

Harper govt moves to gut Atlantic fishery

Written by Scott Parsons

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Recently Brian Lee Crowley, who fancies himself as Canada's Milton Friedman, had an article in the Hill Times calling for more privatization of the Atlantic fishery. Long a big fan of ITQs, the Holy Grail of right-wing fisheries economists, Crowley is one of the ideologues who believes that big business should have unfettered control of the fishery and the "invisible hand" of the free market would sort out all problems. Never mind that hundreds of coastal communities are dying as a consequence. Crowley's musings prompted a response from businessman Herb Breau, who was briefly a Liberal Minister of Fisheries in the 1980s. Breau argued that with respect to the fishery "Crowley had gotten almost every point wrong." Breau pointed out that the Atlantic offshore fishery for cod and similar species, known as groundfish, was already adopting ITQs before he served as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in 1984, and continued after that. He notes that the causes of the cod collapse have still to be fully understood. There is no simple answer. "One thing we know is that ITQs did not prevent it. Advocating them as a blanket solution therefore defies experience," Breau argues. He concludes that, where ITQs are envisaged as a means one must consider both the benefits (they can indeed reduce expenditures) and the dangers (they are often accused of fostering poaching and depopulating communities).

Today columnist Ralph Surette, writing in the Halifax Chronicle Herald, sounds the alarm:

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The Harper government has signalled its intent to assault the structure of the independent East Coast fishery, with the apparent aim of opening it up to more corporate control. Given what's at stake for Atlantic Canada, it had better be all hands on deck for this fight, as the billion-dollar lobster, crab and shrimp sectors and the coastal economies they support risk being thrown into anarchy." He criticizes the current moves by the Harper government to abandon long-established policies that restrict corporate concentration in the Atlantic fishery. His article is pungently titled: " Smell of Rotting Fish Coming from Ottawa." Shades of Shakespeare! Read it here

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/86531-smell-of-rotting-fish-coming-from-ottawa#.T4mnDU5Pe0M.twitter>

<http://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/the-hill-times-most-successful-fishing-nations-give-fishers-right-a-share-of-catch-before-they-go-out-to-fish/>

TAGS: sustainable, fisheries, Atlantic fishery, ITQs, corporate concentration, Atlantic fishery policy, Brian Lee Crowley, Herb Breau, Hill Times, Ralph Surette