

# Norway won first round for whaling; who believes in Greenpeace now?

by Michael Ericson

Three years ago, Iceland, thanks to the fully mustered support of its people, won the battle for national economic survival against the international power apparatus of Greenpeace, over the issue of whaling and seal hunting. Now Norwegians have won the same fight, with the economic survival of northern Norway at stake.

The fight started at the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) at the beginning of July. Nowadays, the whaling nations are a minority in this organization, since it was stacked by the environmental interests with non-whaling governments. The whaling nations could not accept the commission's decision to prolong the five-year ban on whaling yet another year. There are plenty of whales in the seas. In the northeast Atlantic alone the minke whale, the whale species which is being hunted, has an estimated population of 86,000.

Iceland left the IWC and Norway declared that it intends to leave this autumn, and that it will resume commercial whaling next year. The showdown with Greenpeace, an organization ostensibly concerned with protecting the environment, which has made the "whales threatened with extermination" into one of its main fundraising lines for a worldwide money-collecting empire, centered around the scientific quota, i.e., the number of whales allowed to be slaughtered each year during the five-year ban. The truth is that even if some of the largest whale species were heavily depleted in this century, no whale species, with the exception of some dolphin species, is threatened with extinction today.

These facts mean nothing from the standpoint of Greenpeace fundraising. They are more concerned with emotionally charged "mind bombs" capable of disrupting the mental life of whole populations, than with real threats to the environment.

## Foiled

Greenpeace announced it would start an international campaign against Norway. The first decision was to send a Greenpeace ship, *Solo*, to reconnoitre the Norwegian whalers in July, when they whaled the allowed scientific quota.

The battle did not end in the way Greenpeace had imagined. From the outset, the whalers fooled them completely. They all left their home harbors the same night, but sailed out on different courses, as if they were intending to start

their whaling directly off Lofoten. *Solo* arrived in the Lofoten waters, but during several days of search, could not find a single Norwegian whaling vessel. They were all busy whaling in a different location, the Barents Sea.

*Solo* sailed in that direction. But the quota was already caught and the whalers on their way home with the catch. As they arrived home to unload, the Greenpeaceers were far away, in the Barents Sea.

## Pulled out

Meanwhile, the media battle over whaling broke out in Norway. Again, it did not take the turn that Greenpeace wished. Norway's two largest environmentalist organizations, Naturvernforbundet and Bellona, supported the decision to resume commercial whaling. Moreover, the international Greenpeace organization had to face the fact that the former chairman of Greenpeace's Norwegian chapter also supported the decision. Finally, the only Norwegian member of the board of Greenpeace, Prof. Leif Ryvarde, resigned his post and left Greenpeace to protest the organization's way of dealing with the whaling issue.

Media in the world were taken by surprise when Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Norwegian prime minister who had chaired the United Nations Special Commission for the Environment, resolutely defended whaling in a speech to the Norwegian Parliament and said that economic policy must not be steered by "unscientifically founded opinions." In an action of solidarity with the whalers, the Parliament served whale meat in its restaurant that same day. The popularity of this move was further demonstrated when the year's catch ended up in the delicacy shops. Queue lines were long and the entire catch sold out in two days.

Prime Minister Brundtland also got the chance to give Prince Philip of Britain, the chairman of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), a lesson on whaling. His Royal Highness had arrived in Norway together with the rest of the WWF leadership to participate in a "whale safari" in protest against the Norwegian decision. The prince was forced to admit that his protests had not succeeded, but that he had "learned quite a lot on the background of whaling" in his meeting with the Norwegian head of government.

When the battle was over, the whalers invited Greenpeace to debate in the Lofoten area. Greenpeace had

## The King apologizes

In a letter, Swedish King Carl Gustaf has withdrawn his criticism of the Norwegian seal hunters. The king had based his criticism on a film about Norwegian seal hunting off Greenland, which the second national Swedish television channel showed in 1989. Most of the accusations in the film were rejected by the special commission on seal hunting which the Norwegian government set up to investigate the claims.

The commission found that the producer, Odd Lindberg, did not have the competence to call himself a seal hunting inspector, and that there was no proof whatsoever that Norwegian seal hunters had skinned living seals. The commission was also able to show that the sequence in the film in which a dead baby seal is dragged over the ice, followed by its distraught mother seal, had not been filmed by Lindberg, but originated from a seal hunt which took place in Newfoundland at the end of the 1970s.

This past summer, the Norwegian seal hunters won a lawsuit against the newspaper *Avisen* from the area around Tromsø, and actions are also under way to sue the Norwegian daily *Aftenposten*, Norwegian radio, and the second national television channel in Sweden, for libel.

often turned down such invitations, but this time felt they could not back out. Again, the outcome was not what Greenpeace desired, as the Greenpeace representative was forced to take a certificate of thanks for Greenpeace's "extraordinarily active and excellent marketing of whale meat."

In Norway people believe that this year's battle was only a foretaste of the confrontation next year when commercial whaling starts again. With Greenpeace in the lead, many environmentalist organizations are threatening to boycott Norway and its industry. The nation is girding for the fight. Norwegians have improved their starting positions after this year's skirmishes.

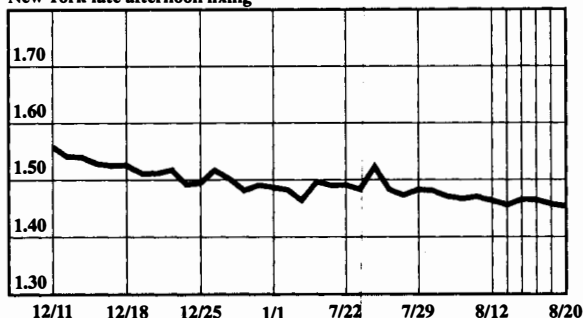
At the debate in Lofoten, the former chairman of Greenpeace Norway, Bjoern Oekern, commented on the situation: "We have found an effective means to prevent them [Greenpeace] from taking bloody pictures, and without such pictures they will get no publicity in the international media."

He also thought that it was "pathetic" to listen to Greenpeace these days. "They have no arguments they can use against whaling any longer, only grasping efforts to get ahold of money."

## Currency Rates

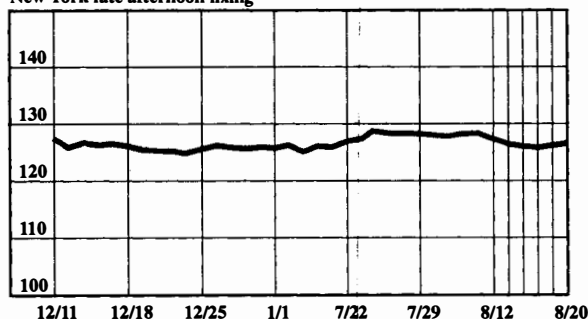
### The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



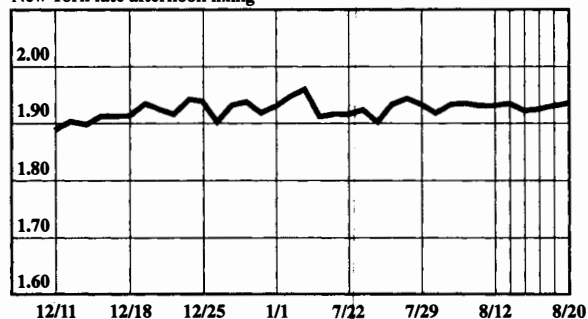
### The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



### The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



### The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

