

# State-subsidized destruction at sea

**Publication info:** The Gazette ; Montreal, Que. [Montreal, Que]20 Nov 2006: A24.

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## ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

Scientists at the University of British Columbia's Fisheries Centre reported this week that Japan, Russia, South Korea, and Spain are among countries that keep unregulated high-seas bottom-trawling going by providing subsidies totalling some \$152 million a year to fishing fleets, mainly in form of cut-price fuel. Meanwhile the United States, like New Zealand, Australia, Britain and some other countries, favour a moratorium on bottom-trawling in international waters.

## FULL TEXT

The latest effort to ban the destructive process of strip-mining the high seas for fish now appears to be hopeless, in part because Canada has refused to join in.

But at least the campaign has illuminated some of the ways in which the "tragedy of the commons" is accelerating in the world's oceans - and the way governments choose not to interfere.

The United Nations General Assembly, that most ineffectual of bodies, continued talking this week about banning high-seas bottom trawling, which scrapes the sea-floor bare, destroying habitat and coral. As the UN devotes two weeks to the issue many good lunches will be consumed - perhaps the Chilean sea bass? - by diplomats. But it turns out the fix is in: A number of influential countries aggressively subsidize this kind of fishing, and most of them are not likely to be deterred.

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It's odd to see Canada on the wrong side of an issue like this. The limp excuse, from federal Fisheries Minister Loyola Hearn, is that the ban would be tough to enforce.

That's true enough, but it's no excuse. If the world doesn't mobilize against destructive fisheries practices - of which this one is fairly minor, actually - then those distressing predictions about the utter collapse of the world's fisheries will come true all too soon.

Surely Canada can do better.

## DETAILS

<b>Publication title:</b>	The Gazette; Montreal, Que.
<b>Pages:</b>	A24
<b>Number of pages:</b>	0
<b>Publication year:</b>	2006
<b>Publication date:</b>	Nov 20, 2006
<b>Section:</b>	Editorial / Op-Ed
<b>Publisher:</b>	Infomart, a division of Postmedia Network Inc.
<b>Place of publication:</b>	Montreal, Que.
<b>Country of publication:</b>	Canada, Montreal, Que.
<b>Publication subject:</b>	General Interest Periodicals--Canada
<b>ISSN:</b>	03841 294
<b>Source type:</b>	Newspapers
<b>Language of publication:</b>	English
<b>Document type:</b>	Editoria l
<b>ProQuest document ID:</b>	434394149
<b>Document URL:</b>	<a href="http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/434394149?accountid=14656">http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/434394149?accountid=14656</a>
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<b>Last updated:</b>	2017-11-16
<b>Database:</b>	Canadian Newsstream

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