

in an attempt to save the fishery. The industry sued, the legal process was dragged out and the older (higher) quota remained. This September Doug Kidd set the same lower quota for the 1996-97 season as he'd unsuccessfully attempted to set a year before. Again the industry rushed to court and obtained an interim order setting aside the decision. The industry's case arguing against the merits of the new quota will now not be heard until next March. In the meantime the snapper continue to be overfished.

IF WE WANT TO retain the wealth of our fisheries then changes must be made in how we manage them: a quota system in itself is not enough. Waste must be eliminated through the use of what's called "input controls". Changing the size and style of fish hooks, altering present trawling methods, protecting areas where baby fish live, and eliminating wasteful gill-nets are all input controls.

The scientific process must be modified to improve safety margins. Managing a fishery at or below a biomass of 25 percent is risky. We need more insurance against the danger of error when we have too little research and hard data, and too much dependence on abstract formulas.

The consultative process could be repaired by requiring the industry to contribute to the bills of other sectors. After all, the industry wants to profit from a public resource and it should also have to pay to protect the resource.

But most of all, the core of the prob-

lem lies with the boards of our big fishing companies. As long as these "captains of industry" use their financial power to push for maximal catches now, instead of sustainability, the management process will fail.

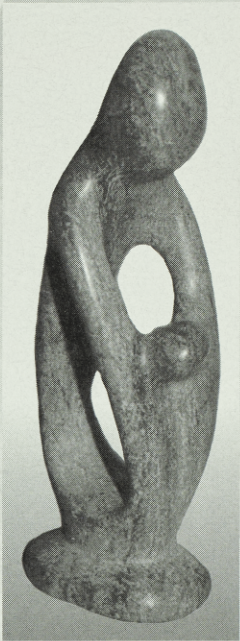
The quota system was introduced with the hope that commercial fishers would care for the resource they had a vested interest in; it didn't work. The industry is still looking backwards, trying to relive the days of big catches and outlandish profits. What we need now is people that look ahead, people who can think and act for the long-term health of the only fishery we will ever have. Brian Rhodes, the former Chief Executive at Sealords, said it best when he left the business in 1994:

"Far too large a proportion of New Zealand's economic community still expends its efforts on finding ways to take value, rather than create value in an organisation. In periods of high inflation and high interest rates, a short-term view of business is understandable, but it's time our financial community accepts that we are now operating in a new business environment which will provide an immense reward for those who are in for the long haul."

MARK FELDMAN is a doctor and amateur fisherman who writes regularly on fishing and fisheries conservation.



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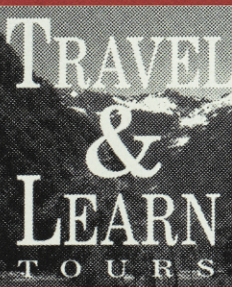
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