



TOO SEXY FOR YOUR HAT

This maybe one on the most unpopular articles I've ever written but as most of you know, I always tell the truth as I see it. I have often said if you stand for everything, you stand for nothing.

Today there is a huge push by many conservation sport fishing organizations such as the Coastal Conservation Association to seemingly want to destroy commercial fishing. In general, the war cry to its members is that commercial fishermen are destroying the ocean and decimating the fish stocks; that they are the devils of the ocean. This type of thinking, besides being wrong, is driving an irretrievable wedge between commercial fishing and sport fishing. It also is cutting the nose right off the sport fisherman's face.

What do I mean? Let me explain. First, for those who carry around with them a bag of unadulterated ignorance, commercial fishermen and commercial fishing have been present all around the world as long as mankind. The fish we eat and buy at fish markets and stores are caught by commercial fishermen. That's what they do: they catch fish big and small for the world to eat. The soul of every American port, from New England to the Gulf of Mexico to the West Coast and Alaska, is commercial fishermen. They are the soul of American fishing. They work incredibly hard, almost slave hours, invest ungodly amounts of money in their boats and gear. They love the ocean. They should be looked upon as we do our American farmers, steel workers, coal miners and ranchers. Long hours, hard work, but all of them are being regulated to the point that they can hardly make a living.

Sport fishing and commercial interests are the same. Both groups want a renewable resource. The

sport fisherman wants his fish so that they can do battle and release their catch or harvest their catch to eat. Commercial fishermen want a renewable resource so they can feed their families. What sport fishermen must understand is as they try to abolish commercial fishermen, they also are abolishing their own right to fish, as the same regulations that affect commercial fishermen are cutting sport to the point that in many fisheries it's not even worth going. It is true that if commercial fishermen are not properly regulated they can hurt our resource to the point that is no longer renewable. Sport fishermen are capable of that as well. I am a man of the ocean. I know and see both sides clearly. I am on the inner circle of science and regulation. I am on the board of the RFA, I have raised \$1 million for the IGFA junior angler program. My son is a commercial fisherman in Beaufort, North Carolina. He works 18 hours a day and often has a hard time feeding his family.

If a commercial aspect of fishing is truly pushing a resource so it is not renewable, then I am for regulation. That said, it truly scares me that sport fishing is becoming a left-wing environmental activity, where they insinuate they are smarter and better than commercial fishermen. Left wing environmental groups are driving a wedge between sport fishing and commercial fishing so we fight against each other while they raise million upon millions of dollars lying about the facts and make laws that hurt both sport fishing and commercial fishing. How dare any sport fishermen speak ill of hard working American families who earn their livelihood in the sea, you can take your fly rod and shove it up your arse.

I maintain the following: com-

mercial fishing must be regulated because with the technology available today, commercial fishermen are deadlier and more accurate at harvesting their quarry than ever before. But they deserve to be regulated based on science, not voodoo. I say loudly to all sport fishing groups: do not let the management of your organization point to commercial fishing as the enemy.

Let me point out one other huge hypocrisy: hundreds of sport fishermen catch bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna, giant tuna and other species to sell and make a profit. You are not killing these great fish for your table; are you a sport fisherman or are you a commercial fisherman? Interesting question isn't it.

The ocean represents 71 percent of the earth's surface, and much of the world rapes the ocean with no regard to regulations or renewable resource. Japan, China, Africa, all around the world they slaughter the ocean's assets. American fishermen are not part of this unscrupulous world. I love sport fishing and the people in my sport, but no one loves the ocean more than those who depend on it to feed their families, send their kids to college, buy their homes and live a life worth living.

If we continue as sport fishermen to see American commercial fishermen as the enemy, we will lose the fight on conservation. The real fight is to maintain a renewable resource for both groups. I support the CCA; I am a life member, I have made several donations to CCA and will continue to do so, but I warn them of taking the wrong path. You should remind them also. Another day, another adventure, Capt. Tred Barta

Capt Tred Barta