

used to produce means of destruction rather than means of production. These highly-qualified and -trained people are alienated from the real values and needs of their society.

The international community should seriously search for, and urgently agree on, means of releasing most of these resources which are currently squandered on the arms race. These, if ensured as additional resources with due continuation, could bring a major change of perspective, in the form of new scientific and technological solutions, to persistent and potentially explosive problems of development.

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### Thoughts about the International Whaling Commission after its Thirty-first Annual Meeting

The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling has been in force for over thirty years. For the last ten years the meetings of the Commission which was established to implement this Convention have been the centre of mounting attention, and the usual spate of reports—despairing, analytical, or scathing—duly appeared after its 31st Meeting which was held recently in London, U.K. For the first time, however, conservationists were able to concede, albeit grudgingly, that at least some decisions for positive conservation action had been taken. But thirty years was a long wait!

The unfortunate fact is that, among human society, there is still a demand for whale products. Sources of supply are sought, and bargains are struck, by the age-old process of haggling. The main difference between the haggling of the ancient Phoenician market-place and that of the International Whaling Commission is that the latter includes politics in its trading considerations and selects the most expedient interpretation of regulations and scientific opinions in its pattern. And such is the way of things when politics get involved, that gaining a trading advantage for a difficult domestic problem is considered more important than insistence on immediate and stringent action to protect a grossly depleted species of whale from imminent extinction. The United States so demonstrated at this meeting by refusing to accept the unanimous recommendation of the Commission's Scientific Committee that the Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*, also known as the Greenland Whale) be totally protected—thereby compromising her otherwise commendable contribution towards the improvement of whale management.

Let it not be suggested that the Commission has made no attempt at regulation. Initiatives for effective action have indeed been put forward. On the basis of a Resolution from the UN Conference on the Human Environment of 1972, the United States proposed a moratorium on whaling which, as might be expected, was not accepted by the Commission, but which did result in the introduction in 1975 of the New Management Procedure. It seems, however, that one of the reasons why this Procedure has not proved effective is the reluctance of countries with interests in the whaling industry to commit support for measures that seem likely to curtail those interests. In consequence there is a situation where more extensive and precise scientific information is demanded as a basis for management, but the process whereby it could be obtained is allowed to remain subject to scientific indiscipline and political wrangling—where plausible-sounding reasons are found for not pursuing investigations into reasonable allegations of infractions; where restrictive obligations are circumvented by recourse to subterfuges such as flags of convenience and advantageous arrangements with non-member whaling enterprises; and where procedural delays in the long-overdue review of the Convention are condoned.

Happily, there is also in human society the capacity to develop strong public opinion on issues of fundamental importance to it. Over the past few years, opinions about whales and whaling have been developing within various groupings of society. These opinions have related to ethical, humanitarian, and cultural, aspects of whaling as well as to institutional, managerial, and scientific, requirements for maintaining the resource values which whales represent—and have inevitably focussed on the Commission's operations. Pressure from these opinions has obliged the Commission recently to adopt an increasingly open attitude in its negotiations, which has provided the opportunity for a more probing analysis of its activities. The gathering weight of public opinion was significantly confirmed in 1978 by the result of an Inquiry into Whales and Whaling commissioned by the Australian Government. Included among the recommendations, which were accepted in full by the Government, was one that Australia should cease whaling but retain membership of the International Whaling Commission with a view to improving its performance in the discharge of its international responsibility. A manifestation of Australia's new role at the London meeting was a blistering condemnation by its Commissioner of apparent duplicity in the matter of Bowhead Whales.

Although several states, such as The Netherlands, Panama, Mexico, and France, have held commendably constructive attitudes in the Commission, this was the first time that the views of a Commissioner have had the backing of a popular mandate. The strength of public opinion is also evident in the decision, made in response to it by Sweden, to join the Commission for the purpose of promoting rational management based on the requirements of resource conservation rather than industrial or political exigencies.

The London meeting was also noteworthy for the emergence of a Third World country, the Republic of Seychelles, as the initiator of one of the positive conservation measures which were accepted, namely that relating to the establishment of a whale sanctuary in the Indian Ocean. Of special significance was its argument

that such a sanctuary would safeguard the resources therein for the ultimate benefit of the peoples of the region as a whole.

These encouraging developments suggest that public opinion may at last be mobilizing itself to make the Whaling Convention work. However, in the Commission a new whaling member, Korea, has already reacted with an impassioned plea for all holders of views unsympa-

thetic to the whaling industry to be excluded from the Commission's deliberations. Let us see to it that the whales are the winners!

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### Indian National Committee on Environmental Planning and Coordination

The importance of environmental planning and of its integration with economic policies and programmes, is being increasingly recognized all over the world—particularly in the wake of the U.N. Conference on the Human Environment, which was held in Stockholm in the summer of 1972. Yet already in February of that year, recognizing the need to provide a sharper focus on environmental considerations in the development process, the Government of India established the National Committee on Environmental Planning and Coordination (NCEPC).

The Committee—comprising experts, senior officials of Government Departments, and representatives of citizen groups and voluntary agencies—is a top-level advisory body for review, formulation, and promotion, of policies and programmes covering development projects, physical planning, legislation, administrative procedures, education, and research, relating to the protection and improvement of environmental quality. The Committee, in its multifaceted tasks, is assisted by sub-committees in different subject areas; these include Human Settlements, Rural Environment, Industry and Environment, Nature and Resource Conservation, and Environmental Education.

Promotion of environmental research is one of the major activities of NCEPC. So far, more than 70 projects have been initiated in different fields, such as monitoring of water and air quality, pollution and its effects, and waste treatment and recycling. Case-studies have also been established to conduct comprehensive examination of the environmental impact of large development projects. One such project is the study centring around a multipurpose river valley project in Kerala.

In order to systematize environmental impact studies, NCEPC has drawn up questionnaires and guidelines relevant to particular sectors—such as heavy industry, thermal and hydroelectric-power generation, roads and railways, and mining, etc. All thermal, hydroelectric-power, and irrigation, projects are referred to NCEPC for scrutiny from the environmental aspect. Special Committees and Task Forces have been constituted by NCEPC to attend to such assignments. These exercises of environmental appraisal have proved to be extremely useful for obtaining information on environmental problems *vis-à-vis* developmental requirements, which are often characteristically different from one region to another.

In the field of nature conservation, NCEPC is assisted by the National Man and the Biosphere Committee, among the key programmes of which is the identification of areas in the country that are most suitable to be designated as Biosphere Reserves. An advisory group of experts has made a preliminary selection of such areas, a detailed inventory of them has been prepared, and discussions are under way towards the formal designation of these areas and the drawing up of management plans.

Evolving institutional mechanisms for environmental management has been engaging the attention of NCEPC since its inception. NCEPC strongly felt the need for setting up nodal agencies at the level of State and Union Territory administrations, in order to ensure adequate environmental consideration in development planning for different regions. Most of the States and Union Territories have since constituted Environment Committees which will work in close collaboration with the local planning bodies and development organizations. NCEPC has also played an important role in the formulation of various legislative measures, such as the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974, and the Air Pollution Control Bill which is now under active consideration by the Government.

NCEPC has placed particular emphasis on programmes for the stimulation of environmental awareness. Newspaper and magazine articles, as well as radio and TV programmes, are used to highlight the importance of environmental concern at all levels of society. For curriculum development on environmental subjects at the school and college level, NCEPC interacts with the various educational institutes, including the University Grants Commission and the National Council for Educational Research and Training.

A National Fellowship on Environmental Sciences has recently been instituted to recognize the outstanding contributions and promote excellence in environmental research. Thus far, two scientists, one in the field of radioactive pollution monitoring, and the other in the field of nature conservation, have received this award.

From time to time, NCEPC organizes Seminars and Workshops on subjects of environmental concern. One such Seminar was held in April 1978 on Resources, Development, and Environment, in the Himalayan Region, which resulted in a number of important recommendations relating to plant and animal resources, agriculture, soil and water management, forestry and human settlements, industry, tourism, and communication facilities, in this vitally important region.

NCEPC, with the support of the Department of Science and Technology, also advises the Government on programmes for cooperation with international agencies such as UNEP, UNESCO, and UNIDO, as well as on bilateral and multilateral agreements involving environmental matters.

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