

U.S.A. admits Trawler incident

THE U.S. Navy has admitted responsibility for an incident on Monday, 18th April, when a Peel trawler *The Laurel*, was dragged backwards for a mile by a large object which became enmeshed in the nets.

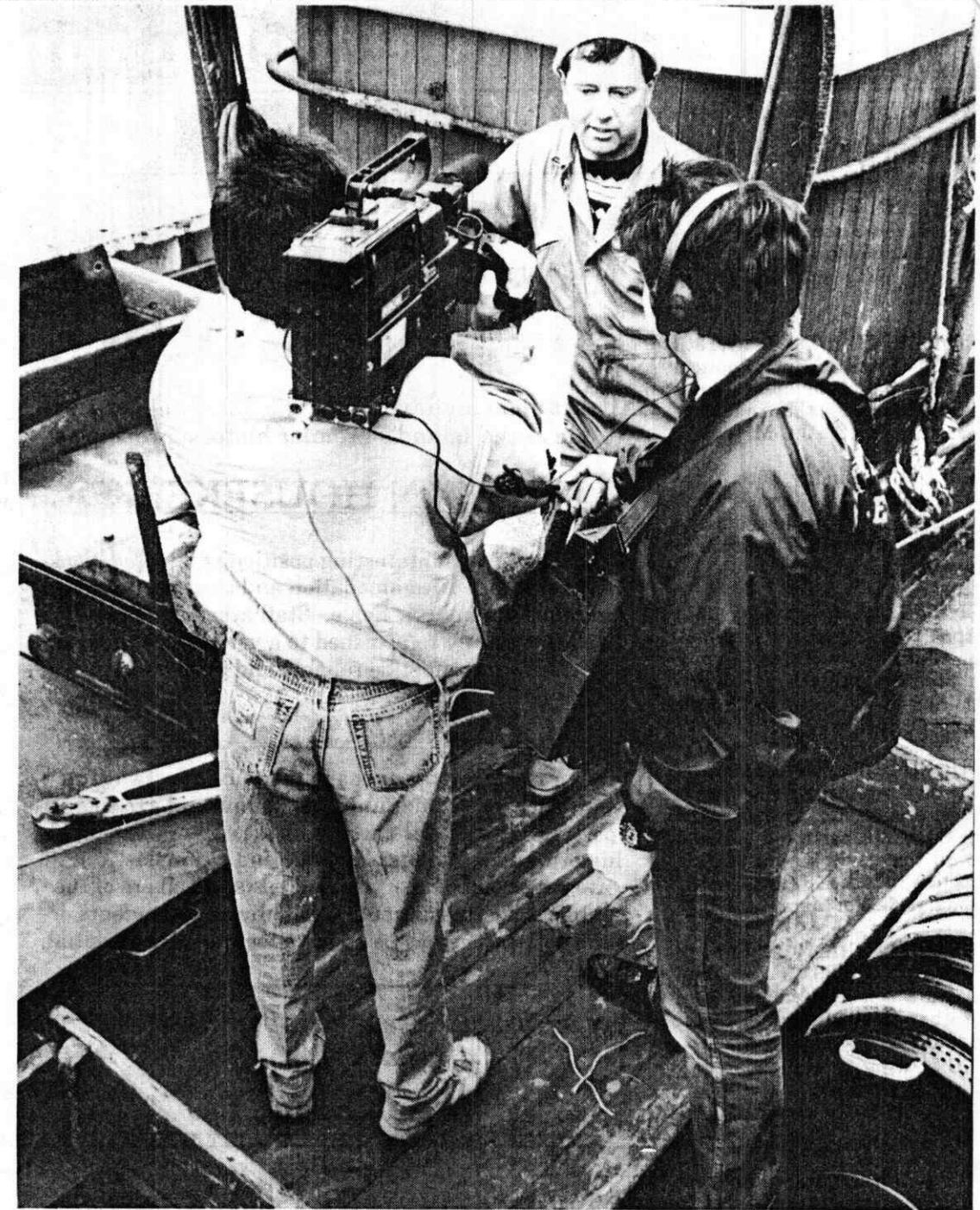
Skipper, Geoff Comber, with crew Phillip Comber and Andrew Leadley, were prawn fishing about twelve miles out from Peel when their 44 foot vessel was violently dragged backwards at a speed of about 4 knots. Geoff Comber eventually managed to sever the new £4,000 net with wire-cutters, and, on arrival back in Peel, alerted the Liverpool coastguard, who suspected the involvement of a submarine in the incident. In a carefully worded statement, The Ministry of Defence denied that any Royal Navy submarines had been in the area.

The Mannin branch of the Celtic League alerted anti-militarist protesters at Faslane, the British Submarine base, and Holy Loch, which houses the U.S. nuclear submarines. A watch was kept for a damaged submarine surfacing at either base. The culprit vessel could be easily spotted by damage to paintwork and rubberized tiles on the conning tower. Following the unusually swift admission of responsibility by the U.S. Navy, it is hoped that Mr. Comber will equally quickly receive compensation for his loss.

While welcoming the new openness of the military, Bernard Moffatt, of the Celtic League, advised people to 'have a thought for the incident where no men came home, there was no admission of responsibility, no compensation, just families left to face the consequences alone and wonder what happened?'

The Celtic League has monitored such events since 1982, and thirty incidents, involving at least eighteen craft and the loss of fifty lives, were recorded in the first six years.

Following criticism of their findings by the U.S. Navy in 1988, a revised, computerized record has been made, with data on times, dates, co-ordinates, tonnage, compensation paid (or not



Crewmen on the *Laurel*, of Peel, are besieged by reporters and photographers on their return to port after an "incident" with a U.S. Submarine.

paid), and lives lost, all minutely detailed. Quite frighteningly, as a result of the more comprehensive record, and accurate tally of lost lives is much closer to one hundred than the 50 estimated originally.

While refusing to publically admit liability for such incidents, The Ministry of Defence does admit that claims totalling £500,000 have been paid in private settlements with vessel owners over the last decade. However, it continues to state categorically that no British submarine has been responsible for loss of life.

