



The Background to the EU Common Fisheries Policy

(Last revised 5 January 2011)

Fishing has been a key element of the Scottish economy for many centuries, even for thousands of years. It is therefore a lifeblood political issue for the Scottish Democratic Alliance. During those centuries the Scottish fishing industry harvested Scotland's national territorial waters while maintaining healthy fish stocks in balance with exploitation. Fishing was not even a UK matter; up to 1973 the Scottish waters were under the control of the Scottish Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and were policed by Scottish fisheries protection vessels.

In 1973 this all changed with the advent of control from Brussels, a move that resulted in an economic, environmental, ecological, social and cultural disaster. The direct results for Scotland include tens of thousands of job losses and an annual loss of wealth creation of well over £1,500 million. More than 1,200 modern boats have been removed from the Scottish offshore fleet.

It is already clear that there is no possibility of having this intolerable situation rectified within the European Union, where a combination of incomprehension of the Scottish situation, stubbornly inflexible ideology detached from reality as well as pure acquisitive greed on the part of member states and large corporations will always prevent any serious reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Such reform would entail alterations to four major EU treaties, which is just not going to happen. The SDA therefore stands for a future independent Scottish fisheries regime after Scotland's transfer from the EU to the EFTA side of the European Economic Area, where the CFP does not apply. This annex to the SDA policy statement explains the reasons why.

The Start of Control from Brussels

The European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), dating from 1970, basically consists of an agreement between the then six members of the European Economic Community (EEC) that fishing vessels belonging to member states would have free and equal access to the waters of all other members (Directive 2141/70, later replaced by 101/76). **The CFP therefore consists basically of only six words: equal access to a common resource.** All the rest – quotas, decommissioning, ITQs etc. – are simply derogations from this basic principle that were introduced in a futile and unsuccessful attempt to control the havoc that this lunatic free-for-all has caused.

Apparently instigated by French interests in the first instance, its clear purpose was to gain unrestricted access to the rich (being strictly conserved) fish stocks of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Norway, which together with Denmark had just applied to join the EEC, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, amalgamated with the EEC in 2001) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom).

It had nothing whatever to do with management or conservation. It was a ruthless political gambit, with no legal basis for decades on end, to give powerful commercial interests in other member states an entry ticket to the well conserved Norwegian, UK and especially Scottish waters, which they would otherwise have been unable to exploit. Later, as EU global ambitions expanded, the control of the surrounding seas with their energy and mineral resources was also seen as a function that could be added to the EU's powers to help it on its way to becoming a European superstate.

The Norwegians, in a referendum, rejected the terms negotiated by their government. Norway then remained a member of the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** and later joined the EFTA/EU umbrella organisation known as the **European Economic Area (EEA)**. The UK became a member of the EEC, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) on 1 January 1973.

These three (later two) economic institutions became known collectively as the **European Community**, which later constituted the so-called First Pillar of the European Union. Unlike the second and third “pillars” of the EU, which were intergovernmental in nature, the economic European Community was supranational, which means that its rules were directly binding on member states. This situation was, in its turn, overtaken in 2010 by the provisions of the **Lisbon Treaty**, despite the latter's highly dubious constitutional status.

In 1973, apart from the open access rule, there was no fisheries “policy” as such. However, after it became obvious that free access to the fishing grounds for all was going to have disastrous ecological and economic effects, an enormous complex of rules and quotas was drawn up in a futile attempt to correct the damage – but without addressing the root cause of the damage. These ‘sticking plaster’ amendments only made matters worse.

Like the original agreement on open access, these measures were of highly dubious legality, as well as being unmanageable, and with increasing Community membership merely aggravated the situation. The predictable result was the collapse of fish stocks. The transitional arrangements leading to full open access ran out at the end of 2002, and there is still no sign of any genuine reform of the CFP.

The Effects of the CFP on the Scottish Fishing Industry

The well-conserved reserves of fish stocks in Scottish waters at first ran down only slowly under the increased pressures in a Community of nine members. The real deterioration began after 1975, and accelerated from around 1980. Up to 1983 there were no licences and only limited quota allocations, but from then on the regulatory pressures increased and decommissioning started.

The “dog-eat-dog” situation created by abolishing the three mile limit and allowing European fleets into the national **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** pitched Scottish fishermen against each other, and this accelerated the reduction of inshore fish stocks, particularly in the Firths and Minches. The owners of larger Scots pair trawlers and pursers felt they should harvest the coastal stocks before Continental vessels caught them. The UK government completely failed to institute local fishery management schemes as it had in effect conceded direct fishery management authority to Brussels.

The situation changed again dramatically when Spain and Portugal joined the Community in 1986. Offshore fishing in Spain is in the hands of large industrial combines that exert considerable political power. Spain entered the CFP with a huge fishing fleet not much smaller than the entire remaining European Community fleets combined, and contributed nothing substantial to the sum total of Community resources. From the beginning, the by now already over-fished Scottish waters were a prime target for Spanish exploitation.

In order to give the southern EEC members access to a “common resource” that by this stage was totally inadequate to sustain the inordinate catching capacities that were now to be let loose on it, the fishing sectors of Scotland and the other northern countries were systematically run down to make way for the incomers.

The effects on Scotland of this piratical Brussels policy and grossly excessive foreign access can be illustrated by the following official statistics for **operational Scottish boats over 10 metres in length**. Note that EU-enforced decommissioning of vessels has brought about most of the reduction, as well as the sale of some no longer viable, due to quota restrictions and the loss of fishing grounds to EU fleets. Decommissioning assistance is regarded as a last resort, since the actual grants are very meagre:

| YEAR | | BOATS |
|------|---|-------|
| 1973 | Entry into EEC (approx.) | 1,800 |
| 1975 | Scottish waters opened to boats of 8 countries | 1,782 |
| 1985 | Fish stocks declining – decommissioning & licenses introduced | 1,396 |
| 1995 | Spain & Portugal enter CFP | 1,209 |
| 1998 | Apparent reduction in fish stocks – yet more decommissioning | 1,045 |

| | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 2002 | Perceived collapse of cod stocks – panic restrictions by Brussels | 845 |
| 2007 | Brussels devoid of an answer except still more decommissioning | 697 |
| 2010 | Decommissioning continued (total: 580 demersal, 25 pelagic vessels) | 605 |

This represents a reduction of two thirds in the Scottish offshore fishing fleet since joining the CFP, with corresponding downstream effects on fish processing, boat building, and other shore industries. More than 1,200 offshore boats have been removed, mostly from the demersal fleet (although overall figures have recently been deliberately inflated by counting small inshore shellfish boats down to rowing boat size that previously were never included in the statistics). At 2004 values (an average taken over five years) each of these sold or decommissioned boats would have grossed on average more than £310,000 annually from around 330 tons of fish. The loss of direct income to the catching sector was therefore a minimum of £334 million annually. Of this, £110 million would have been crew wages, with the remaining £224 million lost to the vessel services including fuel, boat repairs, gear, insurance, banks, groceries, harbours, transport. Local fish processing has also suffered greatly.

Added value, fish processing and marketing, etc., raise the economic value of the annual loss considerably. The recognised GDP impact ratio for fisheries is 2.35 times the landed value. Thus the direct economic impact of the reduction of the Scottish fishing fleet in 1975-2003 was an annual loss to the Scottish economy of a staggering £785 million in respect of vessels of 10 metres and over alone. The costs to public funds of unemployment and other social benefits as well as broader economic consequences, including loss of tax income, probably brought the total loss to around £1,000 million every year. This exceeds by a huge margin any economic benefits Scotland receives from the European Union, especially when it is considered that Scotland as a member of the UK is already a substantial net contributor to the EU.

The above calculations were made for the SDA in 2004, on the basis of the then available information, by Dr James Wilkie, with data and guidance from Japanese economist Kaz Nagao, Fishermen’s Association (FAL) Secretary Roddy McColl, and fishery consultant David Thomson. These figures have now been overtaken by an excellent and more up to date study by The Taxpayers’ Alliance in 2009. This reveals that the total annual economic cost to the UK of the EU Common Fisheries Policy just a few years later had reached £2,813 million, or £2.8 billion (American billion 10⁹ – European billion 10¹² is different). Of that total, £2,100 million was from the loss of access to home waters.

Since Scotland has over 66 % of the UK EEZ, then £1,400 million of that loss relates to Scotland. Adding the other estimates proportionally from the TPA study now make **the Scottish fisheries sector loss due to the CFP well over £1,500 million every single year**. The 2004 SDA calculation including the wider related sectors is therefore forty per cent lower than the more recent TPA figure. Little wonder that nobody in Westminster or Brussels repudiated the SDA estimates at the time. Dr Lee Rotherham, who carried out the research for The Taxpayers’ Alliance, said:

“For years everyone has known, even in Brussels, that the Common Fisheries Policy has been a disaster. It has trashed the environment, wrecked coastal communities like Hull and Grimsby, and dumped hundreds of thousands of tonnes of dead fish uselessly back into the sea. If any government minister had ordered such actions, he would have been lynched. The time is long overdue to scrap the CFP and manage our territorial seas with the self-interest and self-enlightenment of countries like Norway, Iceland and Canada.” (Costing the Common Fisheries Policy, January 2009)

Commenting on the TPA study, the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* in its editorial of 30 January 2009, *The Price of Fish*, wrote: “*In case any proof were needed that the European Union’s Common Fisheries Policy is one of the most damaging political schemes ever to affect a UK industry, some facts about its impact on every single household will help. Pressure group The Taxpayer’s Alliance has calculated that the policy costs every family £111 a year in higher taxes and lost business and puts £186 a year on the average food bill. As the north and northeast of Scotland has witnessed, the impact on jobs has been severe. More than 9,000 directly in fishing and up to 90,000 have been lost from onshore dependent industries. This is before the baffling phenomenon of throwing away tons of dead fish each year has been considered. The problem with the CFP of course, is that we are pretty much stuck in a world in which the European Union will forever meddle with this vital Scottish industry. ... The CFP is a triumph of pork barrel politics over commonsense and compassion.*”

Summary of Scottish Losses

The SDA cannot conceive of any calculable benefits to Scotland of EU membership that could possibly compensate for this haemorrhage of Scotland’s economic wealth. The appalling figure of lost value creation of over £1,500 million every single year, and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs from the employment market, represents nothing less than a national disaster – brought about for no better reason than the crazed ideology of “sharing the common resource” with other EU member countries. The fleet of offshore boats has been reduced by two thirds. In the pelagic sector alone, where in earlier years 1,000 herring boats employed 10,000 seamen, the present fleet consists of two dozen large midwater boats crewed by 280 men. The larger demersal white fish fleet has been even harder hit by the unwarranted EU intervention.

What the figures cannot reveal is the amount of personal tragedy and communal disruption that lie behind them: bankruptcies, the uprooting of individuals and families, the destruction of thriving communities with centuries-old cultural traditions and communal lives. Major harbours, like Lossiemouth, that were the focus of social and economic life twelve months in the year, are now marinas for a handful of yachts. One can imagine the reaction if Brussels had reduced the Spanish or French fishing fleets by almost two thirds simply to make way for incomers. And fishing is by no means as important to those countries as it is to Scotland.

In the following section we analyse the situation from its beginnings in 1970. There are four principal elements in the broad complex of motivational factors that govern the European Union’s policy on fisheries as it affects Scotland:

The Underlying Factors

1. The first, considerably underestimated factor is **Euro-ideology**. The ostensible primary reason for having a European Union policy on fisheries at all is the so-called “European Ideal” or “European Idea”, in this case expressed as the argument that common resources should be shared equally between member states. This view is genuinely held by many of the decision makers from the landlocked countries, amongst whom knowledge of the actual maritime situation is either limited or non-existent.

For most of the fishing states, however, it represents the justification for exploiting the resources of more fish-rich neighbours in order to maintain fishing fleets and levels of employment that they could not sustain from the resources of their own waters. It goes without saying that, if they are gaining, somebody else must be losing – not the best of neighbourhood policies.

Apparently at French instigation, the then six members of the European Economic Community suddenly discovered this allegedly idealistic “principle” **one day** before the opening of entry negotiations with Denmark and the fish-rich states Norway, Ireland and the UK. It was blatant opportunism by politically powerful fishing lobbies in five of the Six, with the obvious exception of tiny landlocked Luxembourg. There was no necessity otherwise for the move, especially since **the EEC treaty contained no provision empowering the Community to become involved in fisheries at all**. Unfortunately for the credibility of the argument, fish are so far the only “common resource” to have been identified. The sharing of others is evidently not contemplated. And no other group of fishing nations has thought it necessary to give each other “equal access to a common resource”, although fishery cooperation is conducted harmoniously between the ASEAN, SADEC and Pacific states, which all retain control of their own EEZ resources.

In reality, it is not so much a case of sharing the resource (which would be done anyway through the single European market) but rather more one of carving up the fish catching capacity, and hence the employment and economic benefits as well as the value added in the ancillary industries. This blatantly corrupt so-called “principle” implies that a country with, say, a coastline of 4,000 kilometres, and hundreds of communities dependent on fishing, should have a catching capacity no larger than that of another country with a coastline of 40 km, or – theoretically – none at all.

It also implies a planned reduction of employment in the fisheries sector in certain countries, above all Scotland, in order to protect or expand employment in certain others – **something for which there is no enabling provision in any treaty**. Therefore, in the eyes of the Euro-ideologists, who seem to be blind to the sheer immorality and indeed illegality of what they are doing, the systematic destruction of most of the Scottish fishing industry is a small and acceptable price to pay for the achievement of this overriding “ideal”. It is a classic case at best of applied lunacy, or perhaps more accurately another example of the EU's endemic corruption and lack of ethics.

The reasoning behind this ideology (insofar as it is not just cynical manipulation) is not easy to comprehend in a maritime environment; however, some fundamentals must be grasped. The integration movement in Europe, with the associated attempts to establish a common European identity, is a product of Central European history. One must be acquainted with this, and with the Central European mind, in order to understand it. In the light of 20th century history it regards “the great work of European unification” not simply as a necessity, but also as a burning ethical ideal that sheds its golden ray from the moral high ground.

In respect of its strong peacekeeping element, integration has in fact been completely successful; another war between Western European countries is not merely unthinkable, but also materially impossible, due to the interlinking of their economies. The emotive element should not be underestimated, however. Its protagonists look back on the ninth-century Frankish empire under Charlemagne as the last time Europe was “united”, and regard the present integration movement as the rebirth of that alleged ideal. This Central European view is, of course, a completely foreign concept to the island and Scandinavian peoples like the Scots, who were never involved in those continental empires.

Be that as it may, the generation that learned the lessons of European divisiveness from hard experience during the past century has now passed away, and all that is left is a mindless integrationist ideology – integration for the sake of integration. It is noteworthy that the ideological, indeed quasi-imperialist “what-we-have-we-hold” attitude is most pronounced among diplomats and politicians from landlocked countries with no direct interest in fishing.

They cannot understand the maritime situation, nor do they attempt to do so, and can become quite short-tempered with anyone who questions the holy principle of integration.

They regard with horror any retreat from the degree of integration that has already been achieved as a dangerous regression towards the nationalist excesses that tore the continent apart during the 20th century. This is reflected in their voting within the Fisheries Council, where they will always side with the Brussels centralists.

This may be understandable coming from a landlocked country with a turbulent history that shares common borders with half a dozen others in Central Europe, but the result is that principles, policies and structures that have essentially been tailored to Central European conditions are being applied in an arbitrary manner to maritime and island communities, as if there were no geographical, demographic, economic, social or cultural differences there. In a sense it is Scotland’s traditional bugbear, the Home Counties phenomenon, writ ten times larger, but the implications are even more sinister.

The stated policy is to have a common EU fishing fleet operating without restriction anywhere within the waters of member countries, and controlled from Brussels. (There is no such thing as “EU waters” or “Community waters”, since international law recognises only the national EEZ waters of the individual member states.)

The most acute danger of the EU fisheries policy arises directly from this ideological basis, since it clearly implies the de facto creation of a single European state. This has implications that go far beyond fishing.

2. The second and by now major factor is **national covetousness**. This was the obvious motivation behind the original “open-access” policy, which was adopted by the Six in 1970 even although their own experts had pointed out to them that there was no legal basis for it in any provision of the EEC Treaty. It has remained the dominating factor to this day, with the pseudo-ethical “European Ideal” as window-dressing. It is not the first time in history that lofty principles have been advanced to justify the pursuit of naked self-interest.

These nationalist excesses have been manifest since then at every meeting of the Fisheries Council, which apparently has the primary function of a platform for the greatest degree of exploitation of the CFP that national delegates can wring out of it.

The representatives of Spain, and also those of Denmark and to a lesser extent the Netherlands and France, have used diplomatic pressure to advance the interests of their fishing industries irrespective of the consequential damage caused to others. For example, Denmark’s industrial sand-eel fishing was particularly harmful to other interests, since it destroyed the food chain for other species like cod, thereby making it one of the major causes of the cod stocks crisis.

Spain, having fished its own waters virtually to extinction, has pursued a policy of unrestricted access by its enormous fleet to the waters of other members, no doubt to repeat the process there. In both these cases the main culprits have been the major international corporations that own the greater part of the fleets and have exerted political pressure on the national governments.

The governments of these member states, with such politically powerful interests breathing down their necks, find themselves in no position to make concessions to the likes of Scotland unless forced to do so. Decisions in the Fisheries Council are therefore routinely taken on political grounds, with expert advice being ignored where it conflicts with national interests. Due to such political pressures, backed by powerful commercial fishing lobbies, national quotas have for years been allocated on an aggregate basis far in excess of what is ecologically sustainable. Fishery scientists have complained privately that their professional findings and recommendations have been regularly misrepresented and misused to support political decisions.

European idealism has been conspicuous by its absence in the cut-throat scramble to plunder Scotland's resources, and the result has been seen in the inevitable collapse of fish stocks.

It should be pointed out that the CFP injustice also adversely affects the remaining English and Irish fishing industries as well as the numerous small-scale inshore fishers in other countries, who complain about it as vociferously as the Scots, but are rarely listened or referred to. The Spanish "Cofradias" and the Galician "Cediera Charter" are major examples of their protest. Any change in the system brought about by the Scots would also work to their benefit, as well as that of inshore fishers in Portugal, France and Denmark.

3. The third factor is the nature of the **decision-making process and management system in Brussels**, where integrationist ideology is paramount. There is a lack of knowledge, or wilful ignorance, of the practicalities of fishing among the Eurocrats and politicians active in Brussels, and in many cases among their scientific advisers too. This is only exceeded by their ignorance of Scotland.

For years we have seen quotas allocated and effort control measures taken mechanically by ministers who have no real conception of what they are doing. This accounts for some of the most heinous blunders they have committed.

One the worst of these blunders is the discards situation, which according to ICES estimates causes the destruction of up to 600,000 tons of fish each year in EU waters. Single species quota allocations inevitably result in a by-catch of other non-quota species. Any fisherman could have told the EU that nobody has yet invented a trawl net capable of catching only one species of fish, let alone fish species in relative quantities that accord with the latest changes in quota allocations! The heavy penalties for landing the inevitable extra catch, often the major proportion, as "black fish" mean that, every time the net is hauled, this perfectly saleable by-catch has to be thrown overboard – dead, to rot on the seabed or provide food for seabirds, lost to the industry, the consumers and the stock.

Since boats have to bring an economic catch back to port, this senseless waste of valuable stock means more time at sea fishing for the legal quota species, more fuel consumed, an escalating number of discards with every net haul, and consequent devastating damage to fish stocks overall. It is economic and ecological lunacy - and this is only one of many examples of Brussels incompetence.

Decision makers in Brussels consistently refuse to admit such irrational errors. They don't want to lose face, and so fiercely defend their decisions, even when integrationist ideology is plainly in conflict with common sense. The emperor has been revealed to have no clothes, but the show must go on.

The refusal to allow one iota of decision-making power to be removed from Brussels has reduced the whole fisheries system to Stalinist economics. This setup was a disaster after 70 years of experience within the Soviet Union, and it has been a similar disaster after almost 40 years of experience within the European Community. As in the former and now defunct Soviet Union, it is the ultimate failure of "big government", of over-centralisation, of micromanagement at too low a level, instead of delegating – one of the cardinal sins of professional management generally.

It might be mentioned at this point that many students of the EU believe there was a secret back-room deal or deals to share out predominance in major economic sectors, under which Spain would have the major share of fish. This is not mentioned as established fact, but the very existence of such opinions illustrates just how far the European Union has gone along the road of institutionalised oligarchy or worse. In apparent confirmation of these views the UK government has pointedly washed its hands of its fishing industry.

4. The fourth factor affecting Scotland is therefore **UK government policy**. Not simply economically, but also emotively, the ruling elite in London were committed to entry into "Europe" as compensation for the loss of an empire and of their own influence. Although the UK was already a member of all the other European organisations in the early 1970s, Edward Heath and his negotiators wanted to take the country into the then 6-member European Economic Community (EEC), European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) at almost any price. The methods he used to buy entry, using the Scottish fishing industry as a bargaining counter, have left a damnable legacy.

The opening of the relevant records under the 30-year rule has brought to light the fact that Heath was fully aware that the conditions to which he agreed would eventually kill the Scottish fishing industry. This was deliberately concealed from the industry and the country at large, in defiance of all the canons of democratic legitimacy and open government, because it was obvious what sort of a reaction it would have provoked. Heath systematically lied to Parliament, and to Scotland, about the inevitable results of his actions. For example, he repeatedly justified them with reference to Article 38 of the EEC Treaty (Treaty of Rome) – which in fact legalises only "trade in fisheries products", but does not legalise any regulation of the fishing industry itself.

Even more reprehensibly, the records also reveal Heath's intention that the deal would benefit the English fishing industry (which then had a distant-water fleet) at the expense of the Scots – a hope that has since proved illusory. His actions must also be considered in the light of the fact that the Conservative votes are overwhelmingly to be found in England, and not Scotland. Since around one quarter of the UK fishing industry was then located in England, with 50 million people, and three quarters in 5-million Scotland, using the "British" fishing industry as a bargaining counter against other advantages to be negotiated in Brussels was not going to hurt his party's prospects in its heartland.

This policy of an "expendable" Scottish fishing industry (the word "expendable" is actually used in the relevant records of the former Scottish Office) has continued under every UK successor government since then, notably that by the Labour Party under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

The EU administration is riddled with secret deals and backstairs carve-ups between governments, and it is clear that, in respect of fishing, the UK has got itself onto a hook that it cannot wriggle off without losing out in other directions. Just what the *quid pro quo* for throwing the Scottish fishing industry to the sharks might be has never yet been revealed. It is extremely doubtful if it has brought Scotland any benefits at all in other directions; at any rate we not been informed of any.

London clearly has no intention of altering this policy of using the Scottish fishing industry as a trade-off, and refuses to come into the open with any explanation of the reasons behind it. The official UK response to the Commission's Green Paper on the modernisation of the CFP was a model of supine acceptance of the system.

Even more mysterious was UK Commissioner Neil Kinnock's dismissal of a reform-minded Fisheries Director-General in Brussels after direct political pressure from Spanish Prime Minister Aznar and Commission President Prodi. Everything here points to a surreptitious carve-up between London and Madrid, possibly over Gibraltar or other economic share-outs, with the Scottish fishing industry as a pawn in the game. And Scotland, with three quarters of the UK fishing industry, has for decades been represented (and conspicuously **not** defended) in Brussels by the English fisheries minister. The fact that this murky double-dealing conflicts with the stated EU principle of transparency does not seem to concern any of the participants.

This all goes to prove beyond doubt that Scotland's interests in Europe generally (i.e. not simply the EU) are not being, and can never be, adequately or safely represented through London. Any solution must take the form of direct Scottish representation at European level. It is only the form and status of that representation that is open to discussion.

The Prospects

Let us look at the future situation. After the latest round of enlargement there are some 20 EU countries with sea fishing industries of some kind, with others in the queue for membership. If the present system continues we will eventually see sturgeon in the Black Sea, swordfish in the Adriatic, sardines in the Mediterranean, cod in the Atlantic, halibut in the North Sea and herring in the Baltic all being administered from the desk of the Fisheries Director-General in Brussels – this without regard to all the other parameters like enormously varied local marine conditions, unique local fish species, different economic, social and cultural structures, and widely varying local fish consumption patterns.

Furthermore, the winners in the CFP cut-throat scramble for pickings at Scotland's expense have managed to press home their advantage in the drafting of the failed EU Draft Constitution (the so-called "Constitution for Europe"), which was resurrected as the Lisbon Treaty. That treaty prescribes that fishing is to be managed "jointly" by the EU and the member states. It then takes that vague concession back again in the adjoining provision that all "marine biological resources" (by definition ranging from whales and basking sharks to the last frond of seaweed) are to come under the exclusive central control of the EU. This is obviously a precursor to having *all* marine resources like oil, gas and minerals, etc. under EU control.

The setup is patently impossible – there is no way it can be administered. It does not seem to have occurred to the politicians and bureaucrats concerned that this kind of centrally directed economy is exactly the rock on which the Soviet Union foundered. The attitudes one encounters remind one of the old guard of the Soviet system, who, after 70 years of obvious failure, were still convinced that their system would prove itself if it were only given time. Rigor mortis – the dead hand of Brussels centralism that refuses to part with any powers once acquired – remains the biggest single obstacle to the revival of the fishing industry.

The SDA believes that the pernicious CFP regulations also have a hidden agenda, namely, to drive the Scottish fleet into oblivion for the benefit of certain other member states by making it impossible to fish profitably while adhering to the multitude of enforced restrictions. Although public pressure has forced the EU into admitting its discarding rules are not helping conservation – on the contrary, they are destroying up to 600,000 tons of good fish a year – the CFP is becoming even more control-obsessed. The latest measure is to place cameras on board every fishing vessel so that an army of bureaucrats can observe the fishers at work and look for infringements that they can charge skippers with, and fine them colossal sums. These cameras are in addition to the Sat-Nav transponder boxes that allow constant tracking of every boat's position, and the grid system electronic logbooks now being developed. No other industry in the UK is treated this way, so why fisheries? The iniquitous designated ports measure is also being taken a further step forward. Not only are our boats prohibited from landing catches at other ports – they now are deemed to be still at sea if they seek shelter from a storm in a non-designated port, and these days are regarded as days at sea, so that their productive fishing days are being reduced even more.

The scientists who are advising the EU, with no practical experience of fishing, actually know very little of what is going on below the surface of the water, and the rest is pure speculation. Fishing for cod is a fraction of what it was when fishing was unrestricted, and has decreased steadily under “scientific advice”. A similar tale could be told in respect of most other commercial species.

All of this is getting so far away from basics that it cannot survive in the long term. The EU Common Fisheries Policy is not working, has never worked, and will never work. It is repressive in that it exists overwhelmingly at the expense of one nation – Scotland – whose opinion has never been invited. The CFP is not applied in the Mediterranean or the Baltic, but only around the British Isles, with a concentration on Scotland's national territorial waters. The result has been a swathe of devastation through Scotland's national economy and social life. This imposed situation has never been legitimised under Scots law or by the Scottish people, and has escalated to the level of a burden that can no longer be tolerated.

The Scottish Democratic Alliance can visualise no solution to the problem within the European Union, where incomprehension of the Scottish situation, stubbornly inflexible ideology detached from reality, face-saving, and not least unconcealed acquisitive greed on the part of other EU member states and large commercial corporations will always prevent any significant improvement, while the ruthless over-exploitation of Scotland's resources continues unchecked. It is time to scrap the entire system.

As the one and only answer to this situation, the SDA fisheries policy foresees complete withdrawal from this Brussels-controlled lunacy as part of its overarching goal of a Scottish transfer to the EFTA side of the European Economic Area, which is not subject to the CFP. The SDA Fisheries Policy, with its organisational scheme for the future of Scottish marine fisheries, has been drafted accordingly.