

**S**aving whales has gained national appeal. More and more people and organizations are calling for a total moratorium on all commercial whaling. In 1974, The HSUS initiated a boycott against nations still killing whales and since then we have continued to press for a moratorium and an end to the slaughter.

Many people have asked me if I believe we are really saving whales. I believe we are, but it hasn't been easy and more importantly, the fight is far from over. In fact, we still don't know how many great whales are left. Yet, year after year several countries continue to divy them up and lower the odds that the species will survive. They are betting that they can make enough profit in the short run to make it worthwhile to stay in the whaling business, which means of course before the whales are finally extinct. We are trying to narrow those odds by making it less and less desirable economically to continue killing whales.

Presently, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) makes most of the life and death decisions about whales. The IWC is a body of sixteen nations which meets annually

Probably the single most important influence helping to turn the tide in favor of whales over the past several years has been the public awareness and support of the boycott. Dr. Robert White, head of the U.S. Delegation to the IWC, has stated many times that these public efforts have made all the difference in forcing tighter controls within the IWC. In 1973 the whale quota was 45,673. In 1976 it was reduced by 40% to 27,939 whales. Granted, in some cases there were simply fewer whales left to catch. But, in other cases, the quotas were reduced with the help of the boycott, coupled with proposed U.S. legislation for an embargo if they didn't.

The Soviet Union and Japan have been the principal countries affected by the boycott because they kill over 80% of the total quota each year. They have been the most recalcitrant. Our allies within the IWC have

## Opinion:

### Are We Saving The Whales?

by Patricia Forkan, HSUS Program Coordinator

to determine how many whales can be "safely harvested" during the next season. Having attended those meetings for three years, as one of only ten observers (no press or public are allowed), there is no doubt in my mind that the whaling countries will continue their efforts to push the whale stocks to the very edge of extinction before admitting they must stop. The Soviets\* and Japanese\* did just this at the IWC meeting this past summer by stonewalling efforts to reduce sperm whale quotas. At the last hour however they were voted down. This may not always happen and if they ever do win, some whale populations could eventually get to such a low point that they might not be able to fully recover.

Fortunately, the efforts of conservation and humane groups have helped slow the slaughter to such an extent that the tide has been turned in favor of saving the great whales. Now, however, we must keep the pressure on to first keep it that way, and second to achieve our final goal of a total end to the killing.



been of invaluable assistance, particularly Mexico, France, New Zealand, and Argentina. The United Kingdom and Canada haven't been as strong as they should be. The most difficult countries within the IWC in terms of consistently supporting whaling and the the Soviets and Japanese have been Denmark\*, Norway\*, Iceland\*, South Africa\*, and Panama. Australia\* and Brazil\* have been middle of the roaders. Even so, representatives from most of the IWC nations admitted to me that the public pressure has helped "convince" them to support lower quotas.

Now the world must consider still another threat to whales. I call them "pirate" whalers. They are mercenary whaling ships from countries which are not members of the IWC,

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and which take any and every whale they can find. At least within the IWC there are limits on numbers, sex, size, and there is no taking of endangered species. That is not the case with whale ships flying under the flags of Peru\*, South Korea\*, Spain\*, Somali\*, Portugal\*, and Chile\*, and Mainland China\*. Although these "pirate" ships may not kill the most whales in terms of sheer quantity, they can cause irreparable harm to endangered species.

Mixed in with these "pirate" ships are some Japanese companies backing them financially and/or buying the whale meat thereby creating a market for their continuation. Obviously the Japanese think nothing of circumventing their responsibilities within the IWC by supporting these ships. There can be no meaningful effort to save whales until these countries are brought within the confines of the IWC's strict quotas and Japan ends its support of them.

In any future "Save the Whales" efforts, therefore, it is imperative that *all* nations still in the whaling business be included. If our objective continues to be a total moratorium on all commercial whaling, we cannot do otherwise. Secondly, we applaud and have testified in favor of recent legislative efforts to pass a bill aimed at a U.S. embargo of products from any countries in the whaling business outside the IWC or any IWC nation selling unwanted whaling ships to non IWC nations. That same bill will be reintroduced in the new Congress, and will pass only if the American public demands it.

I believe we have made progress in reducing quotas, and achieving a limited moratorium on taking of some whales. It is encouraging to learn the Japanese have cut their whaling fleet by one third and their work force in half. The Soviets have also reduced their fleet. For the first time the issue of humaneness was a topic on the IWC agenda and efforts are underway to find better killing methods than the explosive harpoon which is an incredibly cruel and painful weapon. The IWC scientists are taking a harder look at their data and are attempting to make informed judgments about quotas. All of these things are steps, however small, in the right direction.

One way to create more pressure on countries to help achieve the moratorium is to expand the consumer boycott to all whaling nations, not just Japan and the Soviet Union. Another is direct confrontation with the whalers such as recent Greenpeace efforts have

done. Of course, continuing public education and awareness coupled with strong legislation are imperative.

HSUS has taken yet another step by signing a letter sent to Ambassadors from the non-IWC countries, requesting they end commercial whaling operations or, alternatively adhere to IWC quotas and regulations. Now these countries are on notice. If they refuse to take these conservation measures, stronger sanctions will have to be considered.

To me an end to all whaling has importance beyond the question of giving the whales enough time to increase in numbers. It is like one HSUS board member remarked "there might be a 30 ton Aristotle floating around out there." How indefensible it is for man to destroy the only species known on earth which might have intelligence comparable to our own. Or, as Dr. John Lilly suggested to me, "the sperm whale is even brighter than us." This idea may be pretty hard to take at first, but when faced with mounting evidence to that effect, let's at least save them and find out.

\*A Whaling Nation

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*The HSUS will send you a booklet without obligation on how to make the best use of your animal welfare bequest. It contains information on selecting recipients and describes how to proceed when you decide to write or change your Will.*

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General Counsel, The Humane Society of the  
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