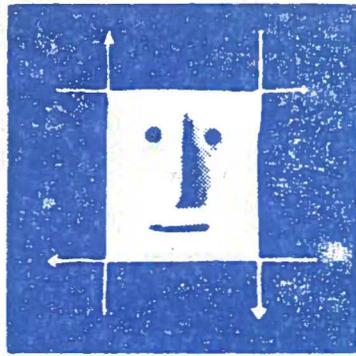


**Arctic:
a protection zone for the
whales**

IWC 1996 Aberdeen
Robin des Bois



ROBIN DES BOIS

1996 Update

Two years ago when the Antarctic whale sanctuary was adopted at the IWC46 in Puerto Vallarta, Robin des Bois launched the idea of a sanctuary in the Arctic. At the 47th meeting last year in Dublin, armed with the support and interest of several parties to the IWC, the foundations of this project were developed upon when the enclosed dossier was presented to the Commission. Many delegations and NGOs warmed to the idea and France, with Finland, Mexico, India, the Netherlands, Monaco and Oman, put forward a draft resolution on research on whales in the Arctic region (*Res. IWC47/51 rev.1* - find enclosed). This, in general, provoked support from several parties and the Chairman proposed that it be "*kept alive*" until the IWC48 where it will appear as a separate sub-item of the item dealing with environmental concerns on the agenda of the Scientific Committee. This, however, seems to have fallen on deaf ears since according to the Scientific Committee "*there has been no specific, organized activity during the inter-sessional period by the IWC Scientific Committee on effects of pollutants on Arctic whales...*"

Since the IWC47 pressure has intensified throughout the circumpolar Arctic with, for example, the discovery of new gold and nickel deposits and oil and gas fields - with prospects for possible exploitation in the near future (see press cuttings enclosed). Moreover, new information has been published on the dumping of radioactive waste, the accumulation of POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants), the development of Arctic transshipping routes and tourism activities and on the increasing worry of whale strandings in seas adjacent to the Arctic.

Likewise, international concern and cooperation in the Arctic is also increasing. The **Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS)** - an agreement signed in Rovaniemi in June 1991 which encompasses all eight Arctic countries - is at present the most relevant international process for matters concerning the Arctic environment. This comprises various working groups including **AMAP (Arctic Monitoring & Assessment Programme)**, **PAME (Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment)** and **CAFF (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna)**. The 3rd Ministerial Conference on the Protection of the Arctic environment took place in **March 1996 in Inuvik, Canada**, and several "new concerns" became evident: the AMAP report noted "*increased concerns relating to the actual and potential effects of oil pollution*" and "*abnormalities in some invertebrate species which may be attributable to organotin substances, such as found in anti-fouling paint*" while the CAFF report noted the consequential increased vulnerability among Arctic fauna: "*in 1995, 39 species and sub-species of birds and mammals were identified as rare, vulnerable or endangered by at least two Arctic countries*". Among others, countries most consistently identified "*marine mammals (ie several whale species)*" and that "[the] trend is disturbing and increased circumpolar co-operation is required to arrest and reverse it."

Moreover, Ministers noted the increasing body of information collected by AMAP regarding the need for international action to deal with POPs and heavy metals, especially concerning levels of toxaphene, chlordane, PCBs and mercury in certain Arctic biota. These substances pose a threat to the health of

Arctic ecosystems - especially to whales, being near the top of the food web. As for radioactivity, Ministers stressed the need for countries to make source information related to nuclear power stations and other nuclear facilities available for circumpolar modelling and assessment. The 1996 PAME report noted that *"issues of concern in the Arctic are: the past dumping of radioactive wastes; the possible future dumping of liquid radioactive wastes; the potential for future dumping of contaminated dredged materials for increased shipping activities; and the possibility of future dumping associated with the potential growth of Arctic towns and cities."*

Aswell as the AEPS, other bodies are becoming more and more interested in the Arctic, for example the **Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority** held the Second International Conference on Environmental Radioactivity in the Arctic in August 1995 and the **Wadati Conference on Global Change and the Polar Climate** took place in November 1995. The effects of global warming are expected to be more dramatic in the Arctic than in lower latitudes and may have significant impacts on sea ice, river runoff and permafrost. Concern for possible effects on natural ecosystems as a result of these changes in UV radiation needs further investigation.

Robin des Bois, also, has been intensifying its research and now has the support of several eminent scientists* who are specialists in Arctic issues, many of whom live in the circumpolar Arctic region. Scientific coordination between the IWC and the relevant working groups of the AEPS would be fruitful for all parties concerned.

Robin des Bois urges you to draw your attention to the unique and fragile ecosystem of the Arctic and to the present and future consequences this has on the nine species of whales which are still present there. Aswell as being heavily influenced and threatened by factors occurring outside the region, Arctic sensitivity is broadly characterised by 1) Limited sunlight 2) Ice cover which inhibits energy penetration 3) Low mean and extreme temperatures 4) Low species diversity and biological productivity and 5) Long-lived organisms with high lipid levels. It is therefore vital that the whales receive additional protection. CAFF is presently progressing towards the development of a Circumpolar Protected Area Network (CPAN) dealing with marine, terrestrial and coastal areas; the IWC must lead the renewed circumpolar concern for this region and seriously consider the need for either a circumpolar protection zone for whales or a scheme of SPAs (Special Protected Areas).

*Scientists who helped us in our research in the past year include Professor Marvin S. Soroos (North Carolina State University); Professor Kenneth A. Rahn (The University of Rhode Island); Professor Glen Shaw (University of Alaska Fairbanks); Mr. William T. Sturges (University of East Anglia); Professor Vera Alexander (University of Alaska Fairbanks); Mr. Odd Rogne (International Arctic Science Committee, Norway); Mr. Alex Oude Elferink (NILOS, The Netherlands); Dr. C. Amiard-Triquet (University of Nantes, France) and Professor G.G. Matishov (Murmansk Marine Biological Institute, Russia) who suggests the creation of a protected zone for cetaceans around Victoria Island and Spitzbergen - *"this nature reserve will protect places of concentration and migration ways of Greenland whales and narwhal...our Institute is completely solid with the "Arctic" resolution of Robin des Bois at the IWC47 session in Dublin"*

Arctic pollution 'exceeds fears'

By Anthony Robinson
in London

Environmental pollution in the Arctic ocean as a result of Russian nuclear accidents, the dumping of nuclear submarines and continuous oil and heavy metal pollution could lead to an environmental disaster on the scale of the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown.

This warning came yesterday from Professor Alexei Yablokov, head of Russia's interagency commission on ecological security, who was addressing the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London.

"Every day, a report lands on my desk detailing fresh ecological disasters from Chechnya to Siberia and the 14 per cent of the country which can be counted as ecological disaster zones," he said.

"The situation is far worse than most people are aware of. Nuclear submarines have either been sunk in shallow water, or simply moored and abandoned. Hundreds of spent nuclear fuel rods are stored in the open with only strands of barbed wire to protect them. Nuclear pollution from unreported disasters in the Urals region alone is twice as bad as the fall-out from Chernobyl," he warned. "As a result of the mounting ecological problems,

child mortality and genetic defects are rising while average life expectancy falls. Yet it is a constant battle with an indifferent government to get resources for ecological purposes," Russia's leading ecological defender said.

Earlier this month the World Bank announced it had completed negotiations with the Russian government for a \$99m emergency loan to help clean up a 200,000-ton oil spill from a pipeline in the Komi republic, which threatens to pollute the Kolva, Usa and Pechora rivers that flow into the Barents sea. The spill was described by the World Bank as "one of the world's largest".

But for Prof Yablokov the Komi spill "was nothing on the Russian scale of disasters. Every year we lose between 3m-5m tons of oil a year from leaking pipelines. All the industry cares about is how much oil comes out of the end of the pipeline, not how much gets spilt."

One bright spot in a dark picture of environmental deterioration is an improvement in air quality thanks to a dramatic fall in output and hence emissions from Russia's heavily polluting arms and related heavy engineering plants. However, this has been partially counter-balanced by a sharp rise in car emissions.

Financial Times 20/4/95

Du gaz au Groenland

Un très important gisement de gaz a été découvert en mer à 150 km à l'ouest de Nuuk, capitale du Groenland, par la compagnie pétrolière danoise Nunaoil. Il s'agit du site le plus prometteur jamais découvert au Groenland -territoire autonome du Danemark- dans une mer presque libre de glaces, relativement facile d'accès.

Paris-Normandie 5/7/95

(Large gas field discovered 150km north of Nuuk)

Jaws removed from beached whales

Three dead sperm whales nearly 12 metres long were found beached near Raufarhöfn, northeast Iceland, on the evening of June 17, by the owner of a farm 4km south of there.

News travels, as they say, and soon people began calling the farmer, asking whether they could take teeth from the carcasses. When the farmer exam-

ined the whales more closely he discovered that the jaws had been removed from two of them, the third whale being difficult to reach.

The farmer notified police of the jaws' disappearance. They were returned two days later without the authorities' involvement. At press time it was not clear whether charges would be pressed.

News From Iceland 7/7/95

Importante découverte aurifère en Suède

La société minière suédoise Boliden, filiale du groupe suédois Trelleborg, a annoncé avoir découvert un important gisement aurifère dans le nord du pays, dont l'exploitation pourrait démarrer prochainement. Des opérations de prospection réalisées à Aakulla Cestra (nord de la Suède, près du cercle polaire arctique) ont permis de localiser des réserves prouvées « estimées à au moins 8 tonnes d'or », a déclaré le président de Trelleborg, Kjell Nilsson, au quotidien suédois « Svenska Dagbladet ». « Cette découverte aurifère pourrait être la plus importante depuis soixante-dix ans », a souligné Kjell Nilsson.

Les Echos 22/2/96

(Large gold reserve discovered in northern Sweden)

KENAI (American)

London, Jan 31 — A tanker that nearly grounded in Prince William Sound's Valdez Narrows earlier this winter is undergoing a series of inspections by authorities, according to the US Coast Guard. M tanker *Kenai* (60,384 gt, built 1979) was discovered to have some mechanical defects during her regular annual inspection at a previous port call, said Lieutenant Joe McGuinness of the USCG. The vessel, owned by Keystone Shipping, is chartered by British Petroleum. She travels to Valdez about twice a month. "We found problems with the steering system and problems with the inert gas system, which have subsequently been repaired," said Mr McGuinness. The *Kenai* is now considered safe, but USCG officials want to continue checks, he added. The vessel came close to grounding in the Narrows on Nov 10, just after departing with a full load of crude oil. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is to investigate the incident.

Sperm whales follow leader to death on beach

Coastguards were last night mounting a security vigil on six sperm whales which died after becoming stranded on a North Sea beach.

Hoads of onlookers flocked to Cruden Bay beach, north of Aberdeen, after the 25ft-long mammals were discovered yesterday, but they were kept away from the site by a police cordon.

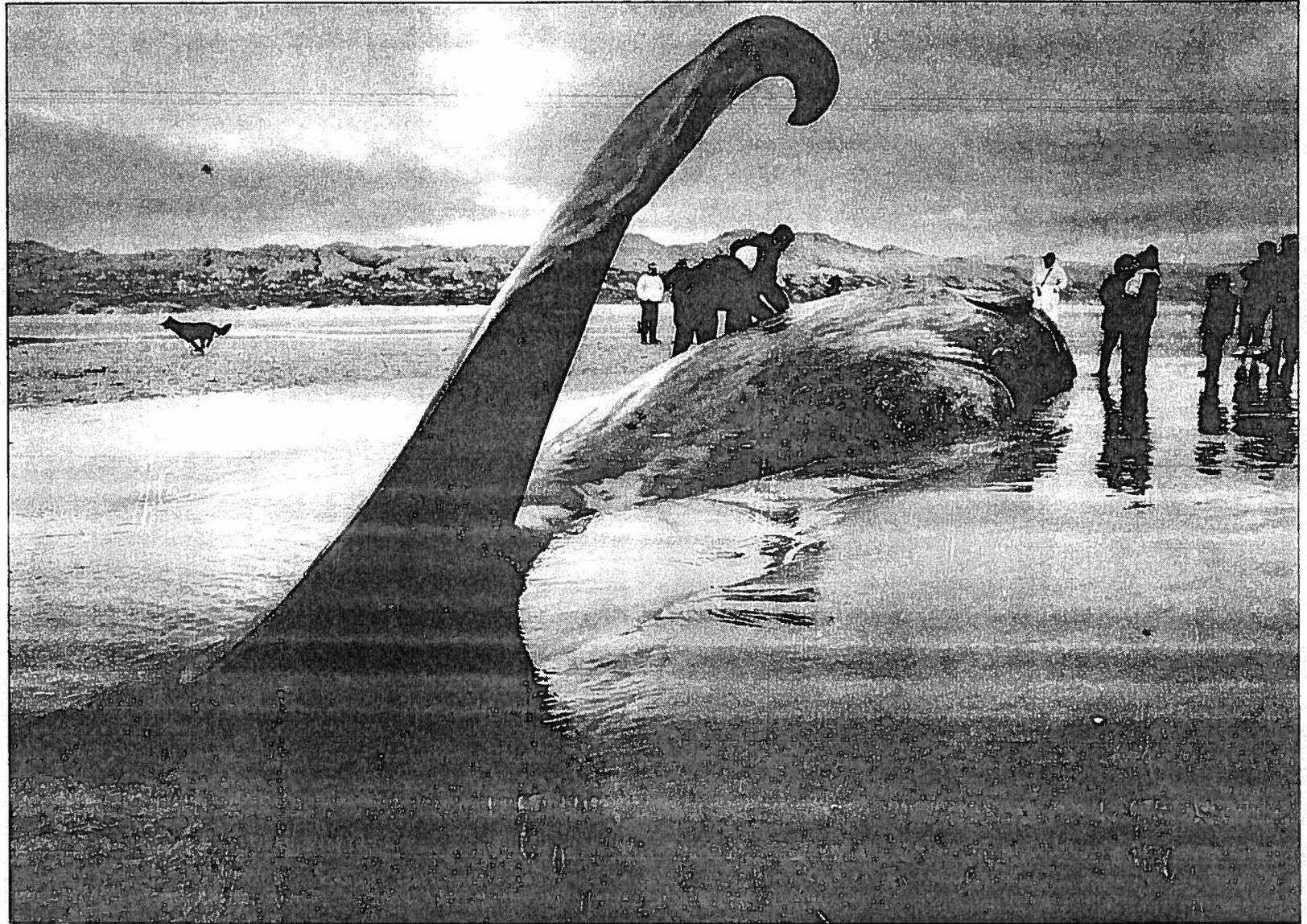
Desperate attempts were made by animal protection officers to save one of the whales found barely alive, but it died before a vet reached the scene. The vet eventually pronounced dead all the whales – some weighing more than 10 tons.

Environmental health officers, police and coastguards spent the day examining ways of disposing of the huge mammals. It also emerged that five of the creatures may have perished while trying to escort a sick whale as it headed towards shallow water.

Disposing of the whales has been described as “extremely complicated” by coastguards because they are beached on soft sand which would hamper attempts to use heavy lifting equipment. If the animals are buried on the beach a protective fence would have to be erected around the grave to protect public health.

SSPCA inspector Sylvester Hay said: “It appears the dominant whale in the school had been ill and came in so close to shore that it became stuck on a sandbank and could not return to the deeper water.

“The other whales appear to have followed it in and also became stuck. It is a tragic case.”



Sandy grave: One of the six sperm whales that died after becoming beached at Curden Bay, in Aberdeenshire

Photograph: Chris James

Finns' new concept looks set to become huge commercial success

Ice-breaking tanker to open up Russian routes

HELSINKI'S Arctic Research Centre, part of Finnish shipbuilder Kvaerner Masa-Yards, has developed a revolutionary ice-breaking tanker concept which it says could finally make seaborne transport of oil and gas from the vast reserves of north-west Russia commercially viable.

Due to be presented this week at a Murmansk Arctic conference, the Double Acting Tanker (DAT) concept combines the centre's experience of ice-breaker development with a modern propulsion system to produce a vessel that is as efficient in heavy ice conditions as it is in open water.

By Jon Henley, Helsinki

"This is pretty much of a breakthrough," Kimmo Juurmaa, manager of Kvaerner-Masa's Arctic research and development, said.

"Until now the problem has been that the best ice-breaking bow is very inefficient in open water, and yet the ice-bound distance an Arctic tanker has to cover is actually quite a short portion of its voyage.

"Now we believe we have an Arctic tanker that has genuinely good ice and open-water characteristics. It's a compromise, but a very good one."

The DAT concept is based

on a well-known phenomenon, Mr Juurmaa said — a vessel will often progress more easily through difficult ice when running astern rather than ahead.

Until now, however, it has been impossible to take advantage of this characteristic because of the difficulty of steering vessels running astern, and the fact that fitting bow propellers — while feasible in less severe conditions — is impractical in Arctic ice because of the danger of damage.

"But modern Arctic ice-breaker design has focused on stern propulsion and using cylindrical bow forms and low-friction coatings for ice-breaking," Mr Juurmaa said.

The design breakthrough came with Kvaerner-Masa's Azipod drive, a rudderless, rotating electric propulsion unit mounted beneath the vessel's stern that offers vastly improved manoeuvrability.

"We began to think, what could that mean for an Arctic tanker?" Mr Juurmaa said.

"Would the Azipod system make it possible to tackle heavy ice running astern, with an ice-breaking stern, and open water with an efficient open-water bow?"

Extensive tank testing on a variety of models and trials last year with the MT *Uikku*, an otherwise unmodified 16,000 dwt Arctic tanker fitted with an Azipod unit, proved the

centre's assumptions were correct: ice resistance when running astern was 40% of that when running ahead.

Also, the *Uikku* could cope with ice four times thicker than before without need of ice-breaker assistance.

"What we have developed is an Arctic tanker concept that is 100% as efficient as a conventional tanker in open water, but with substantially increased ice-breaking capability, superior manoeuvrability and better overall economy," said Mr Juurmaa.

"It hasn't been built or ordered yet, but it really could offer a solution to getting oil and gas out of Arctic Russia," he added.

Lloyd's List 16/8/95

Britain says whaling is immoral

NICHOLAS SCHOON

The Government yesterday said it was morally opposed to any resumption of commercial whaling. It is the first time it has declared an entire order of animals to be totally off-limits for exploitation by humanity.

Even if whales can be humanely hunted without any threat to their populations, the UK will always oppose any slaughter of the huge marine mammals by other nations, said fisheries minister Tony Baldry.

The moratorium on commercial whaling is 10 years old this year, but two nations - Japan and Norway - continue to kill hundreds of minke whales every year in Antarctic waters and the North East Atlantic.

At next month's annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Aberdeen the two countries will be arguing that stocks have now recovered and management techniques improved to the point where commercial whaling is acceptable and the moratorium should be lifted.

For years, Britain's opposition had been based on the low state of the stocks following decades of over-exploitation, the cruelty of techniques such as explosive harpoons and electric lances, and defects in the management of whaling.

Whalers might soon be able to counter all those objections. But Britain will still vote against any resumption at IWC meetings. "Commercial whaling is

opposed by the vast majority of our citizens and by Parliament," said Mr Baldry.

His announcement follows a year long review involving the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAFF), the Foreign Office and the Department of the Environment.

"We've decided to make our stance more explicit," said a MAFF official. But the ministry had no explanation of what makes whales so special. Its change of policy is based on public and cross-party opinion.

The United States, New Zealand and Australia have made similar declarations in recent years. Yesterday wildlife groups were surprised and delighted. James Martin-Jones of the Worldwide Fund for Nature

said: "It's a dramatic development and a very welcome one."

Britain sold the last of its whaling ships and its IWC quotas to the Japanese in the late 1950s because stocks were so low that the industry was no longer profitable.

The IWC was founded 50 years ago to exploit whales rationally, but it failed dismally. The great majority of its 39 member nations are now opposed to whaling and have no

interest at all in what little remains of a once great industry, but the original aims of the commission and the treaty underpinning it remain in force. Any change to these would require unanimity.

Britain's announcement increases pressure on Japan and Norway to withdraw from the commission. But if they did they would face international opprobrium, and the risk of trade sanctions from the US.

The Independent 9/5/96

Joint venture to dispose of leaking nuclear waste ship

A PRIVATE Norwegian company has signed a joint venture agreement with a Russian ship operator to manage the engineered disposal of the nuclear waste ship *Lepse*, isolated due to high radioactive emissions and causing international concern.

Broken and intact fuel rods from three ex-Soviet icebreakers are stored on the ship anchored near Murmansk. As well as the spent fuel rods, the *Lepse* also holds low and medium level radioactive waste. Much of the stored

waste has been encased in concrete in attempts to shield the surroundings from the radioactivity, but this poses an extra problem for its eventual disposal.

Oslo-based Macro Group A/S and the Murmansk Shipping Company, operator of *Lepse* on behalf of the Russian Federation, have set up a joint venture to organise and manage the safe disposal of the storage

By Patrick Reynolds

ship and her waste. The Macro Group was established in October by engineers who had been researching the *Lepse* problem on behalf of a division of the Aker Group.

Until 1980, the *Lepse* worked mainly as a service ship for replacing and storing used fuel rods from three icebreakers.

She was also used to transport radioactive waste from the Atomflot base, which services civil nuclear-powered vessels, to near the Arctic island of Novaya Zemlja for offshore dumping, according to a 1994 report by the Bellona Foundation, a Norwegian research group.

One of the nearly 60 year old, steel plated ship's two storage sections holds rods removed from the 1959-built icebreaker *Lenin* 133,990gt, which suffered a reactor accident in 1966. Cooling problems with the reactor resulted in the rods being too large for *Lepse's* storage vessels and according to the report some were broken as workers forced them to fit.

Reprocessing authorities would not accept the damaged rods and they have remained on the *Lepse*.

The new joint venture plans to establish a Russian-registered project management organisation for the *Lepse* work.

The project manager will issue the various design, construction, equipment and other key contracts for the *Lepse*, but it also has the crucial duty of establishing the legal and other responsibilities of various bodies in the matter, such as the Russian government.

Jon Ronning, president of Macro Group, said the engineering solution for the *Lepse* disposal had yet to be finalised. It was understood a possible option was to create a secure, sealed drydock in the area and dismantle the ship and remove the waste under controlled conditions.

He said more data was needed before the best engineering option was chosen and the design work could start.

Consultants AEA Technology (UK) and SGN (France) are evaluating the condition of the stored radioactive materials on the *Lepse* in an European Union-funded study. The EU is a member of the international advisory group on *Lepse*, established in May this year in a major policy initiative by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. Other members of the group are the US, France and Russia.

Norway is especially sensitive to the radioactivity problems as its northern regions border with Russia's contaminated Kola Peninsula.

Last month Russia was reported to have asked Norway for help to monitor radioactivity across the peninsular.

Barents round

RUSSIA plans licence talks this year for exploration in the Barents Sea offshore oil fields, *Reuter reports*. Vladislav Prokhorovich, deputy chairman of the Russian Committee of Natural Resources, said: "The first round of licence negotiations concerning several sites in the Barents offshore is planned." The Barents and Kara Seas are estimated to hold resources of 70bn tonnes of oil equivalent and large oil-gas condensate northeast of the Sakhalin Islands.

Lloyd's List 10/5/96

Lloyd's List 13(?) / 12/95

Robin des Bois IWC 96
Arctic: a protection zone for the whale

**DRAFT RESOLUTION WHICH COULD PROVOKE DISCUSSION AT IWC48 IN
ABERDEEN**

Resolution on a protection zone for whales in the Arctic region

RECALLING that the aim of the Commission is, *inter alia*, to safeguard for future generations the great natural resources represented by the whale stocks;

CONSCIOUS that the Arctic environment consists of ecosystems with unique features and resources which are especially slow to recover from the impact of human activities, and as such, require special protective measures;

CONSCIOUS of the increasing scientific evidence of the impact of atmospheric, riverine and other marine pollution of land-based origin on the Arctic Ocean and that this may have long term detrimental effects on the entire food chain and thus on the whales;

RECOGNISING, however, the social and cultural importance of circumpolar aboriginal subsistence whaling;

NOTING that the Scientific Committee intends to undertake a global review of the white whale and narwhal for consideration at the 1998 Annual Meeting;

WELCOMING the ongoing efforts of the 8 Arctic countries through the AEPS (Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy); efforts that include the AMAP (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme) and the working groups on the CAFF (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna), EPPR (Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response) and the PAME (Protection of the Marine Environment);

ACKNOWLEDGING that the resolution is in line with the UNEP Governing Council decision to negotiate a Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants launched at the initiative of the Nordic countries;

ACKNOWLEDGING FURTHER that new concerns* were noted by Ministers at the 3rd. Ministerial Conference on the Protection of the Arctic Environment in March 1996 in Inuvik and that the CAFF report to Ministers (Inuvik 1996) noted increased vulnerability among Arctic fauna**;

RECOGNISING that scientific coordination between the IWC and the relevant working groups within the AEPS would be fruitful for all parties concerned;

CONSCIOUS of the support of eminent scientific bodies and marine biologists from around the world and in particular from Arctic countries;

Now therefore the Commission URGES the Scientific Committee to investigate, through non-lethal research, the effects of environmental changes and threats upon Arctic whale stocks for the next Annual Meetings and to make an inventory of measures able to give long-term protection to Arctic whales - among others to create either a circumpolar protection zone or a scheme of SPAs (Special Protected Areas)

* "*increased concerns relating to the actual and potential effects of oil pollution*"; "*abnormalities in some invertebrate species which may be attributable to organotin substances, such as found in anti-fouling paint*"

** "*in 1995, 39 species and sub-species of birds and mammals were identified as rare, vulnerable or endangered by at least 2 Arctic countries*". Among others, countries most consistently identified "*marine mammals (ie. several whale species)*" and that "[the] trend is disturbing and increased circumpolar co-operation is required to arrest and reverse it".

RESOLUTION DISCUSSED AT IWC47 IN DUBLIN

IWC/47/51 Rev.1
Agenda Item 22

RESOLUTION ON RESEARCH ON WHALES IN THE ARCTIC REGION

Submitted by Finland, France, India, Mexico, Monaco, the Netherlands, Oman.

RECALLING that the aim of the Commission is, *inter alia*, to safeguard for future generations the great natural resources represented by the whale stocks;

RECALLING that Article IV of the Convention provides for the encouragement, recommendation and organisation of studies and investigations related to whales and whaling;

RECOGNISING the social and cultural importance of circumpolar aboriginal subsistence whaling;

CONSCIOUS of the increasing scientific evidence of the impact of atmospheric, riverine and other land-based marine pollution on the Arctic Ocean and that this may have long-term detrimental effects on its entire food chain and thus on the whales;

RECOGNISING the ecological sensitivity of the Arctic region, and its importance as a feeding, breeding and gathering area for Northern Hemisphere whales;

RECOGNISING the need to develop international non-lethal research on the biology and behaviour of whales in the Arctic ecosystem;

TAKING into account the ongoing implementation of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) adopted by the ministers of the eight Arctic countries at Rovaniemi, Finland, 1991.

NOTING that the Scientific Committee intends to undertake a global review of the white whale and narwhal for consideration at the 1998 Annual Meeting;

Now therefore the Commission REQUESTS the Scientific Committee to establish an agenda item addressing the effects of environmental changes and threats upon Arctic whale stocks for the next Annual Meetings;

Invites members, non-members and relevant organisations to submit questions and comments, to provide information on this subject and to send relevant experts to the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

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