

## **A WHALE OF A STUSHIE**

*Alex Brodie*

Stop the bloody whaling - boycott Norway. Norway is killing whales again in defiance of the International Whaling Commission. This century alone they've butchered more than 350,000 whales. They cannot be allowed to destroy one of the last remaining great whale populations. The whales can't fight back, but you can.

- **Greenpeace leaflet**

If we sacrifice whaling we will have to sacrifice our entire coastal culture.

- **Geir Andersen, Norwegian whaler**

It is of course the case that Norwegian whaling would not be compatible with existing EC regulations on whaling and I shall certainly lose no opportunity to make that clear.

- **Gillian Shepherd, UK Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Hansard 10.6.93**

The whaling will be conducted on the basis of fair and reasonable catch limits, ensuring a stable population of minke whales and sustainable management in accordance with the principles adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development.

- **Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, press statement, July 1992**

In June 1992 the Norwegian government decided to permit the resumption of small-type commercial whaling from 1993, despite a ban by the International

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Whaling Commission. Because of this act Norway was faced with economic sanctions by which it stood to lose many times more than the value of the whale catch. There is also a threat to block Norway's application to join the European Union. And Norway's high moral standing as a superclean country in its concern for the environment has been tarnished.

Why has Norway persisted in defying the international ban at such cost? Why should we be concerned?

The whaling programme that is the cause of all the stushie concerns one species of whale, the minke whale (vågehval in Norwegian). This is the smallest and by far the most numerous of the sub-order of baleen or toothless whales. The quota fixed by the Norwegian government for 1993 was 160 for commercial purposes plus 136 for research, out of an estimated north-east Atlantic minke whale population of around 86,700.

Minke whaling in Norway is a part-time activity which has been carried out by generations of fishermen from a handful of coastal villages in Arctic Norway, particularly in the Lofoten islands. Whaling occupies the blank summer period between the winter and spring cod fishing and the autumn herring fishing. The boats are small traditional family-owned fishing boats of 40 to 80 feet in length, and normally carry a crew of three to eight persons. The minke whales are caught for their meat, which is processed and eaten locally or sold in the rest of Norway. The meat is a prized delicacy and fetches high prices.

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) was set up by fourteen of the main whaling nations following the signing of an International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling in 1946. In its first twenty years the Commission was little more effective than previous half-hearted attempts to regulate the industry which was rapidly depleting stocks of the valuable great whales. Not enough was known to provide an effective basis for setting catch limits for the various species, and it was all too easy for member and non-member nations to flout what rules there were. Post-war shortages ensured a lucrative market for whale oil and other whale products, and the slaughter of great whales reached new heights during this period.

Public concern about whaling took off in the early seventies. The impetus was provided not only by the perceived need to protect endangered species but also by the growing revulsion against inflicting pain and suffering on animals. What gave the whales and their close cousins the dolphins a special status was their new-found image as intelligent, playful, friendly creatures

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with an affinity to human beings. Killing such animals for profit now seemed immoral. Whaling also became less profitable as better substitutes replaced the once indispensable products of the whale.

Large-scale industrial-type whaling continued, however, well into the 1980s. In the sixties, the British, Dutch and Norwegians of the major whaling nations had pulled out for commercial reasons, followed in the seventies by USA, South Africa and Australia, leaving the USSR and Japan, together with smaller countries such as South Korea and Taiwan, Chile and Peru. This was the period of the running war between factory whalers (often operating under flags of convenience) and the freebooting vessels Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior owned and skippered by dedicated conservation activists. Finally in 1987 the USSR and Japan, the last of the big whalers, declared a cessation of commercial whaling.

Intense lobbying by the protectionist societies, accompanied by spectacular campaigns and open air stunts, had been rewarded in 1982 when the IWC at its annual meeting in Brighton adopted a resolution applying a moratorium on all commercial whaling on conservation grounds, to take effect from 1986. By this time the IWC had grown to 39 members, most of whom had never been involved in or had given up whaling. Norway reserved its position in regard to its traditional coastal minke whaling, and continued to set its own quotas until 1986, when the government decided to impose its own five-year moratorium pending further research into stocks and sustainable catch levels.

Although large-scale industrial whaling has ceased, probably for good, so-called aboriginal subsistence whaling has continued with IWC approval among the Eskimos of Alaska and Greenland and other 'native peoples' in various parts of the world. Most of this is small-scale with traditional primitive equipment, but the Alaskan whaling in particular, where rare bowheads are killed, has increasingly used more sophisticated technology. Japan, although ceasing large-scale whaling, continued to kill minke whales in the Antarctic for research purposes.

It may be mentioned in passing that the traditional practice of driving pilot whales into shallow bays to be killed in large numbers, once prevalent in Shetland, is still carried on in the Faroe Islands despite much criticism. The pilot whale is however properly classed as a small cetacean and as such the catches are not regulated by the IWC.

Improved methods of studying whales without killing them were developed. However, in 1991, Norway, which had been in the forefront of international

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movements for environmental protection, disappointed many by announcing that as part of a major ongoing research into the ecology of the north-east Atlantic it proposed to carry out a three-year study of minke whales which would involve catching and dissecting random samples of 382 minke whales over a three-year period beginning in 1992.

Then in 1992 the Norwegian government, after considering all the scientific evidence to date and the effects of the moratorium on the economy of the communities concerned, decided that there was no longer justification for continuing its moratorium on small-scale commercial minke whaling. Norway accordingly sought IWC agreement to a commercial catch of up to 160 minke whales in 1993, plus 136 for research.

The proposal unleashed an instant storm of protest around the world. At their annual meeting in Glasgow in 1992, the IWC refused the request by a substantial majority. Norway tried again at the IWC annual meeting in Kyoto, Japan, in May 1993, and was again rebuffed, as was a proposal of Japan to take up to 300 minke in Antarctic waters for research. At both meetings the British government representatives were among the most vocal in condemning the Norwegian action. Nevertheless the catch went ahead, although because of exceptionally bad weather and a late refusal of permission to sample in the Russian zone of the Barents Sea only 69 of the research quota of 136 were taken.

### **THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION: MANAGEMENT OR PROTECTION?**

The environmental argument against Norway's action turns on scientific evidence, for which the International Whaling Commission is the main co-ordinating organisation.

Membership of the IWC is open to any nation which accepts the 1946 international convention. It is primarily concerned with scientific and political aspects rather than with the ethics of whaling, although it has an advisory Group on Humane Killing which has studied different killing methods with a view to establishing the most humane possible. By 1982 the IWC had changed from being a 'whalers' club' to a body in which conservation interests predominated. Its present 40 members are something of a rag-bag of whaling, ex-whaling and never-been-whaling nations, and range from major powers such as USA, China, Japan and Russia, to tiny states like the Seychelles, Monaco and Grenada. Switzerland, which does not

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have a seaboard, is a member. Other European members are the UK, France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries. Canada and Iceland resigned at different times because of disagreements over IWC decisions. The Commission meets annually in different venues in a week-long conference to receive reports, hear representations and take decisions. All countries, large or small, have one vote each.

The definitive history of the IWC has yet to be written, but David Day gives some hint, albeit from the extreme anti-whaling point of view, of the wheeler-dealing, political manoeuvring, and commercial pressure which brought countries on to the Commission and have influenced their voting patterns (Day 1992).

The Commission takes its advice on scientific matters from its Scientific Committee. This is made up of experts nominated by the various member countries, with provision for co-opting others. In its reports to the full Commission it may put forward differing viewpoints, and may or may not come to firm conclusions or recommendations. Ambiguity about the interpretation of the Committee's findings on the matter of minke whale stocks and sustainable catch limits has contributed not a little to the present dispute.

The Commission's decisions have no force in international law and are dependent on agreement by member countries. Member countries, as well as non-members, may legally decide, as Norway has done in the present case, to ignore Commission decisions, but this may leave them open to trade sanctions by other countries. European Union regulations and directives are of course not binding on Norway but have been held to prohibit Norway's whaling programme if Norway should join the Union.

#### **IS NORWEGIAN MINKE WHALING ENVIRONMENTALLY JUSTIFIED?**

Assessment of whale populations is notoriously difficult, and estimates of what might constitute a sustainable catch of a particular stock are open to wide differences of scientific interpretation. The whole constitutes a dynamic fuzzy system whose parameters include natural age span, migratory and reproductive patterns, feeding and social habits, changes in climate and water temperature, food supply, interaction with other species and the effects of human activities such as overfishing, disturbance, loss in fishing nets and pollution, as well as death by whaling.

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The 12 species of great whale are all protected by the IWC but not all species are equally threatened. The bowhead, humpback, fin and blue whales have been reduced to a small fraction of their previous numbers and have been variously classed as rare or endangered, although there is evidence that numbers may be recovering in some areas. The sperm whale (the Moby Dick of Melville's novel) is not endangered but has been depleted. The minke whale still exists in large numbers, and there is no question of its being regarded as endangered or seriously threatened.

Knowledge of the minke whale is increasing, but still patchy. It is up to 30 or 40 feet long and has a natural life span of 40 or 50 years. The interval between calving has been put at between 12 and 18 months. As a toothless whale it is thought to live largely on plankton and krill in Antarctic waters, but in northern waters it is known to eat large quantities of fish, including commercially important species such as cod, haddock and herring. Norwegian analysis of stomach contents in the 1992 sample showed a diet 'almost totally dominated by fish' (Norsk Institut for Fiskeri-og Havforbruksforskning 1993). The minke is not aggressive to human beings and indeed may approach boats out of curiosity. It is numerous in all oceans and follows certain migratory patterns for calving and feeding; and it is thought to be divided into a number of fairly discrete though probably overlapping stocks. The global population has been put at 900,000 animals, of which the north-east Atlantic stock has been estimated at around 87,000.

The last figure needs some explanation. It is the most recent best estimate based on Norwegian sampling by sighting along transect lines in different boxes of the Norwegian and Barents seas. Statistically, this count when grossed up in 1992 gave an estimate of between 61,000 and 117,000 on a 95 per cent probability, with a mid point of 86,736 (Rep.IWC 1993 p79). As a method of counting it is by no means free of possible bias; nevertheless it is the best available, and the 1993 report of the Scientific Committee accepted it. The wide variance of the estimate has to be borne in mind, but the Norwegians claim that their proposed catch is well below any reasonable estimate of sustainable yield, and will have a negligible effect on stocks; and this has not been seriously challenged.

In 1975 most of the commercial stocks of large whales had been classified as Protection stocks, defined as stocks which had shown more than a 54 per cent decline on the so-called pre-exploitation level. In 1986 the north-east Atlantic minke stock was added despite Norwegian dissent. Both the data and the method of assessment, using catch per unit effort (CPUE), are acknowledged to be highly unreliable in regard to minke populations, and the Norwegians

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claimed in 1992 that there was 'solid evidence' to suggest that the north-east minke stock should never have been placed on the protected list. Since then numbers have been re-assessed upwards by a substantial amount, and the Scientific Committee has accepted the revised estimate. In truth the question whether minke stocks in the north-east Atlantic are declining, stable or increasing is one which it is impossible to answer with any confidence. Nevertheless, despite the Scientific Committee's acceptance of the most recent Norwegian estimate, the IWC has refused to take the minke off the protected list.

The sightings surveys on which the Norwegian stock estimates are based are part of a much larger five-year £11 million research programme into sea mammals in the north east Atlantic which started in 1989. This programme, the largest ever undertaken under the aegis of the state-funded Norwegian Fisheries Research Council, was given the main aim of establishing guidelines for the conservation and management of whales and seals, and their interaction with fish stocks in relation to the overall ecology of the north east Atlantic - an area of research of the greatest importance as well as difficulty. Much of the research work is non-lethal, but the scientists considered it necessary to include in the programme a limited lethal sampling of minke whales involving taking 382 whales for analysis over the three years 1992 to 1994.

The result of Norwegian and Japanese research to date was reported to the IWC Kyoto meeting in May 1993. While recognising that the granting of permits to take whales for scientific purposes was a matter for the national Governments concerned and not for the IWC, the Commission nonetheless by a majority refused to endorse either country's research proposals. Much of the opposition was on the grounds that research which involved the killing of whales was unacceptable, although there had been strong testimony within the Scientific Committee (not only by the whaling nations) that a controlled amount of lethal as well as non-lethal research was necessary in order inter alia to obtain essential biological data and information on feeding habits. In dismissing the Norwegian proposals the Commission not only appeared to disregard much of the scientific advice but also by implication to devalue the whole of the Norwegian research effort into the ecology of the north-east Atlantic.

Norway's proposals to restart small-scale commercial whaling fared no better under the Commission's spotlight. When in 1982 the Commission had declared a moratorium on all commercial whaling it did so in the light of the absence at that time of any satisfactory mechanism for setting and regulating

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catches of the large whales. The Commission had therefore instructed its Scientific Committee to prepare a revised procedure for managing baleen whales and setting approved catch limits. After seven years of study and deliberation, the Scientific Committee unanimously recommended to the 1993 annual meeting a Revised Management Procedure together with other data which it considered should be required under a full-blown Revised Management System. Norway was prepared to abide by the revised procedure. The Commission however refused to implement the Scientific Committee's recommendations, and deferred the matter for further consideration. The Norwegians interpreted the decision as deliberate stalling tactics by the anti-whaling nations which took no account of either the scientific advice or such factors as the effect on the fragile fishing communities.

Shortly after the 1993 Kyoto meeting, Dr Philip Hammond of the British state-funded Sea Mammal Research Unit resigned as Chairman of the IWC's Scientific Committee. In his letter of resignation, he wrote of the Committee's work in devising a proper whale management procedure:

Thus one of the most interesting and far-reaching chapters in the science of natural resource management came to a conclusion. The Commission could now put in place a mechanism for the safe management of commercial whaling.....The reality was somewhat different....The future of this unique piece of work was left in the air. Of course, the reasons for this were nothing to do with science. Despite the unanimity of the Scientific Committee's recommendations, some Commissioners used selective quotations out of context from the Committee's report to justify not adopting the Revised Management Procedure on 'scientific' grounds. But the matter of substance is, what is the point of having a Scientific Committee whose unanimous recommendations are treated with such contempt?

### **IS KILLING WHALES ETHICAL?**

It is a sign of the confusion within the IWC that despite its apparent objections to lethal research it has at no time explicitly condemned the killing of whales: indeed the search for a procedure for managing commercial whale stocks recognises the setting of catch limits (even if zero in some cases) as one of the chief objects of such a procedure.

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It is evident, however, that ethical issues have played a major part in framing public opinion and the attitudes of politicians and governments. The more extreme conservation bodies have not hesitated to stigmatise the killing of whales as inhumane, brutal and barbaric, and have boosted their membership and resources as a result.

Obviously one must respect the views of those who would say that wild animals should not be killed in any circumstances. Most who oppose the killing of whales do so, however, because of the pain and suffering which they claim is inherent in the killing methods used. This is one of the main grounds on which the UK government has condemned the Norwegian programme, but it raises difficult ethical questions and can lead to accusations of irrationality, double standards, and political opportunism.

The Norwegian claim that everything possible is done to minimise suffering appears to be well borne out. The method employed, the penthrite exploding grenade harpoon, has been accepted by the IWC as the most humane available, or likely to be developed. The Norwegian authorities insist on rigorous training of crews and testing of personnel and equipment. A Government veterinary inspector accompanies all whaling voyages, both to observe the operation for future report and to ensure compliance with the rules. Properly struck the whale dies instantly. The circumstances of the hunt, requiring relatively calm seas and good weather, are conducive to a clean strike. This does not always happen, however, and time-to-death rates of over 15 minutes can exceptionally occur. In the 1993 season, 50 per cent of whales died instantly and 92 per cent within 10 minutes, the average time to death being less than four minutes. There is some evidence that unconsciousness may intervene before death, but studies are still continuing. The inspectors' reports point to areas where further improvements might be made. (For a detailed analysis of the 1993 programme, and comparison with previous years, reference may be made to preliminary reports issued in October 1993 by the Norwegian Fisheries Directorate and the Norwegian Institute for Fisheries Research.)

Many, however, will say that killing whales at sea will never be humane by acceptable modern standards. To this the Norwegians reply that killing wild animals will always carry a risk of causing pain and suffering, and that killing whales by the method used is at least as humane as killing other wild animals for game or sport, as is permitted or condoned in countries which have not hesitated to express horror at the Norwegian action. The charge of hypocrisy and double standards has been levelled especially at the British government, pointing to the British record in blood sports and the lax standards on

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pollution including toxic emissions which have already caused the death of forests and lake life over large areas of Norway and are continuing to spread their deadly effect.

There is a widespread supposition that whales, being warm-blooded, experience pain whereas cold-blooded creatures like fish do not. There are shaky grounds for the latter assumption, and some researchers have found no significant difference in the respective nervous systems of fish and mammals which would justify it. Ethical standards have changed greatly in recent decades, and it could be that killing fish or other animals for sport or food may one day become as repugnant as killing whales. Questions of pain and suffering must also logically take in such activities as factory farming and the transport of animals for slaughter. Who has the right to throw stones?

### **DOES NORWAY NEED WHALING?**

One of the charges levelled at the Norwegian whaling effort is that, while whale products may have been necessary to keep primitive communities alive, this is not the case with a rich country like Norway where whaling has no longer any economic importance.

This is to misrepresent the situation. Although whaling makes an insignificant contribution to the overall Norwegian economy, it is of great economic and social importance to the small coastal communities, particularly in the Lofoten islands where it is mainly concentrated. Virtually the whole of the £5 million which it is estimated whaling would earn in 1993 would accrue to the families who own and staff the boats, and to local processors.

Large-type factory whaling was never part of the fishing lore and culture of northern Norway, but small-type whaling has long been carried out as a summer activity of fishing people from remote island and coastal settlements of a few hundred inhabitants. For a variety of reasons these remote communities have suffered rapid and substantial depopulation in recent decades. In the eighties, during the period of the 'black seas' as it was called, the collapse of herring, cod and capelin stocks accelerated a process in which some of the remoter villages had to be abandoned and others left to decay as the younger people moved out. The earnings from whaling helped to sustain not only the livelihood of the remaining families but also their distinctive culture and way of life.

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The five-year moratorium imposed from 1987 had a major impact not only on the families concerned but also on the incomes of the Lofoten municipalities of Vågan and Moskenes which were already labelled as impoverished. To some extent the blow has been softened by generous welfare and other transfer payments, but alternative employment opportunities have been few, and nothing could quickly fill the social vacuum.

It has been a major principle of all Norwegian governments since the last war to try to stem the tide of migration from the poorer northern counties to the prosperous south, and Norwegians in the more fortunate areas have been prepared to bear the massive cost in subsidies and fiscal discrimination which this has necessitated. The northern regions, and the political parties, see the whaling issue as a test case of the will to protect Norway's fragile communities. In the past few years the herring and cod fisheries have revived, and it cannot honestly be claimed that a complete cessation of minke whaling would be a national catastrophe. It would have a profound adverse effect on the lives and culture of the Lofoten fishing people. Whether that is to be regarded as an important consideration is perhaps a matter of opinion.

### **SHOCK AND ANGER**

The readiness of the world to condemn the Norwegian action, and the severity of the threatened punishment, has shocked and angered most Norwegians, particularly in view of the country's high standing in environmental matters. Opinion polls show that 75 per cent of Norwegians agree with the stance their Government has taken. In a parliamentary debate following the IWC Kyoto meeting, representatives of all political parties stated their unequivocal support for the Government's action. Minority opposition has come mainly from Norwegian branches of committed international anti-whaling bodies such as Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature. The main Norwegian nature conservation bodies, on the other hand, including the Nature Conservation Union (Naturvernforbund) and Nature and Youth (Natur og Ungdom) fully support the whaling programme as being consistent with the right to take a sustainable harvest of marine mammals.

The criticism of Norway's research effort has hurt badly. Even some of the more objective commentators have referred to 'so-called research' while the less scrupulous have freely used phrases like 'slaughtering whales for profit under the guise of research'. This is an unwarranted slur on the integrity of

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the Norwegian scientists and research institutions. There can be no doubt that the Norwegian research programme is being conducted according to good scientific principles and is a serious attempt to add to the knowledge of the ecology of the North Atlantic.

To those who say that as a member of the IWC Norway must abide by its decisions, the Norwegian government claims that the issue at stake is the right of a small nation heavily dependent on the resources of the sea to harvest these resources in a responsible and sustainable manner in accordance with international convention. Norway has acted legally and responsibly, it is claimed, whereas the IWC has disregarded scientific evidence and exceeded its own remit and the principles laid down in the 1946 International Convention on Whaling as well as those of the UN Convention on Environment and Development. There is a strong feeling that the stance taken by certain IWC member countries has been motivated by domestic political considerations rather than by genuine regard for the environment. It is easy for a country to oppose whaling at no cost to itself, and to derive political kudos from so doing.

### **THE ANTI-WHALING LOBBY - FAIR TACTICS OR FOUL?**

The anti-whaling movement is a phenomenon of the present age which would require closer analysis than can be given here. Until the middle of the present century whaling bore no stigma: on the contrary, deep-sea whaling and its close neighbour, polar exploration, were seen as heroic activities involving great danger and hardship. The Norwegians and the British, especially the Scots, were among the most intrepid and inventive of the whaling peoples: for a time Dundee was the centre of the Arctic whaling industry.

The notion of whales as friendly cuddly creatures would have seemed bizarre to the old-time whaler, for whom the chase was a challenge and the blood and gore part of the job. It is scarcely reasonable to apply our present-day qualms retrospectively to castigate the Norwegians and others who took leading roles in the polar whaling trade.

The anti-whaling movement owes a great deal to a small number of single-minded individuals in the early seventies who were appalled at the slaughter then taking place. Dedicated animal protection societies such as Friends of the Earth, The World Wide Fund for Nature, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and the more militant Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd adopted 'saving the whale' as a moral crusade.

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The movement mushroomed, and the membership and resources of the conservation societies grew accordingly. Campaigns, demonstrations, mass walks, chaining to railings, production of films and television programmes, and intense lobbying of politicians were organised in many countries and attracted much popular support in the cities if not among seagoing communities. Such diverse personalities as Sir Peter Scott, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Beatles lent their names to the cause. The Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd societies, the latter headed by the self-confessed visionary Paul Watson, gloried in taking direct action to disrupt whaling, by illegal means if necessary including scuttling research vessels, but nevertheless attracted many young people with a sense of mission and adventure.

Whaling raises important environmental and ethical issues that concern us all, but it may now be apparent to the reader that the issues are not as simple or as one-sided as some conservation bodies would have us believe. It is proper to hold strong feelings, but with such an emotive subject it is all too easy for argument to shade into rhetoric and then into misrepresentation. The quotation at the head of this article is fairly typical of the kind of intemperate language used to whip up public support. In the long run it is questionable whether such tactics, even if immediately productive, serve the cause of conservation.

### **HOW WILL IT END?**

Following the IWC's decision at the Kyoto meeting to continue opposition to Norway's whaling programme, calls for the boycott of Norwegian goods were stepped up. Some of Norway's major exporting companies lost orders in the US, Europe and Australia, and sections of the Norwegian press began to put pressure on the Government. Greenpeace claimed that Norway had already lost £30 million in exports of fish and other goods. Figures recently issued by the Norwegian Export Board show, however, that the overall effect had been much less than feared, and that in fact exports of fish had increased in the first seven months of the year compared with the same period in 1992. Tourism, which it had been forecast would slump as a result of the boycott, also showed an increase (Nytt fra Norge 14.9.93).

The threat to block Norway's application to join the European Union remains on the table, but may have receded somewhat. In May 1993, following the Kyoto meeting, the European parliament passed a resolution condemning Norwegian whaling and stating that it could be a stumbling block to Norway's membership negotiations. A flurry of diplomatic activity culminating in talks

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between the Norwegian prime minister and the president of the European parliament, Egon Kleptsch, appears to have resulted in a more favourable view being taken of the Norwegian case for a limited whaling programme. The leaders of the three main parliamentary groups, it was reported, agreed with Kleptsch's proposal that the whaling issue should be reviewed.

So far the UK shows no sign of toning down its opposition. The official line remains that, while accepting the Norwegian data on minke whale stocks, the Government 'will not contemplate a lifting of the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling unless stocks are shown to be at healthy levels; methods used to take whales are proved to be humane; and fully effective procedures for managing whale stocks and for their enforcement are in place'. (Burne 1993). The burden of proof is thus placed on Norway, and, as neither the UK Government nor the IWC has defined any of the requirements in advance, the statement could be interpreted as a political smoke screen which would enable the moratorium on all whaling to be continued indefinitely. There is no reference to the rights and needs of the Lofoten fishing people.

On the Norwegian side the whaling question could be a major factor when it comes to ratification of entry to the European Union. The popular mood is firmly against joining, as was shown in the general election in September 1993 when the anti-EU Centre Party, traditionally the party of 'farmers, fishers and foresters', pushed into second place behind the Labour Party and ahead of the Conservatives, the most pro-EU party. The international reaction to the whaling issue has served to strengthen the anti-EU vote, and the issue has become a symbol of the Government's willingness to protect its northern regions.

The likelihood that Norway will decide to stay out of the European Union has also had repercussions in Sweden, where the popular mood is now running more strongly against European integration. It is very much in the interests of the UK, not least of Scotland, that the northern democracies should join the Union, and it seems entirely out of proportion that the whaling question should be a stumbling block.

Staying out of Europe might not be regarded as a catastrophe for most Norwegians, but the threat of economic sanctions, especially by the United States, is taken seriously. The anti-whaling lobbies have powerful allies in both Senate and Congress vehemently demanding a boycott of Norwegian imports. There are also however cautionary voices, and the US must be sensitive to the fact that in Alaska it permits hunting of the rare bowhead for cultural reasons which could be applied to the Norwegian case. Moreover

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Norway has a generally good press in America as a reliable NATO ally. President Clinton has stalled by saying that in the meantime he will take no action to put trade sanctions in place but will work towards agreement with Norway on conservation measures.

At the time of writing, Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland has refused to say categorically that the commercial catch will go ahead in 1994, but the expectation is that it will. Brundtland herself is a strong proponent of EU membership and cannot afford to alienate the regional vote, but it is just possible that in the hard process of political negotiations the Lofoten islanders could be sacrificed to European opinion as part of a deal for conventional fishing. On the other hand, the attitude of the big powers towards 'little Norway' has caused so much national anger and resentment that it will be difficult for the Government to give way on what it has proclaimed to be an important issue of principle. Clearly there will be much diplomatic activity before the next IWC meeting to be held in Mexico in May 1994.

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