

# Models, Motives and Management

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## Models

"Monkey see, monkey do" is a cardinal rule of primate behaviour. Fads and fashions are characteristic of human activity and science is no exception.

Computer modelling is a current fad in science. Such models are only as reliable as our knowledge of the amount and effects of all the relevant factors they include. When many of these are unknown, elaborate computation **does not turn** misunderstandings **and wrong** estimates into reality. Models of complex dynamic phenomena such as animal populations can also be

very sensitive to small errors. Typically they require considerable adjustment before they produce results satisfactory to the modellers. Such results may then be more a reflection of the expectations and desires of the modellers than of anything in the real world.

Models can be made to produce any desired results and they afford an aura of high tech sophistication. They can also occupy endless hours in a comfortable office with much the same appeal as computer games. In contrast, real world fisheries data often demands hard work and long, uncomfortable periods at sea

Model results are now widely used as a basis for fisheries management, and generally are not **accessible to independent** examination. The prestige of science is compounded by computer power and results declared for acceptance entirely on faith. Combined with the precautionary principle, wherein possibility alone is deemed sufficient for action, models can be used to justify any desired decision.

## Motives

Increasing prosperity has made possible a growing class of people who by inheritance, connivance, or sinecure can live comfortably off the effort of others while producing little or nothing themselves. Human nature being what it is, many choose to adopt an air of righteous superiority in preference to gratitude. Increasing productivity makes it possible to support more of them and they are a growing political constituency. Overwhelmingly they are urban-based and have little appreciation of the realities of the production that supports them.

With the collapse of socialism and increasing prosperity, class struggle and concern over the plight of downtrodden workers lost its appeal and the legions of righteousness found a new rallying point in saving our precious environment. Though the banner has changed, the same old agenda of claiming the moral high ground and taking cheap shots at the productive sector remains. Lenin recognised this tendency among the intelligentsia and referred to them as "useful idiots". He followed through by liquidating them as soon as they had served his purpose. But, I digress.

The common division of political orientation between right and left tends to obscure a perhaps more meaningful divide, that between producers and non-producers. In this context producers are all whose livelihood is based on the production of goods and services. Non-producers include those who produce nothing and



Every vessel decommissioning as a **result of government policy** should result in a corresponding management budget cut

those in employment, most often with government or in academia, whereby their ongoing employment and even advancement has little to do with any productivity. Such employment is better described as a position than as a job.

Producers tend to be outcome oriented, value achievement, want to get ahead, see government as more of an obstacle than a **solution** and view life as generally **not** unfair. The non-producers **tend** to be process oriented, **resent** achievement, have limited aspirations, see government as the solution to most problems and view life as generally mean and unfair.

Although such division encompasses much the same people as right/left it is perhaps more explanatory of aims and attitudes.

## Management

Those occupying the academic and bureaucratic positions have developed a symbiotic relationship whereby the bureaucrats provide funding for research to academics who produce the desired findings. A new faith-based management dedicated to saving our precious natural environment and closing down or severely restricting its exploitation has replaced traditional fisheries biology. The sanctimonious bearing of these self-anointed saviours goes with the perceived righteousness of their cause. The ability of producers to bear an every growing burden of costs and restrictions is not unlimited. At some point the productive sector is going to have to wake up and begin to take effective action in opposition or give up and quit.

The problems of our fisheries in most instances are not with overfishing but rather with the current approach to management. Lobbying for more enlightened management is likely to achieve little. Three things that would make a huge difference are:

- Strong industry representation in management decisions. Fisheries management entails decisions about both the condition of the resource and the operation of the fishery. While current management may arguably be qualified to make the former assessment they are demonstrably unqualified to decide the latter
- Budgets for management should be indexed to performance including the production and profitability outcomes for the industry. The current approach of spending increasing amounts for management resulting in ever decreasing yields and profitability is a travesty of the whole concept of management.
- Management must also become open and transparent. This is the Internet Age. Data, models, rationale and other information that are the basis for management decisions should be made open to public access via the net. The current process of issuing dictates based on unverifiable claims, undisclosed models, unknown methods and inaccessible data amounts to faith-based management.

These changes are all eminently practical, in accord with fundamental democratic rights and good management practices. The only real requirement for their implementation is the will to do so.