

On psychology
and biology

616



Climate records
from caves

620



LETTERS | BOOKS | POLICY FORUM | EDUCATION FORUM | PERSPECTIVES

LETTERS

edited by Etta Kavanagh

Boycott of Israeli Academics Misguided

THE RECENT MOTION BY THE U.K.'S LARGEST UNIVERSITY UNION (NAFHE) recommending a boycott of all Israeli academics who “do not publicly dissociate themselves” from Israeli policies has reignited the debate around this issue (“Over protests, U.K. union endorses boycott of Israeli academics,” E. Marshall, *News of the Week*, 2 June, p. 1289).

Despite the fact that the NAFHE decision is only “advisory,” it is likely that many will view it as an inducement to act along the lines of the motion. As an Israeli academic, I find myself wondering just which Israeli policies these anonymous potential boycotters would like me to publicly dissociate myself from? Should I dissociate myself from the policy to encourage joint Palestinian-Israeli science projects, the policy to admit students and faculty to our universities regardless of their race or religion, or the policy to continue withdrawals from occupied territory if the Palestinians will only stop using such territory as launching

“How will the boycotters decide who has and who has not publicly dissociated themselves from Israeli policies?”

—Fainzilber

pads for further attacks on us? Or perhaps the boycotters would like me to dissociate myself from the security barrier that has markedly reduced the number of deaths of Israeli civilians from homicide bombers? If the latter, unfortunately, it seems the boycotters would like to see us choose between death and damnation.

How will the boycotters decide who has and who has not publicly dissociated themselves from Israeli policies? In the absence of a “public dissociation commissar” to categorize myself and my colleagues in Israeli academia into those who are boycottable versus those who are not, I would like to issue the following challenge to

those currently quietly supporting this boycott from the safety of their anonymity. I hereby publicly identify myself as an Israeli academic who has not dissociated himself from the Israeli government policies described above, and challenge the boycott supporters to reciprocate by publicly identifying themselves as supporting this boycott. After all, if they want to support a boycott policy that is the antithesis

of academic freedom and is reminiscent of the darkest days of Lysenkoism in Soviet academia, at the very least they should have the courage to stand behind their misguided convictions.

MIKE FAINZILBER

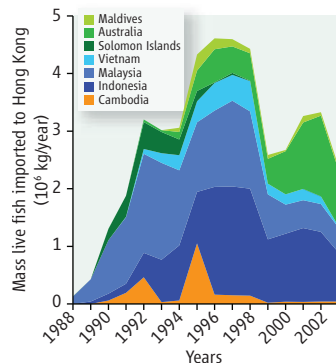
Department of Biological Chemistry, Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot 76100, Israel.

Keeping Bandits at Bay?

IN THEIR POLICY FORUM “GLOBALIZATION, roving bandits, and marine resources” (17 Mar., p. 1557), F. Berkes and colleagues highlight the serious ecological and management consequences of sequential exploitation of biological resources by mobile agents with no attachment to place. Such “roving bandits” (either legal or illegal) deplete stocks and move on faster than local institutions can be developed to regulate them. Here, we quantify the dynamics of a roving bandit system: the live reef fish trade (LRFT) supplying luxury seafood restaurants, mainly in Hong Kong, with large predatory fish (1–4).

We compiled annual statistics on the mass of live reef fish imported to Hong Kong from individual source nations (1988–2003; see graph) from the Hong Kong Census and

Statistics Department (5). Analyzing the start-up dates of the trade from these nations reveals that the LRFT has been spreading away from Hong Kong at an accelerating pace, starting at about 100 km yr⁻¹ in the 1970s and reaching over 400 km yr⁻¹ in the late 1990s (see map) (6). Of 19 exporting nations (7), 10 clearly



Imports of live reef food fish to Hong Kong over time, excluding countries for which the trade volume is too low to be visible and countries detailed in (7). Color-coded by region in ascending chronological order of entry into the LRFT, with minor data gaps extrapolated. The drop in catches in 1999 is a consequence of the global economic downturn that impacted demand for luxury food.

show a pattern of boom and bust. Moreover, booms appear to be increasingly ephemeral, with the time between the start and peak of the trade being significantly shorter for more distant countries (see graph) (8). The progressive deterioration of LRFT fisheries in most source nations has also led to what may be termed “fishing down the price list.” Analyzing LRFT imports by species (9) instead of countries shows that species were depleted serially in order of price (10, 11).

As the accelerating wave with its quickening boom-and-bust pattern spreads out, do local actors have time to react to the threat of roving bandits, or, as