

Save Whales → Not Whaling

Pro-Whaling Nations: The Lengths to Which They Will Go

Ever since the International Whaling Commission's moratorium on whaling went into effect in 1986, the pro-whaling nations of Japan and Norway have been trying to overturn it. In fact, they have shown that they will go to extreme lengths and use dubious methods in pursuit of their deadly goal.

EXPLOITING IWC LOOPHOLES

Both Japan and Norway have found loopholes in the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium that make it possible for them to continue limited whaling operations. One loophole allows a nation to object to the moratorium and then commercially hunt whales and sell the meat domestically. This is exactly what Norway has done, enabling it to hunt minke whales. Norway sells the meat and warehouses the blubber (which Norwegians don't eat) for future sale in case international trade is reopened. Norway also has recently announced its intent to re-open trade.

Japan has been able to continue its so-called scientific whaling program due to another loophole, which allows limited whaling for research purposes. Japan has used this loophole to annually target hundreds of minke whales and sell the meat and blubber domestically. Starting with the 2000 whaling season, Japan added endangered sperm whales and Bryde's whales to the kill as well.

But these loopholes don't appear to be enough for either nation. Their goal is a full-fledged resumption of commercial whaling, so these pro-whaling countries are trying other tactics as well.

CITES AND THE IWC

The IWC moratorium on commercial whaling works in cooperation with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES has put all "great" whale species under its jurisdiction on Appendix I, which prohibits all international trade in their products.

Lately, however, Japan and Norway, unhappy with decisions made at the IWC, have been trying to use CITES to force the IWC to change its policies. They theorize that if they are able to move some species of whales to the less-restrictive CITES Appendix II—thereby allowing trade in whale parts such as meat and blubber—the IWC will be forced to move closer to lifting the ban on commercial whaling. At the April 2000 CITES meeting, Japan and Norway offered proposals to allow a trade in whale parts from specific populations of minke whales and gray whales. Not only does The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) believe that whales should not be hunted, but The HSUS also knows that a legal trade in whale meat will hide an illegal one.

This time, Japan and Norway were not able to pressure enough countries to vote in favor of their proposals, but they showed their willingness to use questionable tactics. In fact, a rumor circulated that Japan had purchased the votes of some developing countries. And during the discussion of one of the proposals, a Czech delegate revealed that a Japanese delegate had advised him that in the case of a secret ballot, it would not be necessary for a delegate to vote according to his government's policies.

PRACTICING CHECKBOOK DIPLOMACY

The CITES meeting is not the only time Japan has been accused of trying to influence votes. Some contend that pro-whaling nations have made it a priority to stack the deck against whale protection by offering foreign aid in exchange for votes.

An April 1997 *Los Angeles Times* article reported that—based on the reporter's survey of Caribbean countries—Japan has pumped more than \$77 million into the Caribbean countries of Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, and Grenada, all of which also attend the IWC. Japan funded elaborate—and sometimes ill-conceived—fisheries projects and other programs. "At the same time, each country consistently voted with Japan and against the [New Zealand, Australian, and U.K.] led, anti-whaling coalition on key issues at the IWC annual meetings," the article stated. ➡

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After the July 2000 IWC meeting, Dominica's Fisheries Minister, Atherton Martin, made headlines around the globe when he resigned in disgust from his government post, denouncing what he declared was "Japan's outright extortion and the use of bribes to win Third World countries' votes for pro-whaling interests." Japan has given the small island of Dominica (with a population of just 77,000 people) more than \$7 million for fisheries facilities since it joined the IWC.

According to Martin, "Japanese officials had visited the Prime Minister and had threatened to withdraw aid for a new fisheries complex if Dominica abstained on the critical sanctuary issue." Martin went on to say that five other islands—Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Antigua, and St. Kitts and Nevis—also have "succumbed to the same extortionary tactics of Japan." As Martin put it, "Frankly they [the Japanese] are relentless, very pushy and aggressive, and I think a lot of our governments cave in."

Norway also is busy spreading cash around. On May 24, 2000, Oslo's *Dagbladet* newspaper reported that Norway's Ministry of Fisheries recently pumped 200,000 NOK (approximately \$22,278 U.S.) into the Brussels-based European Board of Conservation and Development, which has lobbied on behalf of Norwegian whaling for several years. In addition, Norway funneled 100,000 NOK (approximately \$11,139 U.S.) through the High North Alliance, a major whaling advocacy group.

HIDING AN ILLEGAL MARKET IN A LEGAL ONE

If Japan and Norway succeed in buying or influencing enough votes to legalize limited commercial whaling or even a trade in whale parts, they will have an easier time hiding any illegal whaling.

When an item is completely prohibited from trade, it is fairly simple to police the marketplace: Any occurrence of that item is illegal. When there is a limited legal market, however, the situation becomes murkier for authorities. How do they differentiate between legally acquired products and poached or pirated products?

Using DNA "fingerprinting," authorities can test meat samples from the marketplace and ascertain, with a high degree of accuracy, the species of whale from which they came. Randomly sampled meat generically labeled "whale" (or "kujira") in Japanese markets has been proven to be from protected whale species such as humpback, blue, fin, and sperm. If minke whale meat were the only meat the Japanese could legally sell, these results would clearly indicate that someone is illegally killing protected whale species and smuggling the meat into Japan.

However, because of the exceptions allowed by the IWC, there are several other legal sources of whale meat. Meat from whales who were stranded or accidentally drowned in fishing nets, as well as meat that was frozen and stored before the moratorium, can be sold legally, even if it comes from protected species. These exceptions muddy the enforcement waters for trade and domestic authorities. Furthermore, now that the Japanese have expanded their "scientific" whaling program to include sperm whales and Bryde's whales, they can claim that any samples found from these species are the result of the scientific hunt.

The answer is to close all the loopholes, prohibit the commercial hunting of whales, and ban international trade in whale parts.