

“There she blows!”  
Japan Should Stop Whaling

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February 8, 2009

*This paper argues that Japan should stop catching whales. Whale products play no part in modern lifestyles, and whaling is a money-losing venture. Moreover, the trend internationally is toward conservation, not commercial exploitation of wild animals. Finally, Japanese scientific whaling is a sham whose only purpose is to provide meat, not preserve a traditional type of whaling. For these reasons, Japan should cease catching whales.*

“There she blows! —there she blows! A hump like a snow-hill! It is Moby Dick!” (Melville, 1851/1992, p. 446). Such were the words of the lookout in Melville’s *Moby Dick* when, at last, the maniacally obsessed Captain Ahab was able to see and then confront his nemesis, the great white whale. In that day and age, the business of catching whales was crucial, and it provided seemingly permanent elements of cultures that hunted whales. These elements, however, belong to history, and for the reasons outlined below, we should end the practice of catching whales.

First, whales are not necessary for human lifestyle now. Long ago whales were important when they provided many basic lifestyle things. Whale oil, for example, provided light when burned in lamps in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Whale meat sustained coastal communities in many parts of the world, and it continues to do so even now in Inuit communities in the Arctic (Huntington, 1992). The baleen provided accessories for women. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there are alternatives: electricity lights our houses, and other sources of protein are readily available. Moreover, plastic in its countless shapes has adorned millions of fashion-conscious people. Because such alternatives are readily available, they should be used rather than catching whales.

Second, whaling is expensive. According to Greenpeace, the annual cost of catching whales for research is six billion yen (Whaling is bad business, n.d.), yet sales of meat can only cover about 80% of that cost. The Japanese government readily admits that whaling does not produce profits, for it is a “non-profit scientific endeavor” (Position, n.d.). The whaling industry must therefore rely on annual government subsidies of one billion yen to continue. In any time a business model that does not produce profits is a poor idea, and especially in the current economic situation, it is a very unnecessary, wasteful program.

Third, nearly all countries in the world do not practice whaling—of the 192 members of the United Nations, only *three* continue whaling on a large scale: Iceland, Japan, and Norway. Several other countries also allow limited whaling by native peoples; the Inuit in the United States, Canada, Greenland, and Russia represent one example. However, the total number of

whales killed by Inuit totals just dozens, not hundreds or thousands. As one member of the world community, the second largest economy in the world, and a country that aspires to provide leadership in the world, Japan should lead trends in the world, not resist.

Moreover, whaling in Japan occurs under false pretenses. Data for whale research could in fact be collected by such non-lethal means as taking samples called biopsies rather than killing whales to obtain those data (“Catching whales,” n.d.). Furthermore, the data collected by killing whales has used very little and produced research results of questionable quality (Clapham et al, 2003). In fact, many groups insist that Japanese whaling is just an excuse to provide whale meat to consumers (Japanese scientific whaling, 2005), and Japan certainly doesn't need to catch hundreds of whales to do its so-called research.

A common reason given in support of whaling is that whaling is an important part of Japanese culture (Koizumi, 2003). While this may be true, whaling was traditionally done near Japan (Human relationships with whales, n.d.). Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century pelagic (“open-ocean”) whaling emerged as Japan acquired the expertise and technology to catch whales thousands of miles away in the waters of the Antarctic Ocean (Small-type coastal whaling, n.d.). If preserving local culture is important, it should be preserved in its original state by whaling close to Japan, not by plundering oceans thousands of kilometers away.

Whaling should be stopped. There are alternative sources for all that whales provide, and catching whales is a huge financial loss for the Japanese government and us, the taxpayers. Whaling is not widely supported—quite the contrary, as a huge majority of nations condemn whaling and do not practice it. Moreover, so-called whaling for science has produced few scientific results and is actually just an industry providing whale meat for sale. If Japan’s traditional whaling culture in Japan should be preserved, that should be done in its original form, not as a modern industry harvesting whales in distant oceans. For these reasons, whaling should be stopped so we can always hear, “There she blows!”

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