlantic Filmmakers' Co-operative, takes off from the crisis in the

Atlantic Canadian fishery to dwell on the larger theme of man's relationship with the environment.

Addressing Latin America

These links are now being grasped all over the world. Thus, how development policies affect artisanal fisheries in **Latin America** and the Caribbean was the subject of an international seminar last May in Ancona, Italy. It was organized by the Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP-International Committee for the Development of Peoples) in collaboration with the Ancona trade Fair, the Italian Ministry of foreign Affairs and the European Community Commission.

The meet brought together experts for international agencies as well as NGOs and artisanal fisherman's organizations from Latin American Countries. As they shared their experiences, they acquired new strategic outlooks on development policies and programmes carried out in some Latin American countries as part of international co-operation.

Tokyo talk

Transcontinental co-operation of another kind occurs this month in Tokyo, where citizens' opinions on UNCED's Agenda 21 will be aired at the Japanese NGO, Peoples' Forum 2001, **Japan**, organizes an international symposium on the environmental future. The discussion sessions focus on energy, recycling, fishery resources, international finance systems and trading. Departing from customary practice, the participants come from the worlds of government and business too. The Forum believes this is a good way to bridge the traditional gap between these sections and NGOs.

EC studies hard

Gaps, however, are aplenty in the area of scholarship in fisheries research. Now, the **European Community** (EC) fisheries ministers have agreed to thoroughly investigate industrial fishing, thanks largely to pressure from the UK fisheries minister. A Working group is also expected to set priorities for future research work

on the effect of industrial fishing on the marine ecosystem, sea birds and small cetaceans. The group is expected to produce a report by the end of April 1994.

Who's who of coral reef protectors

A different type of report is being put together by **Greenpeace** which is compiling a Coral Reef Network

Directory. This will be a unique listing of NGOs working worldwide to protect coral reefs. With profiles of these organizations and details of their activities and areas of expertise, the directory promises to be a comprehensive publication. Greenpeace welcomes contributions from NGOs working exclusively on coral reef issues as well as those with a single reef-oriented project.

Rumblings down under

Closer to an area famous for reefs, trouble is brewing in **New Caledonia** in the South Pacific. In its quest for the 'coquille Saint Jaques', a shellfish which is a luxury food on the menus of Northern consumers, an Australian fishing company is likely to destroy a traditional fishing ground. This belongs to the 'kanak' fishermen of the island of Tanlo, at the far north of New Caledonia.

Their fishing zone, which is used by all the small scale fishermen of the area, is situated inside the lagoon surrounding the island. Its ecosystem is said to be a closed and fragile one.

Societe Sodinor, the society for kanak fishermen, which is based in Poum village, fears the company's planned processing plant will be come the base for trawlers to operate in the lagoon. The dragnets they use to catch shelfish will then destroy the seabed, the kanak fishermen worry.

Military-guided fishing...

Worried too are those who try to fish in Burmese seas. The SLORC military junta of **Burma** keeps a keen and stern watch over fishing in Burmese waters. Last year, it revoked old Thai fishing company contracts as they violated SLORC regulations. But from the beginning of this year, SLORC has given fishing permits to 281 boats belonging to eight Thai firms. This was the outcome of bilateral agreements.

Under the new Burmese law, illegal foreign boats caught fishing in Burmese waters will be sentenced to 47 years imprisonment.

The new regulations prevent the Thai companies from making direct contact with the Burmese military regime.

Thailand's Fisheries Department will select the Thai firms which will enter into contracts with SLORC. This thus institutes a government

relationship between SLORC and Thailand.

...or responsible fishing?

Relationships between NGOs and the FAO are bound to suffer with the drafting of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing. A number of NGOs present at the July session of the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks expressed concern about NGO participation in the drafting of the Code. They feel that FAO has not yet made any real effort to consult them, even though at the March 1993 session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, governments agreed on the active participation of all concerned organizations, including NGOs.

Irresponsible farming

In **South India**, large stretches of productive rice fields are currently being converted into shrimp farms. This causes the enclosed saline water to seep into the paddy fields, making them unfit for rice cultivation. According to

S.Jagannathan, president of the Tamil Nadu Grama Swaraj Movement, the large volume of sea water pumped in by pipelines, which extend deep into the sea, interferes with

the operations of artisanal fishermen. This in effect imperils their livelihoods.

Dam harm

Equally imperiling is the construction of the Pak Mun Dam in **Thailand**, across the Mun River, a major tributary of the Mekong. All but one of the river's 16 rapids will be flooded or dynamited. This World Bank-funded project will displace 250 families. The tropical forest of Kaeng Tana National Park will also be affected by the flooding. Already, fish catches in the Mun River have been reduced to almost nil.

Sent to the can

Not wanting to be reduced to submission, the workers of the Pacific Fishing Company (PAFCO) in Levuka, **Fiji** went on strike last August.

Most of the 600 workers of the state-owned canning company are women. With the government declaring the strike illegal, the workers remain locked out and the factory closed.

Can this agreement, please

Also coming to a close in October 1994 is the fisheries agreement between **Senegal** and the European Community (EC).

To launch a campaign against the renewal of the agreement, CNPS, the national fishermen's organization of Senegal, will discuss strategies at its second Congress during 24-26 March.