

AQUACULTURE/FISHERIES WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION:

This day-long workshop included panels and small group discussions which presented an overview of the impact of aquaculture and fishing on the lives of traditional harvesters of the sea. The workshop also discussed advocacy strategies and consumer education initiatives. The activities of the day brought together Canadians from the fishery, environment, labour and academic sectors and community activists, environmentalists, and human rights workers from Ecuador, the United States, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Together they shared stories of the impact of current realities and strategies on the lives of community members in the Asia Pacific region and discussed successes in voicing their perspectives and effectively slowing down current government and corporate strategies. They clearly affirmed the distinctions between the needs of local communities striving for sustainable development and the interests of the corporate sector.

Summaries of the Workshop:

The similarities between the fishing/aquaculture industries in the north and the south are startlingly apparent. As corporations move towards vertical integration - control of all aspects of the fish harvesting, production, processing, transporting, marketing and distribution - small local producers and local communities are left with little or no access to their common resource base.

Forestry practices, be it in Canada or overseas, have a direct impact on the fishery industry. Be it cedars and fir trees or mangrove forests, trees play a critical role in providing and sustaining fish habitat, protecting water sources, and preventing erosion. The destruction of forests in the north and south are devastating wild fish stocks, and rendering coastlines unusable.

In Canada, the current salmon fishing industry demonstrates the conflicts between the agendas of the corporate sector and small fishing fleets. Sustainability, from a corporate perspective, is defined by profit. Profits are maximized when a company owns and/or controls all aspects of the industry. From a community perspective, the environment is the foundation and limitation of sustainability.

Current government policies promote the corporate agenda. Area licensing and stacking (the Mifflin Plan) have forced out individual fishers and small fishing fleets as licence costs have become unmanageable. Further price controls of wild salmon catches from industry ensures that fleet owners who have acquired licences cannot remain viable.

Simultaneously, salmon farms are being promoted. Consumers in North America and overseas, unaware of the distinction between wild and farmed salmon, are providing growing and lucrative markets. Intensive fish farming requires processed fish feed, the introduction of antibiotics to prevent/limit disease, and this type of aquaculture further pollutes surrounding waters. Along with ecological degradation from forestry practices, aquaculture practices put