

Letters to the editor are encouraged from readers who wish to say nice things, raise an industry concern or even get something off their chest. Letters are published in good faith and may be abridged if too verbose or on the edge of being libellous. In fact, in 15 years we have only refused to publish two letters. For this reason, while we will protect an author's identity if requested by "name withheld on request", letters must be clearly marked by name and address, signed or emailed as verification of authenticity. Letters not clearly signed may not see the light of day.

CONFERENCE COMMENT

Dear Sir

In this issue of *Professional Skipper* I have rendered the article on the Federation of Commercial Fishermen conference as neutrally and factually as I could. There are, however, other aspects of events which I should comment on in a letter to the editor. That allows me opinions and observations that may not appeal to all.

I found the Minister of Fisheries' attitude to financial burdens on the industry worrying. Phil Heatley was dismissive of our views on decisions, made on what we consider debatable evidence, which are driving fishermen out of business. His English grammar has improved since the last conference he attended, even if he cannot pronounce "liquefaction" and finds the subjunctive a mystery.

The geographically challenged Peter Bodeker made reference to "former eastern European countries". He meant Soviet bloc countries, as they could only be former eastern if they were physically relocated elsewhere.

Keith Ingram was wearing his Recreational Fishing Council hat when he uttered what has become a recreational mantra: "MFish introduce policies and rules at the behest of the commercial industry". If only!

To those of recreational persuasion who read this, let me say it again – MFish treat you no better or worse than they do us, and they listen to you no more or less attentively than they do us.

At a meeting after the conference, a lady was commenting on the ministry "ranking" issues in order of priority. Unfortunately, she had a speech impediment – an eroticism. My question, "Have they got it in hand?" was lost amid the merriment.

R Lea Clough, Kaiapo

TURGID PROSE

Dear Sir

The Ocean Law column in the May/June issue raised serious questions on charter boat registration but did so very obscurely. I would urge those involved to tackle the turgid prose again. It said the Ministry of Fisheries is arguably exceeding its authority in

requiring such registration. Well, that's what this simple seaman made of it.

I read, "A similarly broad provision relating to the powers of a fishery officer to give directives for practically any purpose was read down by the courts and essentially regarding that provision as a 'polyfills power'" several times and was none the wiser. Mike Sullivan explained "read down" as a judicial decision minimising the scope of a rule, conceded that the second part was grammatically incorrect (yes, a solicitor who can't write English) and said it referred to an unsuccessful attempt to extend rules governing other areas to apply to areas not covered.

In that they are carrying their clients as passengers, I find it strange there was no mention of regulations that they are definitely governed by. I hope this helps, that Ocean Law continue to do good work for us and in a way we laymen can understand.

R Lea Clough, Kaiapo

DELPHINIUS INCIDENT

Dear Sir

On reading your May/June issue, I noticed with some concern the report of the *Delphinus* in your incidents and accidents section.

Every piece of information therein is seriously flawed.

On that day I was the skipper of the *Cougar I*, a passenger vessel departing Picton on a scheduled service at 1330 bound for Torea Bay and further. My vessel departed Picton 1.5 minutes prior to the *Delphinus*.

As I tracked out and across Queen Charlotte Sound towards Torea Bay, I noticed and passed the Outward Bound cutter *Matahorua* some 180-200m to the west. At that time the cutter was sitting dead in the water and all the students were holding their oars straight up in the air to signify this. The sea was calm and visibility was excellent.

The Maritime New Zealand description quoted the *Delphinus* was on a 30 degrees true heading into Torea Bay. This would take her straight past the entrance to the bay.

It also stated a guide had just completed a safety briefing on board. Safety briefings should be conducted prior to departure. ►

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It then stated the skipper was looking for'ard and then there was a collision.

There is only one explanation for this. Neither the skipper nor Dolphin Watch guides were keeping a proper watch at the time. This is a serious incident with some 11 lives being put severely at risk. From the outside, it would appear this incident is going to be swept under the carpet by Maritime New Zealand.

The most basic responsibility of any skipper or helmsman is to keep a proper watch at all times, and for either of them to say they were looking for'ard at the time just does not ring true with me. The cutter was plainly visible from a minimum of one mile.

If Maritime NZ has swept this under the carpet I believe a grave injustice has been done to every other commercial skipper in Marlborough who carries the travelling public.

I am well aware of the consequences of not keeping watch, as I too was subject to the same investigation process at one time, although minor. The rules are still the rules and we must all abide by them.

I have been in the industry for some 15 years and have skippered water taxis for an estimated 950,000 miles in this most beautiful part of Godzone.

RM (Dick) Chapman, Picton

SUPPORT NETWORK

Dear Sir

Thank you for your world-class magazine. As one of the grey-haired fleet of those involved in marine search and rescue, I found your article Rescue Craft Tames Wild Cape very interesting and congratulate their initiatives.

Through your publication, as a member (and secretary) of Dunedin Marine Search and Rescue, I am interested in contacting individual volunteer marine search and rescue groups with the view of mutual group support to share ideas, experiences and new SAR equipment opportunities, etc. Email dnmsar@xtra.co.nz

Rowan Leck, Dunedin

CHARTER OPERATORS

Dear Sir

I have been reading your magazine since the beginning and find it very informative and helpful.

It is an interesting attitude from some commercial fishermen who seem to have little understanding of what we charter operators provide. We do not get paid per kilo for the fish our clients catch; we get paid for providing Joe Public with a platform to catch their own legal entitlement, regardless of how many kilos they catch.

This adds to the workload of various reports we have to do in our operation for various government departments, on top of trying to entertain a dozen or so clients, something commercial fishermen do not have to do or even consider.

If the results were truly accurate then that would be perfect, but I defy any skipper to keep an eye on so many people catching and throwing back fish and keeping an accurate record not only of what they have caught, but also what they have thrown back, without employing another crewmember. Quite frankly, the clients don't give a toss about the accuracy of the reporting, so therefore the results are misleading and scientifically flawed.

Also, I wonder what response the government would have had if the onus was put on Joe Public to report their own catch? Reminds me of Manapouri all over again.

Richard Abernethy, Te Anau

INCORRECT LEVY

Dear Sir

How many of you, as a self-employed person, have tried to get anything out of the Accident Compensation Corporation lately? If

you have managed to get any benefit from them you would be one of the very few.

Last year we received an invoice from the ACC for around \$1000, claiming they had incorrectly calculated our levies for the past three years and this is what we owed them! (I can imagine the answer if we invoiced someone three years after the event.)

After arguing the point and finding out what levy they had me on, I was told I was a fishing boat skipper, which is apparently one of the more hazardous occupations. After I told them I had never been and never will be a fishing boat skipper, they agreed to re-assess my levy code.

Two weeks later I received another invoice for \$300. That's not so bad, I thought. But no, it was to be added to the previous invoice, making a total of \$1300 owed. Then it was "Pay up, or have the debt collector call."

I told them I spent about 85 percent of my working time writing and the remainder boating, but not as a fishing boat skipper, and was told if my income from the most dangerous occupation exceeds five percent of your total income, your ACC levy is rated on that.

The problem is that our combined incomes had been going into the same company account, which meant everything we earned was being levied at the top rate. For the past year I have been trying to find out exactly what that is. It has been very difficult, because it seems the ACC is very reluctant to put it in print for me, but after many phone calls to them I was told it appears around 2.8 percent of our income goes to the corporation.

Because they will not differentiate between my various sources of income, (even though we advised them), the only way to get around the problem of having your total income levied at the high rate is to form another company into which all of your non-boating earnings go.

With many small charter boat operators not making all of their income from their boat, and topping earnings up from other sideline jobs with all their money going into the one company account, it would pay them to check with the ACC exactly what levy rate they are on. Don't expect a quick answer, though!

Last December I managed to damage my back while at a gym. I suffered a very painful herniated disc, but the ACC is telling me it was a result of a degenerative condition and so I am not covered. Yeah, right!

The degenerative condition is called a leg press and they can be found at every gym. My osteopath says they are a major source of income for him. I was advised this by an ACC consultant (not a doctor) who also said she knew more about my back than the two osteopaths who had worked on me.

I thought my ears had deceived me and I should get them tested under ACC perhaps. But as I get giddy when going around in circles I don't think I will. I'll just keep on paying my high levies from my dangerous occupation to the ACC (Always Collect Cash) until a degenerative condition affects my cheque-signing hand.

Mike Pignégy, Auckland

MAORI QUOTA

Kia ora

I love fishing and diving! I own a 5.5m Plylite offshore vessel called *Hawaiki Tu* and am recently based in Motueka. I am a skipper and intend to continue my lifelong passion, catching kai for the table and sharing my enjoyment of fishing with friends and newcomers, so I am a descendent of Tangaroa.

I have just read your article, Why are slaves catching our fish? A great mariner mentor and friend of mine, David Andrew, based in Gisborne, always spoke of these mother ships raping and pillaging our resources. He chorused your

sentiments regarding our resource – we protect it, care for it and ensure sustainability. David taught me this.

A couple of years back I viewed a DVD made in Nelson about the international fishing vessels which come into our waters pillaging. I recall it highlighted the poor conditions aboard some of these vessels. I remember getting pissed off with nowhere to go with it.

After reading your article, I'm keen to support the snowy head fella here in Motueka you mentioned!

I am alarmed about your claim that Maori tautoko (support) such atrocities. If you are accurate I say this is wrong and tautoko your korero that iwi adopt a responsible approach. I believe Maori quota should be utilised to regenerate a sustainable future for our people with aroha, manaaki and tiaki. These assertions mentioned in your article are against the natural practice of our ancestors' love, care and sustainability. I will endeavour to research these assertions so I may form a proactive strategy to address these issues.

To bring some balance to this article, I find it very interesting that Maori are highlighted in full neon as the main perpetrator, when as you say they are only 40 percent of the problem. What about the other 60 percent? I hope you have previously highlighted my people in your articles for all the positives brought to the table.

Know this: when you write Maori you write Maihi. Initially, I was upset with the attack on my people and me, but I am a guardian of Tangaroa, so I needed to hear your korero so I can act appropriately for the sustainability of our taonga, tangaroa and all those involved.

I remind us all and those capitalists of an important Maori proverb, "He aha te mea nui o tenei ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata!" What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people! Thanks for the wake-up call.

Maihi Barber, Motueka

Kia ora

I like your comments about the foreign fishing boats fishing for all the Maori quota. The problem is with Aotearoa Fisheries convincing our people they can make more money by giving it to them and getting the FCV to fish our fish. Problem two is that we do not see this money and our young people cannot get work, and problem three is we cannot get our own boats and fish for this quota because these foreigners will work for nothing and AFL does not want to pay. I say if we can't catch the fish ourselves, better we leave it in the water, because we are not seeing the money either.

Keep talking up a storm, bro, because there are a lot of us who agree with you, and until you name and shame these Maori in flash jobs who control our fish, we will not see the benefits for our young people.

D Milner, Northland

Dear Sir

You are right on the nail with your editorial in the May/June issue, as usual, in particular with your comments on greedy iwi who have been given 40 percent of quota on the basis of "we were here first".

They have been given the power and responsibility to ensure our fishery is not raped and plundered and to create employment and wealth for all, not a few fat cats at the top. Where are the traditional Maori principles of conservation and management that are so readily trotted out? I think it's just another case of leaving the fox to guard the henhouse.

Also right on the money was the letter Spiritual Significance by Mark Roden. I remember the first time I dived the Waikoropupu Springs in 1960, and as I didn't have a Landrover but a 1958 Humber 80 it was a bit of a walk to a mostly weed-covered ►



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pond. It wasn't until we got into the water that we fully appreciated the clearest water we had ever seen. My buddy and I seemed to be floating in thin air.

We spent some time down there exploring and getting to know the locals, including Maori, who as far as we could make out placed no more significance than anyone else on the springs. It seems if there is a sniff of money or ownership, claims are made up based on some traditional, cultural or spiritual significance.

The proposed tidal power station on the Kaipara Harbour looks as if it will be torpedoed by a coastal tribe who are suggesting they will slap a wahi tapu over the entire Kaipara, one of the largest harbours in the world, and make it a cultural no-go zone to "shut the whole thing down" when they are given customary title under the new marine and coastal area bill.

May I suggest this wahi tapu will only be lifted once a satisfactory deal has been struck, all behind closed doors, of course. Mark my words, this business hasn't even started yet!

I just have to say what an absolute cracker of a wee magazine *Professional Skipper* is. It truly reflects the professional team behind it.

John Deane, Coromandel

FISH SLAVES

Dear Sir

I know you mix in both recreational and commercial circles and are prone to say it how it is. Your latest editorial on fish slaves just about sums the situation up. I'm not sure if it will win you any friends among the companies or SEAFIC, though.

I get the feeling you might have more to say on this issue in the future and if so, I would be happy to talk with you. You are of course mostly right when you say we had the fishery, but we have always had joint-venture boats as well.

Most thought they would only be here until the companies developed our deepwater capacity to replace them. Little did we know it would be our boats, in preference to slave labour, that would ultimately be tied up, leaving honest, hardworking Kiwis on the beach.

Please do not get conned into the company clap-trap that they could not find local crews to man their boats. We have crews and the skills to equal any foreign charter vessel. It's just that they do not want to pay New Zealand wages, end of story.

Professional Skipper is a great magazine. Long may you maintain your independent voice, because no-one is speaking up for us in Seafood magazine.

J Davison, Deckhand

FINE SEAMAN

Dear Sir

I admire the way you handle the magazine. You don't take prisoners, you have a healthy attitude to the over-exuberance of the regulators and I get the feeling you believe in good, conservative seamanship.

I sailed many times on the *Spirit of New Zealand* under Leppy as master and regard him as a fine seaman (and much else besides).

I once told him he was an inspiration to most of us and he was embarrassed somewhat. He reinforced the precepts I had gleaned as a young keel yachtsman in my early twenties. I had had years of experience on centreboarders before that.

I may have been one of the first New Zealand yachties to do delivery work in the northern hemisphere. In 1972, my best mate and I delivered a 17.4m steel centreboard cutter from Southampton to the Mediterranean port of Alicante. Sea Spray published an article I wrote on the trip.

In retirement, I have become a regular contributor to New Zealand Memories magazine, with four articles published. That background gives me, I feel, the judgement to evaluate the quality of your publication. As I have already indicated, I think it is first class.

John Newsham, Tauranga

STELLA SKIPPER

Dear Sir

I enjoyed reading the article about the *Stella* in the New Zealand Workboat Review. My father, Captain Rex Brown, was skipper of the *Stella* from just after she was first launched until his retirement in 1984. He died in August 1999.

In those days the *Stella* was kept very busy in her role as a lighthouse tender. Dad often used to take his 8mm movie camera away with him. We have recently had the best of the film clips edited and put onto a DVD. The film shows a story of the *Stella's* busy life with footage of the manned lighthouse stations being serviced. I congratulate the Clothiers for all their effort.

Tim Brown, Whangarei

TRAINING SHIP

Dear Sir

Reading your May/June issue, I was interested in Barry Thomson's letter. I would like to add a correction to his statement that the *Spirit of New Zealand* was underpowered.

Being the founding master and engineer of the *Spirit of Adventure* and taking over 50 10-day voyages from Stewart Island to the Three Kings, I never found the vessel to be underpowered. We had no problem motoring through the Tory Channel on the ebb tide, or French Pass.

On one occasion in Wellington Harbour, with winds gusting 80 knots and two anchors dragging, we opted to go alongside at Queens Wharf at 0200. We had no problem berthing stern-to in a restricted berth, with the crew bracing yards to bring her bow to the wharf.

Having worked many times with Shorty Sefton on Gardners, I understand their workings intimately (more than I do my lady friend.)

I found the 250hp at the "back" end never caused me any problems.

Yes, I've owned a couple of 8L3B engines that did sterling work in our tug.

No other motor could match a Gardner of the same shaft horsepower. As an example, while pair-trawling off the East Coast, our Gardner used half the fuel of the Caterpillar in the vessel pulling the other wing.

I know Barry had a love-hate thing with the "underpowered" engine, probably from when he frightened the crap out of the wharfies having their breakfast in the old port building when the bowsprit came through the window.

It's interesting to note we were limited to our fuel usage to save costs, sailing all the time to achieve this a few years back. It will be interesting to see the fuel bills for the new engine. The current masters will notice the noise factor as well.

Now, it's interesting to know where the old engine will end up. They are in big demand for superyachts.

Also on your story Our People, Paul Leppington has one omission from his CV. He also helped set up the Ports of Osaka sail training ship *Akogare* in Japan. He followed me up also to impart his vast knowledge to the crew training on their ship. He was a mariner of many means.

J "Pony" More, Kaeo 