

Everyone needs to be heard

H. Olney

Courier-Islander

Friday, July 23, 2010

The long awaited Cohen Inquiry into the disappearance of Fraser Sockeye has now begun. I find it interesting the amount of controversy surrounding the naming of allowable participants.

It seems people like Alexandra Morton and Conservative MP/commercial fisherman John Cummins would prefer to stack the deck when it comes to who should be allowed to participate. They don't feel that scientists like Brian Riddell a well known and respected scientist in the salmon field should be allowed to participate because he once worked for the DFO. They neglect to mention he resigned from the DFO because they stopped his funding into sockeye research in the 90s. The article I read regarding an event that took place at SFU stated Riddell's funding was cut by the government because the then government claimed sockeye had no economic value.

They also don't feel aquaculture should be allowed to present their scientific data either.

As an ex-commercial salmon fisherman I recall the Mulroney conservative government and how they brought the Aboriginal fishing strategy into force in the Fraser River. At that time John Cummins spoke out loud and clear against the strategy and its aboriginal connections. He claimed it would wipe out the Fraser Sockeye. Now here he is years later lined up with Ernie Crey whom he once spoke against as an enemy almost and a Conservative to boot. Somewhat hypocritical to say the least.

I have read numerous blogs and letters to editors on the subject of this inquiry. I find it simply amazing how some people are already blaming the aquaculture industry for the decline. There has been no scientific evidence to date to support that claim and a recent paper written by Dick Beamish a respected and long time scientist refutes the claim altogether. I think people need to remember this inquiry was brought about to examine all factors and possibilities. Scientists of all opinions should be allowed to meet, present their data and studies in order for it to be an unbiased and well rounded inquiry. The inquiry isn't about aquaculture and fish farming, it's about what happened to the sockeye. It is well known stocks of fish are in decline worldwide due to over fishing, climate change, poaching by foreign fleets and a myriad of other possibilities. For people to say the DFO and the salmon farming industry has no business participating in this enquiry is utterly ridiculous.

People acquainted with the aquaculture industry are well aware Ms. Morton is biased against aquaculture and is funded by American interest groups to promote the closure of fish farms. Do I think she should be allowed to present her opinions at the enquiry?

Frankly yes I do. Although I don't agree with her as an ex-commercial fisher and someone who now depends on aquaculture, I still feel her opinion should

be weighed against the findings of what I think are more qualified and experienced scientists who don't share her bias and are prepared to look at ANY and ALL possibilities for the reasons for the collapse last year.

Let's remember these stocks have collapsed numerous times in the past then returned. It seems the only thing no one wants to ask for here to protect those stocks is a total moratorium on ALL user groups for several years.

H. Olney

© Courier-Islander (Campbell River) 2010

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2010 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.