

13 July 2011

'Reform' of the CFP

The publication of the EU Commission's proposals for the 'reform' of the Common Fisheries Policy has come and gone causing barely a ripple on the Irish political and economic scene beyond an obligatory 'for the record' statement from Simon Coveney, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine. Mr Coveney seems to seriously believe that he has successfully waged a titanic struggle to defend Irish interests on such issues as the maintenance of the 12 mile limit, proposals for multi-annual management plans and a ban on discards. It is self-deception on a truly mind-bending scale. Only once does the penny seem to drop and a semblance of reality enter his thought processes. That is when he acknowledges that EU policy is 'to impose ... (a) scheme of mandatory privatisation of quotas on Member States ... (which) will lead to the family owned fishing fleet here in Ireland being bought up by European international companies who have the capital to buy out our quotas. I have no doubt that this would lead to concentration of fishing into the hands of large fishing international companies without links to the coastal communities and these very large fishing vessels, in some cases factory ships, would no longer land into Ireland resulting in loss of jobs, closure of fish processing factories and economic activity in our coastal communities'.

The latest CFP reform from Brussels is no reform. The CFP has been a form of economic war that has cost Ireland dear in terms of jobs and fisheries conservation. A whole way of life and part of a valuable heritage has been destroyed by decades of predatory control from Brussels.

Mr Coveney in Fine Gael along with his soul mates in Labour and Fianna Fáil should waken up to the fact that the CFP is not reformable. The only solution is to start the process of winning back control of our fisheries from Brussels and concentrating on development of a policy to guarantee a sustainable industry, healthy marine environment and vibrant fishing communities in the future.

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