

ISLANDS TO ICE

THE GREAT SOUTHERN OCEAN & ANTARCTICA

Whaling archive sheet

Tuesday, January 10, 2006

THE MERCURY 7

Whale fight turns into war of words

Crew relives crunch horror

By SUE NEALES
Chief Reporter

THE icy war over whaling in the Southern Ocean between environmentalists and the Japanese has turned into a bitter propaganda battle following a collision between the protagonists' ships.

Yesterday the Japanese Institute for Cetacean Research, which operates the six Japanese whaling ships now near the Antarctic under the auspices of whale research, claimed its factory ship had been deliberately rammed by Greenpeace.

On its website www.icrwhale.org the ICR claims the bow of the Greenpeace ship, the Arctic Sunrise, hit the side of its main whaling research vessel, the Nisshin Maru, twice at its weakest point on Sunday.

"Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd (the second environmental group which has an anti-whaling ship in the Antarctic) should stop at once their dangerous and criminal actions," institute director general Dr Hiroshi Hatanaka said.

"We believe they deliberately rammed our vessel to prevent it transferring cargo."

The ICR website includes a photograph taken by a crew member which it claims backs up the assertion that Greenpeace rammed it squarely midships.

But Shane Rattenbury, Greenpeace's expedition leader who was on the bridge of the Arctic Sunrise at the time, has an alternative version of events.

He says the Japanese vessel, which is the ship where dead whales harpooned by three smaller Japanese catcher boats are dissected, turned a full circle to collide with the bow of Greenpeace's Arctic Sunrise.

Mr Rattenbury claims that the Arctic Sunrise's captain, Arne Sorensen, had the ship in full reverse at the time it was rammed by the Nisshin Maru.

"We have no interest in a collision at sea," Mr Rattenbury said, pointing out that the Japanese ship was five times heavier than the Arctic Sunrise.

"We are in the middle of nowhere; it would be a suicide mission for us to try to ram them. Aside from all that, ramming a vessel is outside of our ethic of peaceful activism."

Mr Rattenbury does not dispute that just before the collision, Greenpeace activists had been painting the side of a supply ship being loaded with whale-meat bound for Japan with the words "Whale meat from sanctuary".

But Dr Hatanaka said the captain of the Nisshin Maru feared that the small Green-



EVIDENCE: The Greenpeace ship closes on the Nisshin Maru in this Japanese Institute for Cetacean Research photo.



INCIDENT: A Japanese-released photo, left, allegedly showing the impact and, right, the damage to the Arctic Sunrise.

GREENPEACE expedition leader Shane Rattenbury believes Japanese whalers deliberately rammed the activists' vessel, Arctic Sunrise. This is his account of the incident.

"THINGS took a turn towards the unexpected this morning [Sunday]. The [Japanese] factory ship, the Nisshin Maru, rammed our ship, the Arctic Sunrise, in an incident none of us were expecting.

"I was on the bridge of the Sunrise at the time of the collision."

"It all happened very quickly. One minute the Nisshin Maru was tied up with [another] vessel, offloading whale meat. The next it was heading straight for us."

"I was on the phone when suddenly Arne [Sorensen, the captain] said, 'They are coming straight at us'."

"I looked around and saw the Nisshin Maru bearing down. It was very surreal. Their ship is so large compared to ours."

"Then it looked like we were going to miss. I went back to the phone interview I was doing, only to be distracted again by Arne sounding the ship's horn."

"The next part was like it was in slow motion, the Nisshin Maru coming towards us, their crew hanging over the rails watching, until suddenly there was a loud bang, and our little ship shook."

"Then a second bang as their stern swung around and caught us again. And then the strangest part - as their stern slid past... a man was standing at one of their water cannons and as he passed by he turned the water cannon straight at us, pouring water at the bridge of our ship."

"So was it deliberate? I have no doubt. The Nisshin Maru turned a big circle to come around to where we were."

"The whalers are now claiming we rammed them but think about this. Our vessel is 49m long. The Nisshin Maru is 129m. Our vessel weighs approximately 1500 tonnes, theirs 7800."

"And the worst part of all of this? I believe it was a deliberate attempt to create an incident and draw attention away from the terrible images we have seen in the last days of whales suffering cruel and slow deaths."

"For the whalers it is much better to be talking in shades of grey about who crashed in to who, our word versus theirs, than talking about the black and white reality of just how unjustified, unsustainable and inhumane their business is."

The Mercury Monday January 9, 2006



CRUSHED BOW: Activists survey the damage to the Greenpeace ship Arctic Sunrise after a collision with the whaling vessel Nisshin Maru.

Whaling protest high seas smash

THE whaling war in the Southern Ocean erupted yesterday when a Greenpeace ship and Japanese whaling vessel collided. Each side later accused the other of ramming its vessel. Crew on the Greenpeace boat

Arctic Sunrise said they feared for their lives when struck by the Japanese ship as they painted a slogan on another whaling ship in the same fleet. The Greenpeace crew had been



FOES: The Arctic Sunrise, left, and the Nisshin Maru before the incident.

City keeps Japanese ties

HOBART City Council has backed down from a plan to cut ties with its Japanese sister city Yairu because of outrage over whaling.

However, the council did write to the Japanese port city and express its concern about continued whaling.

The controversy was reignited last month in Tasmania when a Japanese whaling ship was destined for Hobart with a sick crew member.

But a political storm and planned protests saw the man airlifted from the ship well off the coast.

Alderman John Freeman said he put up a motion last year to discuss the Japa-



FRIENDS: Alderman John Freeman says Hobart will retain its sister city relationship.

In the letter the council reiterated the concerns of Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell, a staunch opponent of whaling.

"We told them we find whaling abhorrent and the attitude of the Japanese Government difficult to understand," Ald Freeman said.

"But we didn't want to go as far as breaking the relationship."

Hobart's link with Yairu was formalised in 1977 by former Lord Mayor Doug Plaister, in the days when the large Japanese tuna fleet would regularly visit local waters and stop over in Hobart.

Monday, January 23, 2006

THE MERCURY 3

Japan harpooning useless data, say scientists

One whale of a lie

By ALISON REHN

THE scientific data Japan says it is collecting from harpooned whales is useless, News Limited has learnt.

An email to News Limited from Japan's whaling research institute says Japan must slaughter whales to obtain certain types of data, which it hopes will underpin a resumption of commercial whaling.

Dan Goodman of the Institute of Cetacean Research in Tokyo also said Australia and other anti-whaling nations should "strongly support"



DEAD IN THE WATER: Nick Gales says approach wrong. Japan's commitment to scientific research.

But whale expert Nick Gales, of the Australian Antarctic Division in Hobart, said the information Japan was collecting from dead whales was useless.

"We don't need that type of science data to manage whale stocks," Dr Gales said.

Japan announced at last year's meeting of the International Whaling Commission it would double its slaughter of minke whales this summer to 935 and target 10 endangered fin whales.

In 2007-08, Japan intends to take 935 minke, 50 fin whales and 50 humpbacks.

Mr Goodman said Japan had to kill the whales because certain kinds of data - including how old populations were, how old whales were when they reached sexual maturity, how long whales

lived and what they ate - could not be obtained using non-lethal methods.

But Dr Gales, who is also head of Australia's delegation to the IWC scientific committee, said years of research should have taught the Japanese that minke ate krill.

Other information they collected was no longer used to monitor whale populations because it was unreliable.

"They're asking for support on the basis of their scientific rationale... but it's hugely disputed in all parts of the world," Dr Gales said. "They're asking for support for science that has no support."

Southern Cross University Whale Research Centre director Peter Harrison said Japan should have enough data to last a lifetime.

Prof Harrison said Japan's previous research had either been a "massive failure" or an attempt to find excuses to kill whales for meat, which was becoming more urgent because the world's tuna fisheries were near exhaustion.

"We know they are doing commercial-scale whaling as part of a bigger political and economic scenario and they... are going to continue to find excuses to kill whales," he said.

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THE GREAT SOUTHERN OCEAN & ANTARCTICA

The Mercury Jan 23, 2006

Cancel activists' tax freedom

CRIMES are being committed in the Southern Ocean by the idiot activists from Greenpeace and the creeps from the hardline enviro-Nazi Sea Shepherd group.

It is obvious from the video footage available on the internet that members of those organisations are trying to interfere with and endanger the ships in the Japanese whaling fleet.

No matter what your thoughts about whaling are, it is a legal activity and no less an authority than New Zealand's commissioner on the International Whaling Commission, the former prime minister Geoffrey Palmer, has said there is no legal reason why the Japanese should be prevented from doing what they are doing.

If the activists want to make a case against a nation hunting and gathering what it claims is a traditional food source, they could look to Canada, the Pacific north coast of America and the activities of some Scandinavian nations which also proclaim whaling as a traditional pastime.

They could even stay closer to home and make a fuss about those Aboriginal Australians who say they are engaging in traditional activities when they chase endangered dugong in boats equipped with their traditional high-speed outboards and shoot them with traditional high-powered rifles — or those claiming traditional rights to fish for abalone using traditional goggles and traditional snorkels.

It is easier, though, for a multinational corporation such as Greenpeace to suckle sentimental media types into believing that anthropomorphised whales are cosmically superior creatures and in greater need of protection.



COLD WAR: One of the clashes between whalers and environmentalists.

Unfortunately, Greenpeace's protection rackets are notoriously prone to getting it massively wrong. Like the Big Lie it proclaimed in Victoria, where it scandalously forced a compliant Labor government to shut down the fertiliser company NuFarm after making false and damaging claims about its waste disposal systems; the episode, including the investigation which cleared NuFarm, cost Victorian taxpayers about \$6 million and hundreds of jobs.

Or its scandalous campaign against the Shell oil company which saw Greenpeace's eco-terrorists misuse measurements from an obsolete oil buoy, forcing Shell to take the Brent Spar to a scenic Norwegian fjord, rather than dump it safely at the bottom of an ocean trench.

Interfering with shipping on the high seas, as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd personnel are doing, falls into a completely different category however. These morons are risking the lives of everyone concerned —

and their supporters, such as Greens senator Bob Brown, a sharper message by removing Greenpeace's tax exempt status.

After all, it lost its Canadian charitable status in 1989 because it was found to be not providing a discernible benefit to the public and there's no reason why Australian taxpayers should be supporting the multinational publicity machine.

Those who feel outraged by the whaling activities of the Japanese would be on considerably firmer ground if they challenged that nation over its rapping of the truly threatened resources of southern bluefin tuna. Not as cuddly as blow-up whales which croon along with aged folksingers, perhaps, but probably closer to extinction, southern bluefin tuna stocks are rapidly approaching the point of collapse.

The international quota agreed by Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines stands at 14,930 tonnes — but by most authoritative counts about 40,000 tonnes was marketed last year in Japan, the over-catch coming from Japanese and Taiwanese long-liners.

Greenpeace's last stunt at Lucas Heights (the Sydney reactor) endangered the flow of radio isotopes used in nuclear medicine to treat many patients around the country, causing a great degree of anxiety to the sick and their families. These short-sighted clowns also hampered the production of nuclear materials used in pollution detecting devices and smoke detectors.

The no-hopers playing chicken with their lives in the Southern Ocean need to be pulled up short. Cutting their access to tax-free funds, obtained by tugging on the heartstrings of the gullible, would be a sure-fire way of gaining their limited attention.

Sydney University professor of international law Don Rothwell believes the Australian Government may have an obligation to arrest and prosecute the protesters should they or their vessels enter an Australian port.

"Some of the protesters' actions could be construed to be in breach of SUA [the UN Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts], dealing with terrorism on the high seas, which came into being after the attack on the *Achille Lauro* in the Mediterranean in October, 1985," Professor Rothwell told me.

The attack on the *Achille Lauro* was one of the more horrific assaults carried out by Palestinian terrorists and an American citizen confined to a wheelchair was murdered during the atrocity.

It is up to the Japanese owners to sue for civil claims against the protesters for damage caused to their vessels by deliberate ramming by the protest ships.

The Australian Government could easily send these eco-freaks

HOT TOPIC

The Mercury, Friday 27th January 2006

GREENPEACE

Piers Akerman attacks Greenpeace for protesting against the Japanese killing whales in the Southern Ocean in his column on January 23, accusing it of hypocrisy for not protesting against the actions of other nations such as Canada, America and some Scandinavian countries.

It would seem that he has missed the major campaigns that Greenpeace has run against Norwegian and Icelandic whalers and that he fails to see the difference between commercial and subsistence whaling.

It is absurd to compare the small amount of whales taken by indigenous groups to the huge numbers of whales taken each year by commercial whaling.

An interesting side note to this story would have been the fact that Japan voted to remove the catch quota given to Alaskan tribes in 2002.

It would seem that Mr Akerman's main gripe with Greenpeace's actions is the organisation's use of direct action against the whalers.

It is common knowledge that the Japanese have been buying votes within the International Whaling Commission, offering countries "fishing aid" in return for pro-whaling votes.

I wonder what actions Mr Akerman would suggest Greenpeace take in a climate where democracy is not being allowed to function?

Peter Cooper
Auckland, New Zealand

I express my concern at *The Mercury* for wasting half a page of



perfectly good paper on the rantings of Piers Akerman in Monday's Commentary column.

Mr Akerman, who wants to listen to your negative, apathetic, goody-two-shoes attitude? Surely society has its fair share of arm-chair critics who have nothing better to do than bring down anyone out there trying to have a positive impact on our planet and all its creatures.

Resorting to utterly childish and petty name-calling only serves to highlight your ignorance. These people you refer to as "idiots", "creeps", "enviro-Nazis" and "morons" et cetera are actually good citizens of this earth who have the passion and drive to get out among the real pirates, being the Japanese whalers.

They willingly put their lives on the line each day for the benefit of generations to come, while we all know this useless Government will

do nothing but sit idly by and watch this terrible slaughter.

Of course there is an abundance of other causes and issues that require urgent attention around the planet. And maybe they're not all as prioritised as you would prefer. But at least Greenpeace is not criticising and doing absolutely nothing, like you!

Jim Richards
Carlton Beach

In the article, "Cancel activists' tax freedom" by Piers Akerman (January 23), Sydney University professor of international law Don Rothwell believes the Australian Government may have an obligation to arrest and prosecute the protesters should they or their vessels enter an Australian port.

Piers Akerman also claims that he was told by Prof Rothwell some of the protesters' actions could be construed to be in breach of SUA (the UN Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts), dealing with terrorism on the high seas. Surely if this was the case both Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace would have been arrested in the Southern Ocean and charged with the offence.

Captain Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd vessel *Farley Mowat* has placed on the public record that if he or his crew are guilty of any crime then they would be willing to defend that action in any court if

they were charged. Sorry, I forgot the Australian Government does not want to send its navy into the Southern Ocean to arrest Sea Shepherd or Greenpeace or to stop the slaughter of innocent whales.

Craig Stringer
Chigwell

With regard to Mr Akerman's statement on Monday (Commentary, January 23) that there was no legal reason why the Japanese should be prevented from doing what they are doing, there used to be no legal reason for the authorities to stop people from dumping radioactive waste into the oceans.

It's thanks to "idiot activists" that this is no longer the case.

Jonathan Marcos
Marrickville, NSW