

# Ban on whaling may be futile

By Anne Martell, the 4th Estate

*A cemetery of whales:  
in a snowy graveyard  
instead of crosses  
their own bones stand.  
They couldn't be gnawed by  
teeth;  
teeth are too soft.  
They couldn't be used for soup:  
pots are too shallow.  
The straining wind bends them,  
but they keep their position,  
rooted in ice,  
arching like rainbows . . .  
Who playfully clicked a camera?  
Restrain your photophilia.  
Let's leave the whales in peace,  
if only after death.*

—Yevtushenko

In the 1600's more than 4½ million whales peacefully roamed the ocean's vastness. In 1930 the number had been reduced to 1½ million. By the end of 1972 it had been reduced to less than 350,000.

What has been responsible for this decimation? What else but man—and his insatiable urge to exploit the world of her riches.

Oil, obtained from the whales' blubber and from spermaceti in their foreheads, lit the lamps of eighteenth century Europe, while the baleen plates—whale bones on either side of the whales' upper jaws—made possible the pinched waist of the nineteenth century.

Whale meat found an additional use in the twentieth century, as its high protein content provided mink and fox furs with the deep gloss the fur industry demands. Whale oil came to be used as a basic ingredient in women's cosmetics—as well as lubricating the machines created by twentieth century technology.

But the whales, the great lords of the ocean and possibly man's superior in intelligence, had no use for technology in their evolution and were therefore helpless in the face of man's terrible onslaught.

*Thar she blows!  
Come on, lads, let's get 'em!  
Where can we hide?  
But you're broader than space!  
The world doesn't hold enough  
water  
for you to dive under.  
You think you're God?  
A risky bit of impudence.  
One harpoon, smack in the  
flank,  
rewards enormity.*

—Yevtushenko

And so they died—by the millions. They were confronted with a cannon which fires a harpoon attached to a line into their body. Once inside, a bomb explodes which spreads the harpoon's barbs apart to ensure the whale will not escape. And they were confronted with a second harpoon which fills them with compressed air to prevent them from sinking. And finally they were confronted with the modern factory ship which permits the whaler to process his catch on board, so as to cut down dependency on shore stations, and thereby allows a greater time at the hunt.

lifted and whaling resumed.

But the chances that the whale population will reach healthy levels in one or two decades are slight indeed—considering the average gestation period of a whale is one year, and that once born, the baby whale nurses for an additional six months, and in some species up to two years. Add to this the fact Norway, Japan and Russia are continuing to take 39,000 whales from the oceans annually and the chances turn into an impossibility.

Canadian waters have been the scene of whaling for many years. The Basques used Cape Breton and Newfoundland as bases for

man halted his oceanic hunt to wage war on his own kind. But as Mowat points out in his "Whale for the Killing", the war also took its share of whales—for many thousands undoubtedly perished by anti-submarine torpedoes through cases of mistaken identity.

The Norwegians re-established commercial whaling off the East Coast in 1945 and operated from bases in Williamsport and Hawkes Harbour, Newfoundland, until the collapse of the whale stock six years later.

Nor were the remaining whales to be left in peace. For once the Norwegians departed, the whales

Thus in A  
Karlsen Com  
with the pro  
began whali  
experimental  
experiment  
profitable,  
plant expa  
whaling on

At the san  
of Canadian  
Smallwood,  
re-emergenc  
Newfoundla  
ing an isla  
industry, Sn  
the killing  
toothed wha  
more than  
had been sh

The sec  
Newfoundla  
with Smallw  
subsidies  
stationed in  
acceptance  
in the r  
Williamsport  
apanese, a  
the Dildo p  
of Japane  
interests.

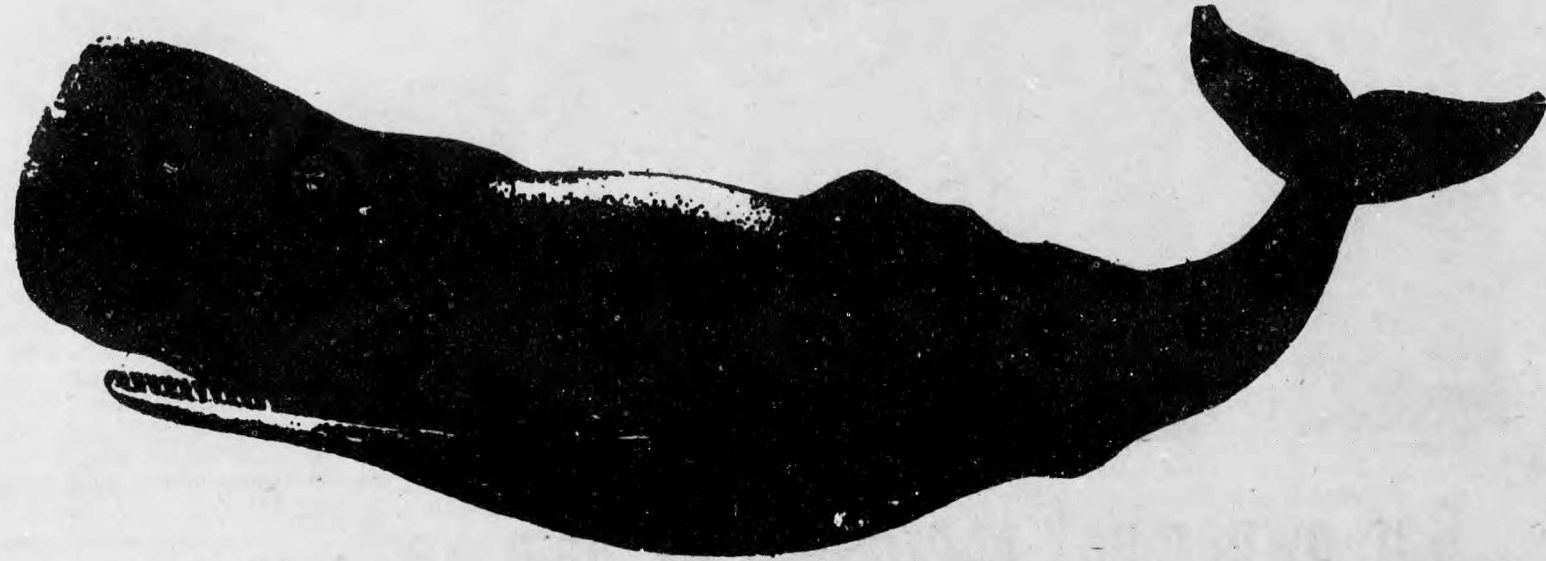
The num  
these thre  
1964-71 sp  
Blandford  
Fins, 654 S  
number of  
backs—whil  
land plants  
2,114 Fins  
hundred Se

The sig  
figures bec  
they are  
numbers of  
world's oce  
3,000 Fins  
Atlantic, a  
1972 quo  
subtracted  
ocean-wide  
are estimat  
60,000.

When  
announced  
quoted i  
newspape  
governme  
came as a

He said  
catch limi  
70 Sei wh  
should be  
whales.

"I advi  
these que  
company  
economic  
were ve  
scientists  
research i  
to set an  
surate wit



Canada's decision to ban whaling on her East Coast because of declining whale stocks comes as a much needed respite to the seriously threatened mammals and as a relief to the scientists, concerned citizens and Farley Mowats of this world.

On December 21, 1972, Canada's environment minister, Jack Davis, announced the termination of East Coast whaling—an action which spells closure for three Canadian whaling plants. One is at Blandford, Nova Scotia and the remaining two are at Dildo and Williamsport, Newfoundland. The former employs about 100 men while the latter each employ 50 for the season, which runs from mid-May to the end of November.

In a telephone interview, John Mullally, assistant to the minister, said compensation would be forthcoming to both employers and employees, and alternate employment would be provided if possible. But no plans are available at the present time.

Mr. Mullally was non-committal about the length of the ban.

"Of course it will be longer than five years . . . probably more in the vicinity of 10 or 15 or 20."

He spoke in terms of the whales reaching sustainable yields, at which time the ban might be

their operations throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as did the British and French. The waters then fell to the flourishing Nantucket industry of the eighteenth century.

In the late 1700's, as a result of the American revolution, a whaling community made a brief appearance at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, composed of American whalers attempting to export their catch into Britain under her colonial preferential rates. But because Britain's policy discouraged colonial whaling, (for it detracted from her own) the venture was short-lived and eventually was transferred to the shores of Wales.

During the 1800's the waters off Canada's eastern coast were scoured by hundreds of whalers from all over the world. The result was the near extinction of the Blues, Rights, Fins, Sperm and Humpbacks. But the whalers were not easily discouraged and they turned to the waters of the Antarctic in search of a fresh supply.

Whaling was revived temporarily in Canadian waters during the 1920's but because of a slow replenishment of stock, it collapsed once more in 1930. The advent of the second world war gave the whales a brief respite, as

around the US Navy base at Argentia became targets for the Navy's anti-submarine training program. The number of whales which lost their lives "in the name of democracy" is beyond conjecture.

The whales' return to Nova Scotian waters in 1960 was noted eagerly by the Karl Karlsen Company, a sealing, scalloping and fishing operation established at Blandford by Mr. Karlsen, a Norwegian immigrant, in the late 1940's.

"We didn't make any special studies to find out about the quantity of whales in N.S. waters," Mr. Karlsen stated in 1962. "Our ships knew there were some from sighting them on trips around the eastern seacoast."

And the Nova Scotia government, in constant readiness to welcome new industries—regardless of their outcome—welcomed the possibilities of whaling, with open arms.

"Other nations are getting out of whaling," said one Nova Scotia fisheries official, "but we think it has tremendous possibilities in Nova Scotia." Besides being a lucrative source for oil for industrial purposes, the provincial government saw in whales a potential market for pet, poultry and mink feed, as well as in human consumption.