

# The Trouble With Turbot

By Marko Peric

Anyone remember an episode of *Star Trek* called "The Trouble With Tribbles"? At one point in this episode, Captain Kirk opens a hatch and is buried in thousands of fuzzy little tribbles. Now, picture Brian Tobin opening a hatch on a Spanish trawler and being buried in not-so-fuzzy dead fish. This writer is willing to bet that Tobin would prefer to be submerged in a pile of fish rather than face the current problems in Canada's East Coast fishery. That is, what's left of it.

Admittedly, the lobster industry is doing fine, and other shellfish harvesters have little to worry about. Of course, those who fish in the Northumberland Strait are concerned about the problems that the fixed link may cause, but that's another topic.

The remains of the Grand Banks fishery is the current media hot potato. Was Canada justified in arresting the *Estai*? If so, should we have released the ship on a half-million dollar bond? And should we have more vessels on

the nose and tail of the Grand Banks to arrest more foreign ships?

To put another spin on a phrase from *This Hour has 22 Minutes*: "nothing like closing the barn door just in time to catch the last mule." Of all the things to take a stand on, our government picked turbot. We could have objected to overfishing of cod or halibut, but no, Canadians aren't confrontational. So, we allowed the Europeans to fish the Grand Banks

to near extinction before anyone took a stand.

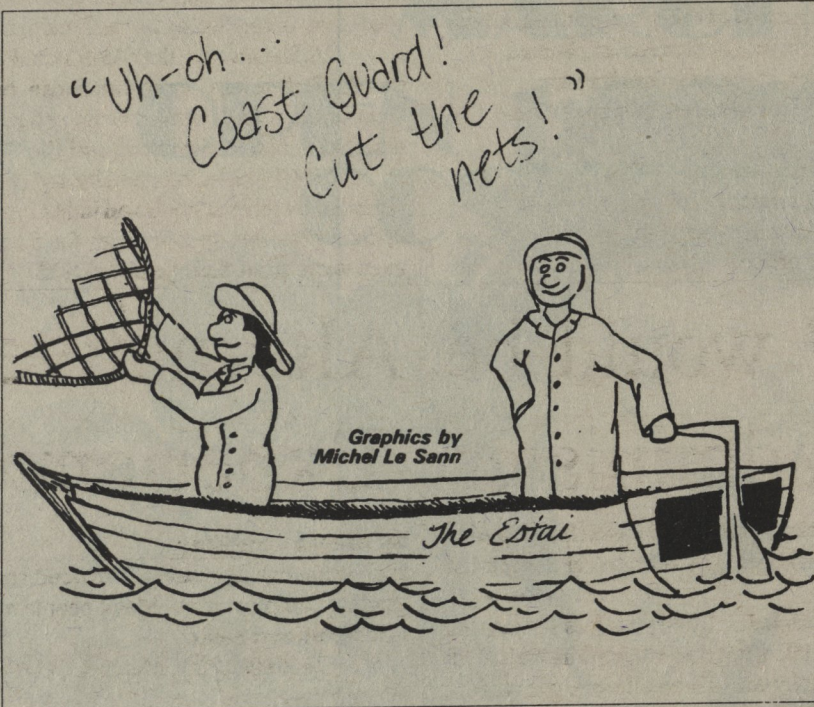
The Spanish should be thankful that we only arrested one trawler. Another option could have been to take a couple of those new frigates out to the Grand Banks and use the foreign vessels for target practice. Then the European Union would have something to complain about. As it stands, their reaction is like Al Capone expressing righteous indignation. Not only were the holds of the *Estai* filled with under-sized fish that could only be caught with illegal nets, there was an international moratorium

against fishing turbot on the Grand Banks. Legally, the Europeans don't have a leg to stand on.

Really, it's about time that someone took action to stop overfishing by certain European nations. British fishermen have been complaining about Spanish tactics in the Bay of Biscay for years, but no one lifted a finger. Now the area has been all-but emptied of fish. Spain and other countries have fished their own stocks to annihilation, then travelled

thousands of nautical miles to deplete those belonging to other nations. Sure, the fishermen complained, but government never listened.

Now it's too late. The once-great Newfoundland cod-fishery is a thing of the past. Thousands of people in Atlantic Canada are out of work because of this. One has to wonder where the European fleets will turn next. This writer only hopes that next time someone else will try to stop them.



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