

Minister says no more action on Antares sinking

By ELIZABETH BUIE

THERE was anger last night after Armed Forces Minister Mr Archie Hamilton announced that no further disciplinary action is to be taken over the sinking of the trawler Antares by a nuclear submarine.

An MP and a lawyer acting for the family of one of the four men who died when the fishing boat was dragged under the Firth of Clyde by the submarine Trenchant accused the Navy of using an officer on a training course at the time of the tragedy as a scapegoat.

They pointed out that there had been others on board more experienced than Lieutenant Commander Peter McDonnell who last year was found guilty of negligence and severely reprimanded by a court-martial as a result of the incident.

Mr George Foulkes, MP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, who has campaigned on behalf of the families of the Antares fishermen, complained about the Navy's training methods and said: "It is clear that a junior officer under training, Lt Cdr Peter McDonnell, has been made the scapegoat in this instance.

"Without any deter-

rent action by the commander-in-chief and with no ban on submerged activity in fishing areas, the seas where submarines operate remain a constant danger for fishermen."

Mr Foulkes said that he would continue to press the Minister to try to have the decision reconsidered and that he would intensify his campaign for a ban on underwater submarine activity in all recognised fishing areas.

Mr Robert Hynd, the solicitor representing the family of the youngest victim of the tragedy, 20-year-old Dugald Campbell, said: "This decision by the Royal Navy confirms that Lt Cdr McDonnell was a scapegoat. At his court-martial we were told that he had made errors in underwater navigation techniques and that these errors, for which he was court-martialled, did not contribute to the loss of the Antares."

He added: "At that stage the families asked the legitimate question: 'If his errors did not contribute to the loss of the Antares, whose did?'"

"Today we are still asking the same question. Effectively no-one is being held responsible for the loss of the Antares.

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