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A Polarised Industry

Norwegian Media Discourse on Pelagic Whaling, 1925-1932

Bachelor's project in History

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May 2019

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1. Introduction

1.1. Theme

Humans have, for most of their existence, hunted whales regardless of the available technology. Examining how whales were treated as a resource gives us insight into how humans interact with their environment and ecosystems. The vast expanses of the ocean created opportunities for unregulated activity, an almost lawless environment in which whalers thrived, always including a dynamic dance between entrepreneurs and regulatory governance. Whale hunting on the open seas was, and is, an activity done at the oceanic frontier of this world.

1.2. Research question

Norway was always a dominant nation in modern whaling. The interwar period saw a complete transformation of the industry, brought by technological innovation, which resulted in the industry's rapid growth. Due to the importance of rapid technological change in Norwegian whaling, it is interesting to investigate how these changes were acknowledged and discussed in Norway. Therefore, I ask: what reactions to whaling do we see in the Norwegian media during the interwar period from 1925 to 1932? How can we understand the changes in the industry through the media discourse? And how do the opinions in the articles compare to the established historical knowledge?

Historical research on modern whaling has not emphasised the discourse in the media enough, which is why I focus on this particular subject. It is a relevant aspect of the overall research since it provides an additional perspective and analysis method to understand modern whaling history better.

1.3. Method and sources

In order to learn how the technological innovations were received by the Norwegian whaling community, I will analyse selected Norwegian newspaper articles between 1925 and 1932 with a comparative method, more accurately defined as *discourse analysis*. Discourse has to do with how humans communicate their understanding of the world. However, I will not delve too deeply into the theoretical underpinnings of the discourse concept.¹ Instead, I will use discourse analysis as it is often used in historical work; by examining the intertextuality between news articles and some of the existing literature on whaling.²

¹ Leidulf Melve and Teemu Sakari Ryymin, *Historikerens Arbeidsmåter* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2018), 39

² Ibid: 61-64

Initially, the plan was to only use articles from *The Norwegian Whaling Gazette (NWG)*, but the publication lacked sufficient material suitable for a coherent discourse analysis for a proper analysis.³ Therefore, I included articles from other daily, national and local newspapers which reported and commented on pelagic whaling, providing a more nuanced spectrum of discourse representations.⁴ I gathered NWG-material from *The University Library of Trondheim (UBIT DORA)* as this was the nearest accessible point for this publication. I used *Nasjonalbiblioteket's* online database when sampling the other newspapers online since this was practical, time saving, and easy to digitally search for keywords. A list of articles analysed is provided in the appendix.

The articles will be analysed as historical sources, meaning its content is used to establish information about the author and the contribution to the discourse. For knowledge about the contextual circumstances, I used literature on modern whaling history. I chose to use discourse analysis over other methods because it provides insight into thoughts and meanings attributed to technological change from people involved and affected by the whaling industry during the interwar period. Using another method, such as a quantitative search for a large amount of data, would not necessarily give a sufficient answer to my research question. The issue is not how every person expressed themselves in the media during this period, it is to uncover common opinions on the subject at the time and use analysed examples of these to illustrate their representation and how it relates to the larger discourse. Other analytical- and comparative methods may provide sufficient answers to statistical research questions but not to the given issue.

Admittedly, the method used has its limitations. Firstly, examining news articles can only give so much insight into the minds of people at the time since they may have withheld information or written deliberately provocative. Additionally, I have chosen only two articles per chapter, which can impossibly represent the whole discourse of 1925-32 because of the plethora of articles from a ten-year span. Ideally, more articles would have been included to give a more complete, nuanced discourse spectrum which existed, but due to practical constraints two articles are included per chapter to act as representative for popular opinions at the time. The limited nature of the bachelor thesis can at best direct attention towards discourse analysis within modern whaling for further research. Additionally, the method used, discourse analysis, has the goal of uncovering previous opinions in history, but even with unlimited

³ My translation: "*Norsk Hvalfangsttidende*"

⁴ The term *pelagic* refers to whaling conducted on the open seas without reliance on land

resources such would not be possible. The narrativization and periodization of events are also admittedly subject to my perspective and the biases this may create. Press control is also not accounted for; some opinions may have been suppressed by editors to avoid too much controversy.

1.4. Previous research

The previous research on Norwegian interwar whaling has been used largely as a literature basis in this assignment. Although previous historical publications of Norwegian whaling have used news media as sources, there are to my knowledge no attempts at a more systematic approach to the media discourse. The literature selected for the discourse analysis is important in the lineage of historical research on modern whaling. Johan N. Tønnessen provides the most comprehensive work of modern whaling history, encompassing nearly all aspects of it. Bjørn Basberg provides more emphasis on the technological aspects of the whaling industry, while Peder Roberts and Kurkpatrick Dorsey focuses on the environmental and political history of modern whaling. The notable exception of literature I use which is not strictly research is “Hvaleventyret” (2018) by Andreas Tjernshaugen as this is not an academic publication, but it is nonetheless used with caution since it is mostly based on Tønnessen and it is historically accurate, although exaggerated in some areas.

1.5. Structure

The structure of this thesis is divided into six parts: the introduction, background information, the rise of pelagic whaling, expansion of the industry, the crisis of 1931-1932, and the conclusion on the analysed material. Each chapter explores two articles each which are representative to discourse patterns in the media of the time, and each chapter provides a short conclusion to show what information can be gathered from each period. Contextual information is given at every chapter to illustrate the importance of the expressed opinions, and how they contribute to the discourse. The periods are analysed separately because the discourse changed in accordance to the changing periods, each starting with a significant event. The analysed opinion of the article is then treated as a representation of the phenomenon, the various representations are then concluded to present the discourse of that period. A concluding chapter will show the evolution and central themes of the discourse. I also chose a chronological style of representing the subject as it gives a logical perspective on this historical subject.

2. Historical background

2.1. The beginning of modern whaling

Whaling had long been a relatively small-scale occupation as opposed to an industry, with mostly low yields of whale oil and profit. It was not until the Norwegian whaler Svend Foyn revolutionised the hunting method by perfecting the grenade harpoon that whaling truly became an important aspect of the Norwegian economy. As a process of industrialization, this ensured the increased efficiency and closely linked whaling to the growing scientific and engineering community.⁵ Better profit followed the increased efficiency but the whale stock decreased to such an extent that the Norwegian Parliament voted in favour of *The Whale Conservation Act* in 1880 which sought to protect whales in Finnmark.⁶ This early phase was the start of modern whaling, created by Svend Foyn, but the industry would not see its historical potential before the next century in which whaling became a central aspect of Norwegian foreign diplomacy with the British Empire.

2.2. The whale rush

Due to the increased efficiency, whale numbers in the northern hemisphere diminished and Norwegian whalers, having the most experience and the best technology, shifted their focus towards the southern hemisphere, particularly in the Antarctic region.⁷ British authorities became aware that the Norwegian whaling stations were productive as locals complained of rapidly declining humpback whale numbers.⁸ The culmination of the conflict became the increasing amount of semi-pelagic ships on Deception Island, a ring-shaped natural harbour that allowed whaling on a massive scale with enormous media coverage.⁹

As time went on, whale numbers became increasingly scarce and colonial authorities increasingly strict in their license regulation. Therefore, more effort went into the perfection of pelagic whaling ships which would allow the complete independence from land and licenses. This resulted with the first real attempt of a pelagic whaling expedition to the Antarctic without any reliance on a natural harbour, the expedition of *Sir James Clark Ross* in 1923. Pelagic whaling technology improved throughout the interwar period. Notably were the new methods

⁵ Andreas Tjernshaugen, *Hvaleventyret, hvordan vi nesten utryddet det største dyret som har levd* (Oslo: Kagge Forlag, 2018), 19-31

⁶ My translation: «Fredningsloven»; Ibid: 53

⁷ Ibid: 94-99

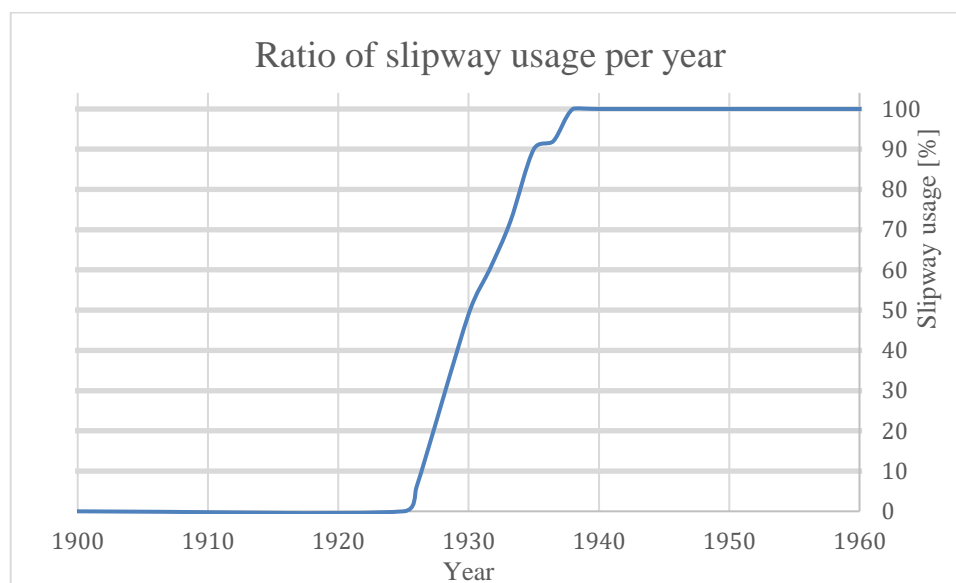
⁸ Ibid: 119

⁹ Ibid: 130-32

of cooking, processing, and hunting of whales. Two main technological inventions during the first half of the 19th century were the reasons for these improvements; the introduction of the rotating *Hartmann-cookery* and Petter Sørle's *stern slipway*.¹⁰ The flensing problems on *Sir James Clark Ross*' expedition were solved with Petter Sørle's invention: the stern slipway, first used on *Lancing* in 1925.

2.3 The pelagic era

The historian Bjørn Basberg correctly assessed the period of 1925-1940 as “the pelagic era” due to the increasingly dominant position of pelagic whaling. He proclaimed “(...) rarely has an industry experienced such a rapid change”.¹¹ His statistics on the adoption of the stern slipway illustrates the quick transformation into pelagic whaling:¹²



Basberg adds that some whaling ships conducted pelagic whaling without the use of the slipway, which is why 78% of whaling was conducted pelagic in 1928-29, but only 37% of Norwegian whaling ships had the slipway during that period. This means that pelagic whaling was possible without the slipway, although somewhat restricted in efficiency. Whaling near Svalbard before the Antarctic whale rush relied on land and were more accurately “semi-pelagic”.¹³ Therefore, this was not the start of the pelagic era as the ships were not fully

¹⁰ Joh. N. Tønnessen, *Den modern hvalfangsts historie – Opprinnelse og utvikling* (Oslo: Norges Hvalfangstforbund, 1969), 16-25

¹¹ Bjørn L. Basberg, *Innovasjonsteori, patenter og teknologisk utvikling I norsk hvalfangst ca. 1860-1968* (Bergen: Novus, 2015), 103

¹² Reconstruction of Basberg's graph; Basberg 1980: 103

¹³ Tjernshaugen 2018: 123

independent from land. The start of this period is traditionally placed at the first expedition of *Lancing* because of its usage of the slipway. However, *Sir James Clark Ross*' expedition laid the foundation for this voyage and enabled the pelagic age. If not the first participant of the pelagic era, *Sir James Clark Ross* was the “failed experiment” which made *Lancing* possible. This technological experiment was a true pioneering attempt at pelagic whaling, despite its shortcomings, allowing following expeditions.¹⁴ The pelagic era is the period in which the analysed articles were published, and its context is highly relevant to understand the significance of the discourse.

Political tensions regarding whaling reached a high level during the pelagic era, not only domestically within Norway but also in regards to Anglo-Norwegian relations. Contextually, the interwar period was a time of general economic protectionism and nationalism with the whaling industry being no exception. The British Empire, at its large territorial extent during the interwar period, was crucial for many whalers because of their licence system. This peculiar relationship between a small, newly independent nation aggressively negotiating with a great power over whaling concession and access to territorial waters manifested itself through outspoken individuals. The famous Norwegian scientist and politician, Johan Hjort, played a central part in negotiating on behalf of Norwegian whalers.¹⁵ Acting as a mediator between opposing parties, he experienced setbacks from his own countrymen as the Norwegian whalers split into the parties of “the concessioned” and the “pelagic”. The split was caused by the increasing number of pelagic whalers hunting without paid license, which gave them an advantage over whalers who had already payed for their licenses. Sørllé's slipway only accelerated this divide since it created more incentive to conduct pelagic whaling. Contrary to some beliefs, the British authorities had real ecological concerns of the whale population and were not purely economically motivated.¹⁶ This was caused by political pressure from zoologists, illustrating the many groups involved in the debate. Culminating in the most dramatic event of this period, the Norwegian annexation of the Bouvet Island, it can certainly be stated that “polar imperialism” deeply affected the minds and politics of Norwegians. Two sides, regardless of nationality, accusing one another of piracy at sea, either because of the decimation of animals or because of the ungrounded economic regulation.

¹⁴ Ibid: 161-166

¹⁵ Ibid 175-189

¹⁶ Ibid: 177

Explained thoroughly by the historian Pål Sandvik in his article “*Såpekrigen*” (2010), the issue of whaling was connected to economic politics in several ways.¹⁷ Understanding that whale oil held such importance, mainly because of its usage in producing soap and margarine, helps explain the tension surrounding its increasing economic importance and efficiency within the whaling industry. The British company *Lever* bought the British whaling company *Southern Whaling and Sealing Co.*, thus encroaching onto one of the largest and most expensive industries in Norway at the time. The fear was that *Lever*, the largest consumer of whale oil in the world, would incorporate all whale oil suppliers including the Norwegians. As part of the nationalistic economic policies at the time, Norway decided to protect its whaling industries from foreign influence by restricting ownership to Norwegian-born citizens.¹⁸

2.4. The crisis

A crisis occurred in the whaling industry when the global economic depression spread, leading the main buyer of whale oil, the margarine producer Unilever, to announce their reluctance to buy next season’s whale oil from Norwegian whalers. As a consequence, *The Norwegian Whaling Association* agreed internally to keep the fleet of whaling ships in Norwegian harbours during the season from 1931 to 1932 as an effort to protect both whale numbers and whale oil prices.¹⁹ As such, the most powerful nation in the whaling industry, Norway, withheld nearly all of its fleets during a whole season, stopping almost all whaling activity during the season of 1931-32. At least, this was the plan, since despite efforts to halt whaling activity, some Norwegian and foreign whalers continued operations in Antarctic oceans due to personal interests.²⁰ The League of Nations attempted international cooperation concerning whaling by calling for a meeting between several nations in Geneva in 1931, which resulted in the first real global effort to regulate the industry, mostly by forbidding the hunt of endangered whale species.²¹ As a result, international cooperation was achieved to some degree, even though the regulations made had many critics, most notably the author Bjarne Aagaard. The main issue with the international cooperation of the whaling industry was described by Kurkpatrick Dorsey as “the fisherman’s problem”, which can briefly be described as individual gains often trump larger purposes.²² The obstacle was that nations with strict regulations made no difference since

¹⁷ Pål Sandvik, «Såpekrigen», *Historisk tidsskrift*, nr. 89 (2010), 392

¹⁸ Ibid: 403

¹⁹ Tjernshaugen 2018: 210-211

²⁰ Kurkpatrick Dorsey, *Environmental diplomacy on the high seas* (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2013), 45

²¹ Ibid: 214

²² Dorsey 2013: 8

migrating whales disregard national claims to oceans, and the treaty required consensual cooperation to function. International regulation could not be achieved successfully, leaving it to the various nation states to enforce the treaty. Thus, interest in protection of the environment collided with economic interests and national identities.²³

²³ Ibid: 11

3. Technological progress

3.1. First come, first served

The previous chapter explained the contextual background information to the modern whaling industry. This chapter will uncover the nature of the media discourse during the first stage of the pelagic era: the technological change brought symbolically by the slipway invention and its first usage on *Lancing's* voyage. Contextually, Norwegian whaling was at the brink of major changes in terms of technology and politics.

Whaling changed politically with the advent of the slipway and subsequent pelagic whaling. There existed a fundamental nationalistic aspect of the whaling industry as a whole during the interwar period. As Norwegians had dominated the modern whaling industry, accompanied with the “polar imperialism” of the time, whaling became increasingly part of the Norwegian national identity.²⁴ Dorsey comments as follows: “The reliance on Norwegian gunners suggested the inherent tension between nationalism and capitalism in the whaling industry”.²⁵ Several British whaling companies were discontent with their own government for licensing whaling to Norwegian foreigners, but: “Again and again, the Colonial Office had to remind the British applicants of how Antarctic whaling had started in 1904 (...)”, meaning the Colonial Office followed a policy of “first come, first served”.²⁶ Thus, growing allegiance to the Norwegian flag was already a factor in the modern whaling industry before the coming economic growth, showing tendencies of nationalism.

In addition, whalers became increasingly motivated to conduct pelagic whaling since the British colonial authorities adopted a stricter license policy. In order to make a profit, engineers had to solve the difficulties in shifting from the spacious land stations to relatively small floating factories, where a lack of resources was the main issue, particularly space, water, and coal.²⁷ Hence, there was a demand for technology that would enable efficient pelagic whaling, which would be introduced on *Lancing's* expedition in 1925.

3.2. Technological celebration

The whaling statistician Sigurd Risting wrote an article in NWG in 1925 before the launch of *Lancing*. Titled “Whaling without connection to land”, it included blueprint of Petter Sørille’ stern slipway patent, explaining how the invention would practically function from the

²⁴ Ibid: 27

²⁵ Ibid: 27

²⁶ Tønnessen 1969: 253-254

²⁷ Ibid: 43-58

perspective of a whaling statistician.²⁸ The invention was acclaimed as the solution to the challenge of pelagic whaling.²⁹

Sigurd Risting celebrated the technological innovation in a highly enthusiastic manner. The discussion here was not so much on whether the industry will become pelagic or not, but rather how the transition to such a future could be done most effectively, simply seen as the natural evolution for the industry. As put forward by Risting:

(...) the common opinion amongst whalers is apparently that this will become the future method for whaling-. just as the common opinion assesses that this method is not harder to practice than what is already done by Norwegians all over the world.³⁰

He implied here that whaling from land-based stations was just as hard as pelagic whaling, meaning the transition to pelagic whaling was a natural phase.

Notably, Risting's article also delved into political issues. Firstly, he displayed nationalistic sentiments, such is evident from the statement that "Norwegian whalers over the world (...)" should adapt to pelagic whaling.³¹ The emphasis put on Norwegian whalers over others directly advocated for its quick adoption to beat foreign competition. Then again, if not a sign of nationalistic sentiments, it could be attributed to Risting's role as editor of NWG. Secondly, Risting was surprisingly silent on the issue of potential polarisation within the industry due to the introduction of pelagic whaling. This could be due to the lack of relevance to this article; his goal could have been to simply display technological innovation in NWG. He could equally have been cautious of showing any signs of partisanship in the debate.

The article functions as the first contribution to the analysed discourse. Risting revealed thoughts on the implications this could have had on the industry as a whole regarding the concession system and freedom of the seas. For Risting, technological change was not feared or critically opposed, he views it as linear, that other whalers would adopt it, and that since this was the fate of the industry it should be done in the best possible way. However, the article was not overly chauvinistic. Risting merely hinted at national affection for Norwegian whaling; he did not outright proclaim Norwegian supremacy in the industry. In essence, his adherence to Norway is clear, but concluding this as a fully nationalistic expression would be false.

²⁸ My translation: "*Hvalfangst uten forbindelse med land*"; Sigurd Risting, «Hvalfangst uten forbindelse med land,» *Norsk Hvalfangst-tidende*, October 1924, 1

²⁹ Tønnessen 1969: 161-164

³⁰ My translation: "(...) den almindelige mening blandt fangstfolk er nu vistnok den, at dette vil bli fremtidens form for hvalfangst -. likesom den almindelige mening turde være, at denne form i og for sig ikke ser vanskeligere at praktisere end den fangst, som nu drives av nordmænd verden over."; Risting 1924: 13

³¹ Ibid: 13

As this is the first analysed article, we cannot access whether he reaffirms or challenges older presentations in the discourse. The article does not explain how the slipway was received elsewhere in the community or society. Newspapers not related to whaling wrote little on the subject, and the written articles explained the practical details briefly without much content. However, it is clear that his opinion was commonly held by others when looking at the literature. Tønnessen mentions this when explaining the reception of other important technological innovations, such as the Hartmann-cooking device. He argues that these were comparably slower to catch on, and mentions in his explanation that the slipway patent by Sørille had a universally positive reputation from the start.³² We can safely state that Risting's view on the invention was not unusual at the time.

This first analysed article by Risting, "Whaling without connection to land", lays the foundation of the discourse and shows a common opinion at the time of technological enthusiasm. His political message was not explicit, but there may have existed themes of nationalism in the article. What Risting avoided was the issue of polarisation within the industry, possibly with the fear that discussion of polarisation would only accelerate it.

3.3 Political polarisation

Adding to the discourse was another version of events, revealing signs of polarisation within the whaling industry. On 17th of September 1925, *Østland-Posten* posted an article written by the editor of the paper, Øyvind Næss, titled: "A strange hijack", defending *Lancing* against French accusations in regards to *the Congo incident*.³³

Næss' perceived the event more from a political perspective than Risting's technological perspective. He first described the incident with a highly informal tone and language filled with dramatization, comparing recent actions to that of the industry's uncivilized past. Furthermore, he explained that *Lancing* followed the nautical border which other international fishing vessels did near Norway and Iceland: "We conduct the most honest catch here on the open sea, far outside the territorial border (...)".³⁴ He did so to exemplify how the industries were treated differently in that fishing vessels were not shunned away, but pelagic whaling was seen as potentially dangerous. His conclusion was that the French reacted in such

³² Tønnessen 1969: 24

³³ The Congo Incident was the controversial seizure of a whale-hunting ship, *Norønna*, during the first expedition of *Lancing* outside Congo in 1925; Tjernshaugen 2018: 167-174; My translation: "Et merkelig kapertokt"; Øyvind Næss, «Hvalfangerselskapets «Et merkelig kapertokt,» *Østlands-Posten*, 18.09.1925, 1

³⁴ My translation: "Vi driver den redeligste fangst i aapne havet, langt utenfor den territorialgrænse (...)"; Næss 1925: 1

a dramatic fashion only because the ship was a pelagic Norwegian whale-hunting ship and that if otherwise, it would have been given a warning, not threatened by rifles. It is during this conflict French zoologists and Norwegian whalers accused each other of being “pirates”, either due to the decimation of whales or due to the use of force to stop whaling.³⁵ The accusation of piracy from both sides shows the increased polarisation between both opposing nationalities and professions.

Furthermore, Næss’s article is part of the conflict between “the pelagic” and “the concessioned” parties Norwegian whalers. In the concluding paragraph of the article, Næss summarized his view:

The French authorities have undoubtedly gotten in over their head. And there is no reason to believe that they have felt the “submersion” as more refreshing if one agrees with the notion that it is the Congo Company’s chairman who is to blame for the dip.³⁶

The symbolic rhetoric used in this quote both discredited the Norwegian whaling company *A/S Congo* and the French colonial authorities in Congo, and proposed that they do not realise the true nature of the conflict.

Næss’ article builds upon the discourse by illuminating the political issues of pelagic whaling. He portrayed this as a betrayal from the Norwegian *A/S Congo* involved in the incident because they leased the ship used in the hijacking and encouraged the prosecution of *A/S Globus* in court. As such, the issue is not restriction, it is the different treatment given to *Lancing* because it is a pelagic whaling ship. The other Norwegian whaling company, *A/S Congo*, had been given a license to hunt whales in the area.³⁷ Rumours and suspicion surfaced that it was in fact this company that encouraged the colonial authorities to confiscate *Lancing’s* hunting vessel as a means to eliminate competition. Therefore, the issue held by Næss becomes clearer. He mentions this in the article, stating several times that this was a manipulation done by another Norwegian whaling company in order to block competition.

Of particular interest is the diction used to describe the court judge in the case against the *A/S Globus*. Næss described the judge by the derogatory term “negro judge”, possibly implying it as a negative aspect of his judgement or lack of intelligence because of the racial prejudices of the time.³⁸ Then again, given the circumstances, it may have been a remark solely

³⁵ Tjernshaugen 2018: 170

³⁶ My translation: “At de franske myndigheter har tat sig vand over hodet er neppe tvilsomt. Og det er ingen grund til aa tro at de har følt “avrivningen” særlig mere forfriskende hvis det forholder sig saa at det er Congoselskapets bestyrer som er skyld i dukkertten.”; Næss 1925: 1

³⁷ Tjernshaugen 2018: 168

³⁸ My translation: “negerdommer”; Næss 1925: 1

on the peculiarity of a black African judge which was probably uncommon at the time. It does, however, seem to be mentioned as something negative affecting the case, which led to the Norwegian defeat in court. Due to the racial beliefs of the time, it is not impossible that Næss and other Norwegians interpreted the use of a coloured judge as insulting to the court case. Or, it could be that Næss referred to him as a local judge that was most likely to favour local interests.

Næss's article focused on the political implications the slipway had on the industry. Therefore, he provides insight to another aspect of *Lancing's* launch not identical to Risting's article, giving a more nuanced perspective on the discourse. Altogether, the introduction of the slipway caused conflicts between Norwegian whalers and French colonial authorities.

3.4. Conclusion – Period of technological progress

The discourse of the first stage of the pelagic era was not homogenous. Risting celebrated technological change by highlighting its value to the industry. His optimistic view of the future is especially confident of Norway's supremacy within whaling, he saw it as a linear progression for Norwegian whalers. However, this technological enthusiasm was met with another expressed opinion in the discourse. The Congo Incident showed potentially dividing results from the slipway, which would later cause opponents to the invention to become technological sceptics. It is important to note that people were only sceptical to the technological invention because it benefited pelagic whaling; they did not oppose technological progress in itself. Pelagic whaling required no license, which threatened the income of whalers who had bought licenses. The article "A strange hijack" highlights the political issues brought by the slipway. What they both have in common is their affection for Norwegian whaling, since despite their different focus they both strongly favour Norwegian strength in the whaling industry over foreign. But it seems subtle and near subconscious; they never outright proclaim national chauvinism. Ultimately, the technological invention of the stern slipway sparked a sense of national pride in being Norwegian.

4. Boom and Expansion

4.1. The road towards expansion

Pelagic whaling only increased in scale after 1925. Growing economic importance in pelagic whaling from 1929-1931 created national prestige for Norwegians. The launch of the whaling ship *Kosmos* in 1929 marked the symbolic transition from the first phase of the pelagic era into the second phase, which was characterized by even greater economic advancements and a generally larger industrial scale. In the period before the ship's launch, 1925-1929, pelagic whaling increased rapidly as a consequence of the technological innovations brought by *Lancing* in 1925. Such is evident by sudden increase in produced whale oil barrels from 1926-1931, changing from 1 205 137 barrels in the season 1926/27 to 3 701 668 during the season 1930/31.³⁹ With the economic boom, “the road towards expansion without concession was opened”.⁴⁰ The industry's output in terms of profit and whale oil tripled from 1925-29.⁴¹

As part of the pelagic era, this period is referred to in Tønnessen as the golden age of pelagic whaling due to its climb to dominance, leading to it comprising more than two thirds of all whaling during the 1927/28 season.⁴² Another factor which contributed to the economic expansion of the industry was the increasing demand for margarine in this period. This was partly due to the generally improved economy at the time, giving most of society more to spend on margarine, but it was also because improved techniques of producing margarine from whale oil bettered its desirability over more expensive milk-based butter or plant oil based margarine.⁴³ As such, Anders Jahre, the lawyer involved in the launch of *Lancing* in 1925, set out to build a whaling ship purposely built for whaling, which was abnormal at the time as most whaling ships were usually rebuilt cargo- or passenger ships.⁴⁴ *Kosmos* was an enormous ship for its time, prompting a journalist to ask Anders Jahre: “When you go after the whale with such might, do you have no concern that the whale can become extinct soon?” meaning its size and technology signalled for many the coming extinction of the species as a consequence of improved technology.⁴⁵ Altogether, the economic expansion of the whaling industry from 1929

³⁹ Tønnessen 1969: 243

⁴⁰ Ibid: 347

⁴¹ Dorsey 2013: 39

⁴² Tønnessen 1969: 347

⁴³ Dorsey 2013: 22; Tønnessen 1969: 339

⁴⁴ Tjernshaugen 2018: 195-196

⁴⁵ My translation: “Når de går løs på hvalen med slike kampstyrker har De altså ingen tro på, at hvalen snart kan bli utryddet?”; Tjernshaugen 2018: 198

to 1931, started by the launch of *Kosmos*, was preceded by another period of substantial growth in the industry from 1925 to 1929, but this would be exceeded during the period 1929-31.

Norwegians felt a strong sense of prestige due to their participation in the economically strong whaling industry, which led to a strong sense of nationalism. This is a continuation of the previous pride felt during the technological innovation. However, the diction used in the articles to express opinions now was much more explicit and chauvinistic; clear signs of hostility towards foreign competition shined through. As such, the issues debated involves one of the three discussed by Dorsey: sovereignty.⁴⁶

One of the largest issues in international whale regulation was national sovereignty.⁴⁷ Whaling nations, especially Norway, felt a national pride over their involvement in the industry, resulting in several disputes over an international organ with control over a nation's sovereignty. Britain initially used their imperial leverage to impose demands from the Norwegians, but due to the Norwegian dominance of the industry the British became reliant on Norwegian whalers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, British authorities generally respected the fact that Norwegians were the first to conduct whaling on a large scale, but did not hand over licenses without discretion.⁴⁸ The other important factor at the time was the increasing power of the fat industry, particularly the monopolization of Unilever. From 1927 to 1931 the demand for margarine skyrocketed, and the British company Unilever sought to dominate the market in Norway because of Norway's position as the leader of the whaling industry.⁴⁹ This increasing demand for fat also meant the increased hunt of whales, which brought Sigurd Risting to declare in 1927 that: "...the whale stock is not inexhaustible. We cannot afford to be reckless".⁵⁰

Paradoxically, pelagic whaling met much resistance in Norway after the initial pride of the slipway-invention lost strength because Norwegian efforts to protect whale numbers were seen as positive, national effort for the good of the environment. As such, some felt that pelagic whalers gave Norwegians a bad international reputation. In addition, the increasing foreign funds from Britain created a feeling of lost pride in Norwegian whaling, but this was revitalised by Anders Jahre.⁵¹ He argued that Norwegian regulation made whaling more difficult than in

⁴⁶ Dorsey argues that sustainability, sovereignty, and science was the three main themes in modern whaling history; Dorsey 2013: 15

⁴⁷ Dorsey 2013: 43

⁴⁸ Tønnessen 1969: 254

⁴⁹ Ibid: 339-345.

⁵⁰ Norwegian: "(...) hvalbestanden er ikke uutømmelig. Vi har ikke råd til å være lettlyvede her"; Tønnessen 1969: 354

⁵¹ Tønnessen 1969: 351-363

Britain, but he proclaimed he would register the *Kosmos* company in Norway regardless to support his home country. With this action, he not only boosted his own popularity but also the nationalistic sentiments in Norway.⁵²

There was little push for international regulation before, during, and immediately after WW1, but in 1924 a League of Nations committee met to discuss regulation of whaling.⁵³ Here, Jose Leon Suarez argued for restricting hunting seasons, while Abel Gruvel wanted more extreme measures, but Johan Hjort warned both that too extreme proposals to regulation would not be accepted amongst whaling nations.⁵⁴ Surprisingly, Norway passed the first truly effective whaling regulation law in 1929, and as the largest whaling nation in the world this set an example to be followed.⁵⁵ In 1931, several whalers from different nations met in Berlin to discuss international whaling regulation, which resulted in the establishment of *The Convention for the Regulation of Whaling* (CRW).⁵⁶ This convention used the Norwegian law of 1929 deliberately as a blueprint, and was in many ways an international application of the Norwegian law. To regulate whaling it banned the hunt of certain endangered whale species, banned hunting of suckling calves and breastfeeding mother whales, required more parts of the hunted whale to be processed into finished product, required whalers to attain license from the nation they sailed a flag under, and made explicit that the convention applied for all parts of the world. Jens Andreas Mørch had long argued for the full utilization of the whale, and despite Mørch's death before 1929, his idea of logging every hunted whale on every whale ship was included in the 1929 Norwegian whale law by Sigurd Risting.⁵⁷ Both Norway and the US approved of this agreement, but Britain thought the agreement was too ineffective, however, they signed it nonetheless. Practical enforcement issues arose due to the responsibility placed on the whalers and not on independent enforcers, and in many aspects, it ultimately failed to fulfil its goals.

4.2. Economic nationalism

An article based on a speech by Ragnv. Walnum, the chairman of *The Norwegian Whaling Commission* at the time, to "*Oslo Venstrelag*" in 1929 illustrated the nationalistic sentiments at the time, concerning economic sovereignty and regulation.⁵⁸ It explained two issues as the

⁵² Ibid: 365

⁵³ Ibid: 34

⁵⁴ Jose Leon Suarez was an Argentinian zoologist on the commission of international law in The League of Nations, Dorsey 2013: 34; Jean Abel Gruvel was a French marine biologist, Dorsey 2013: 34

⁵⁵ Dorsey 2013: 36

⁵⁶ Ibid: 42-43

⁵⁷ Tønnessen 1969: 264-265

⁵⁸ My translation: «Hvalrådet»; Dagbladet, «De to store farer for norsk hvalfangst,» 21.11.1929, 1

most threatening to Norwegian whaling: foreign interference and overwhaling. It is followed by commentary on Walnum's speech by the whaling scientist Dr. Ræstad.

First, Walnum explained how the industry contributed to the national economy of Norway and not just the local industrial whaling centres in Vestfold. He attributed this to the increased pelagic whaling in 1925 and thus the Norwegian whalers, giving Norwegians credit for the invention that helped all whalers regardless of nationality. He additionally responded to criticism from foreigners by emphasizing the 1929 whale regulation law which stood as an example for others to follow. Walnum then shifted the focus towards dangerous industrial capitalists from the Norwegian whalers to British and Dutch margarine producers, Unilever. His position was to strengthen the regulation of these foreign interventions in the Norwegian economy, but Walnum did not see government regulation as the correct way of doing so, "Ultimately, it is up to the companies to save themselves".⁵⁹ His argument was that Norwegian whaling companies had to cooperate without governmental interference, meaning Walnum favoured private regulation over governmental. Furthermore, he argued Norway had a right to dominate the industry because Norwegian whalers were the first to hunt whales on a large scale in Antarctica and because of the already domination in the industry by workers in the field. He finished with:

Because it is a Norwegian business, because it can only be run with the help of Norwegian boys, because it has gotten increasingly more important for our economy, we have always been happy over the fact that it is run under the Norwegian flag. We must never see the flag removed!⁶⁰

Dr. Ræstad added that he agreed with Walnum's message, but disagreed with the neglect of the role of the state, proposing further involvement in science and improvement of better utilization of the caught whale during processing it into whale oil. As he said, cooperation and consolidation between whale companies should be done, but he had personal fears that foreign whaling companies were reluctant to cooperate with Norwegian whalers.

The representation here is an industry with problems that originate from lack of cooperation. Norwegians specifically need to cooperate, according to Walnum, if to survive foreign competition. The long quote at the end of the speech is remarkable in its nationalistic diction and use of flag symbolism. In summary, the article shows enthusiasm for the industry

⁵⁹ My translation: "Det blir, når alt kommer til alt, bedriften selv som må klare denne sak."; Ibid: 1

⁶⁰ My translation: "Fordi at det er en norsk bedrift, fordi den bare kan drives ved hjelp av norske gutter, fordi den har fått en stadig stigende betydning for vår økonomi, har vi alltid vært lykkelig over at den drives under norsk flagg. Måtte vi aldri oppleve å se flagget strøket!"; Dagbladet 1929: 2

as well as a strong belief in its ability to self-regulate, and a sense of national pride due to the increased economic importance of whaling.

4.3. Legislative legacy

Another perspective perceived whale conservation more favourably than the previous article, but with the caution that it is only positive as long as it does not hinder economic growth in the Norwegian whaling industry. The Norwegian media portrayed CRW proudly as inspired by the Norwegian whale regulation law of 1929, and thus as a continuation of the work laid by the Norwegians. “*The Norwegian Trade- and Shipping Gazette*” published an article in 1931 written by an unknown author regarding the international attempt of whale regulation, describing it as beneficial to the Norwegian whaling community more than as a contribution to the protection of whales.⁶¹ As it is from a national newspaper interested in all matters of trade and shipping, this was intended for everyone interested in such and not just for whalers.

In essence, the article described the similarities between the Norwegian whaling law of 1929 and the CRW of 1931, both of them designed to limit the restrictions as to not cause harm to the short-term economic aspect of the whaling industry. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the author was mainly concerned of the industry and not of protecting the whales themselves by his proclamation that “(...) one cannot with the help of legal restrictions prevent all kinds of accidents”.⁶² The author viewed potential overwhaling not too pessimistically, hoping for lessons to be learned from past failures, but was clearly referring a crisis as an economic issue and not environmental in relation to the conservation of whales.

This article on the 1931 CRW agreement relates to the larger picture by including themes such as nationalism and governmental regulation. More importantly, it may illustrate the opinions held by many at the time, that whale regulation was to protect economic interests of the industry and not the whales themselves as zoologists argued. A commonly held view by whalers at the time was that decimation of the whale stock was regrettable, but the benefits it gave to the national economy and scientific research outweighed the costs.⁶³ Put in a more blunt way, Dorsey explains that: “whales were strange and interesting (...)”, but seen first and foremost as food and energy for humans.⁶⁴ The representation provided in this article of whales

⁶¹ My translation: «*Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende*»; Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende, «Hvalloven», 18.09.1931, 3

⁶² My translation: “(...) man kan nu en gang ikke ved hjelp av loverrestriksjoner forbebygge allverdens ulykker”; Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende 1931: 3

⁶³ Dorsey 2013: 9

⁶⁴ Ibid: 10

is that whales is a resource for humans to be harvested, and the most important reason for regulation is to prevent the overextension of it. Thus, he reinforces the notion that national economic interests come before the conservation of whales at a global level.

Hence, this strongly relates to Dorsey's "fisherman's problem", because most people want a sustainable industry but few want to sacrifice personal gains. It therefore made Norwegians feel proud that they played an important part in creating regulation that protected whales. Regulation of whaling became increasingly important because of the potential economic profits and fears of whale extinction. As previously mentioned, Dorsey identifies sustainability and sovereignty, alongside science, as the main issues confronting whalers during the interwar period.⁶⁵ Sustainability and sovereignty were evident in the minds of most people, as said by a whaler at the time: "Catching is the same the world over. You must grab what you can before the next man comes".⁶⁶ This perspective of whalers helps explain why negotiating an agreement was so difficult; whalers had a "short-term gambling mentality" due to the harsh nature of the industry.⁶⁷ And whalers saw few benefits from regulation, indeed, they mostly gained restrictions on the industry from authorities.⁶⁸ The competition between whalers themselves was just as important as the conflict between whalers and governments. Technology enabled the whaling industry to become immensely wealthy to such a degree that authorities had little leverage in negotiations. As such, the industry continued to use wasteful processing methods since implemented regulation was hard to practically uphold, as a famous saying of the time claimed of pelagic whaling in the Antarctic Ocean: "Below 40 degrees no law, below 50 degrees no God".⁶⁹

The legislative legacy by Norway was portrayed by *The Norwegian Trade- and Shipping Gazette* as for the benefit of the international whaling community because it secured the economic foundation of the industry. Regardless, the emphasis remained on the benefit of the industry and not the whales themselves. The discourse in Norway continued to be centred on the expansion of Norwegian whaling.

4.4. Conclusion – Period of boom and expansion

During the economic expansion of pelagic whaling, the media displayed nationalistic pride over the Norwegian contribution to the industry. Some derived this pride from technical

⁶⁵ Ibid: 15

⁶⁶ Ibid: 14

⁶⁷ Ibid: 17

⁶⁸ Ibid: 28-31

⁶⁹ Ibid: 30

contribution, while others drew it from the legislative efforts to balance the interests of whalers and whale-conservationists. Despite the efforts to establish protection of some whale species and suckling calves, it was clear that the media discourse favoured the interests of the industry over ecological concerns. This is evident from the constant reminder that regulation was good as long as it did not harm economic profit. Ultimately, the economic boom led to increased nationalistic reactions in the media discourse.

5. Crisis and consolidation

5.1. The death blow

In contrast to the previous chapter of economic expansion, this chapter entails the detrimental crisis of the whaling industry during the season of 1931-1932. Caused by the great depression in 1929, it caused 150 000 metric tons of whale oil to remain unsold on the market in 1931.⁷⁰ Solutions to the problem fell into the categories of complete abandonment or salvation, and everything between. Previous opponents to the industry proposed its complete shutdown, while engineers wanted better utilization of the whale so the industry would require less whales, creating enough whale oil to ensure whalers' jobs and protect the remaining whale stocks. The crisis shattered the national confidence mentioned in the previous chapter. Some reacted by directing their anger towards "traitors" such as Lars Christensen. His cooperation with Unilever was described as "the ultimate betrayal", an act of treason to Norwegian whaling. This, with the emergence of Japan and Germany in the industry, seemed to be the death blow to Norwegian whaling.⁷¹

Following the crisis, the industry consolidated itself through private cooperation and international regulation (most notably the CRW in 1931). Whaling ships followed the large-scale industrial tradition set by Kosmos, but the consolidation also meant the contraction of whaling companies and reduction of ships.⁷² Only the strongest whaling companies survived the crisis, and they did so by consolidating their fleets and improving whaling techniques. Thus, the amount of caught whale would only increase as the crisis passed.

It is in this political climate that two essential opinions differed on the solution to the crisis, where people such as Aagaard favoured harsh regulation or the complete shutdown of the industry, others, such as Eilif Heyerdahl, wanted a more technologically efficient industry. While Heyerdahl did favour some governmental intervention in the whaling industry, he emphasized the efforts that could be made by the whaling companies themselves without the use of government policies. This stands in contrast to that of Aagaard, who strongly favoured state intervention and was furious at the Norwegian government for not submitting to an international British license system for whaling.⁷³

⁷⁰ Tjernshaugen 2018: 210

⁷¹ Tønnessen 1969: 436-446; Peder Roberts, "The friend who outstayed his welcome? Johan Hjort and the Difficulties of bringing Science to bear upon Whaling," in *Whaling and History IV – Papers presented at a symposium in Sandefjord on the 20th and 21st of June 2013*, editor Jan Erik Ringstad (Sandefjord: Commander Chr. Christensen's Whaling Museum, 2014)

⁷² Tjernshaugen 2018: 216

⁷³ Tønnessen 1969: 415

Bjarne Aagaard had repeatedly spoken out against the industry's destructive effect on whales, as he expressed on the 1931 convention in Geneva: "Hjort has been sent to Geneva, apparently to make up for old sins".⁷⁴ Aagaard referred to the message given by Hjort to the 1914 committee in front of the League of Nations, in which Hjort proclaimed the whaling population to be large and the likelihood of extinction to be minimal. And despite the agreed regulation in 1931 (CRW), Aagaard was dissatisfied, calling the agreement "laughable" and "toothless", arguing that its basis, the 1929 Norwegian whale law, was just as useless, hindering any real effort to protect whales.⁷⁵ In response to Aagaard's attack, Johan Hjort countered with two main arguments: the high costs of Antarctic expeditions restricted extinction due to economic difficulties, and the rapid reproductive rate of the blue whale would ensure the survival of the species.⁷⁶ This last argument based itself on the wrongly assessed fact by the Discovery-expedition that blue whales became mature after only 2 years, when in reality blue whales only become mature after 8-10 years.⁷⁷ The crisis only incited Aagaard's feud with proponents of the whaling industry.

5.2. Eliminating the irresponsible spirit

Out of the crisis, an opinion originated believing that the leaders of the whaling industry were at fault for the near extermination of whales. Bjarne Aagaard was not in favour of the whaling industry, such was apparent to everyone at the time. He openly criticised the industry's economic boom in 1929-31, and displayed anger when Norway refused to let Britain govern international laws of whale regulation.⁷⁸ In an article based on his own speech, Bjarne Aagaard attacked the leadership of whaling and called for governmental action to solve the issue.⁷⁹

Aagaard's speech is cited in the text, making the lack of a noted author less important as we can view the article as Aagaard's own words, granted the belief that the article is written truthfully. He is speaking to a crowd on the 11.09.1931 in *The Norwegian Scientific Academy* in Oslo.⁸⁰ The setting and audience tells us that Aagaard spoke in front of several people who likely also had information on the issue. Aagaard blames the people in power in the article, he states that: "the irresponsible spirit that roamed around us must be eliminated".⁸¹ His tone is

⁷⁴ My translation: "*Hjort er blitt sendt til Geneve, tilsynelatende for å rette på gamle synder*"; Tjernshaugen 2018: 213

⁷⁵ Ibid: 214

⁷⁶ Ibid: 218

⁷⁷ Ibid: 218

⁷⁸ Tønnessen 1969: 350

⁷⁹ Østlands-Posten, «Konsul Aagaards angrep på ledelsen i norsk hvalfangst», 29.09.1931, 2

⁸⁰ My translation: *Det Norske Vitenskaps-Akademi*

⁸¹ My translation: «(...) den uansvarliges ånd som rådet blandt oss må utryddes (...)»

quite judgemental and explicit, leaving little to be left to interpretation of his opinion on the Norwegian whaling industry's leadership. He held that misdirection within the industry is accompanied with lack of international cooperation in whale conservation. Aagaard wanted an international concession system, but he feared too much power lied within the hands of private, profit-seeking entrepreneurs who would bury the courts with judicial papers, slowing down the process. Here, he pointed to the source of the administrative issue which he deems to be powerful industrialists. He saw the ever increasingly powerful margarine industry from Britain (notably Unilever) as the true motor behind the machine he feared. Whalers too would not benefit from this as the interest of these industrial giants lay in capital and not within the whaling community. His call for action was to separate the margarine industry from the whaling industry as to not make them interdependent on one another. His prediction was that the margarine industry would become based on plant oil and not whale oil, collapsing the whaling industry. As such, the whale industry would collapse, the only decision now was for whalers to leave with dignity or deteriorate with shame.

Aagaard's argued that Norwegian whalers were killing too many whales and not focusing enough on the zoological research possibilities with the species, such as its migration patterns.⁸² He suggested that more information about the species would only help the whaling industry while also aiding whale conservation. This relates to the year 1931, as it was a time of crisis within the industry since whales had been hunted to such an extent that larger whales in the Antarctic could possibly go extinct. His arguments were scientific and quantitative in nature, warning the crowd that whalers were killing more whales now in one season than had been done over several centuries before the invention of modern whaling. More specifically, Aagaard blames the advent of pelagic whaling as the culprit for such a dramatic increase in numbers of killed whales. He went on shaming the Norwegian government for not taking any responsibility in the matter, and he somewhat appealed to Norwegian nationalism, arguing that whaling was damaging the international reputation of the nation as a whole. His solution was more governmental action and scientific expeditions to the Antarctic to uncover the realities and consequences of unrestricted whaling. His next arguments followed the basic premises that the whaling industry was dying as it reached its maximum sustainable yield, but that pelagic whaling saved it by allowing further exploitation.⁸³ Thus, he represented pelagic whaling as an

⁸² Østlands-Posten 1931: 6

⁸³ Aagaard utilizes Johan Hjort's concept of the maximum Potential yield of whaling, which used the amount of hunted whales to determine the extent of the whale stock. Hjort had previously used this concept when defending the whaling industry from accusations of overwhaling, arguing that whale Atlantic whale stocks in the early 20th century were not near extinction since whalers reported spotting several whales at sea; Roberts 2013: 139

unnatural way of hunting since they were not allowed to escape or migrate to safe areas of the ocean. In short, Aagaard argued that saving the industry meant killing the whales, and for him the issue was zero-sum, meaning only one can be saved, and he positioned himself on the side of the whales.

How, then, does Aagaard's presentation in the article contribute to the discourse? He proclaims that pelagic whaling has become too effective and will eventually exterminate the species, culminating in the death of the industry itself as it is dependent on whales. Aagaard's contribution to the discourse acts as a challenge to most of the written statements and representations of pelagic whaling. He agrees on the technical efficiency brought by floating factories, but he disagrees in the results this will have for the industry as a whole. The arguments brought forward in the speech are obvious vocal attacks towards the whaling industry, but he also reminds the crowd that his predictions involve the destruction of the industry brought on by themselves. Therefore, Aagaard comes with a gloomy prediction for the industry's future, agreeing with the technological prowess but calling for a more cautious future of pelagic whaling.

Bjarne Aagaard is opposed to the powerful industrialists who control the whaling industry, and proposes government action to protect the whale stock for scientific and national reputational reasons. He saw the industry, which he disliked, as ruled by powers behind the scene, which could be utilized to win over whalers into stopping the mass producing of whale oil. By separating the margarine industry from the whaling industry, extinction of the species would become a lot less possible. Placed within the larger discourse, Aagaard appealed more to whalers in these statements by aligning some of his interests with them. Thus, the issue is represented as a struggle for the common man against tyrannical powers, and whaling as an industry is again represented as one of inevitable crash. The only possible solution was to leave with dignity.

5.3. Need for effectivization

As is often the case in a discourse when extreme opinions are expressed, others counter with a mediating opinion. This occurred when Aagaard proposed radical measures to stop the industry; engineers came with solutions which could not fix the problem entirely but perhaps find common ground. For an engineer, the proposal to stop the whole industry seemed as an extreme measure and not necessary since it could be solved with more cautious methods. The Norwegian engineer Eilif Fredrik Heyerdahl expressed his opinion in NWG during the crisis in 1932: better

engineering technology is needed in the whaling industry in order to maximise its purpose.⁸⁴ In this instance, the word “purpose” is used vaguely since Heyerdahl is of the opinion that technological improvements are generally better for most cases, not just economic concerns.

Heyerdahl had several articles in NWG before the whaling crisis. He always emphasized the importance of efficiency of whale body utilization since this would protect the species from overfishing and provide better economic profit.⁸⁵ Heyerdahl could be interpreted as a man of an age where technological advancement and efficiency was of the higher ideal, or as a man deeply invested in the whaling industry. In either case, Heyerdahl speaks highly positively of the whaling industry as a whole but especially of Norwegian whaling which he saw as the legitimate owners of the profession.

Whalers tended “skim the cream”, only utilizing the bare minimum of the whale in order to decrease time used at sea to maximise profit.⁸⁶ The wasteful practices led to a demand for increased efficiency in technological terms. As a result, general optimism within the Norwegian whaling community arose as whaling companies wanted more efficient ways to hunt and process whales. Heyerdahl argued that better utilization of the whale could keep profits high while sparing the lives of other whales. From his scientific research, he discovered that 50-60% of the whale (that was not blubber) could be potentially cooked into whale oil, which was a significant discovery since most whalers simply flensed the blubber and discarded the rest.⁸⁷

What importance did Heyerdahl’s article have? Not surprisingly, Heyerdahl, an engineer, was focused on efficiency. The essential aspect here is how his representation of the issue regarding pelagic whaling relates to the broader discourse as a whole and how he represents engineers in the discourse. He does, as mentioned, focus largely on the technological aspects and difficulties relating to pelagic whaling. Heyerdahl mentions Johan Hjort’s accomplishments, and praises his technological innovations that made pelagic whaling the huge industry it had become in 1932.⁸⁸ His concern is the seemingly lack of interest and motivation from whalers in optimizing hunted whale carcasses.

To emphasize his point, he drew attention to an important issue to most industrialists: economic profit. He argued that whale oil will always be the most profitable aspect of whaling, but that much more can be made on the other auxiliary parts of the whale, such as the production of guano and bone meal. As of the time writing the article, such production only accounted by

⁸⁴ E. Fred. Heyerdahl, «Accounts of engineer E. Fred. Heyerdahl», *Norsk Hvalfangst-Tidende*, April 1932, 1

⁸⁵ E. Fred. Heyerdahl, «Oljeutvinding av limvand», *Norsk Hvalfangst-Tidende*, August 1925, 1-2

⁸⁶ Dorsey 2013: 8

⁸⁷ Tønnessen 1969: 7

⁸⁸ Heyerdahl 1932: 2

a fraction of the whaling industry because of the technological inefficiency.⁸⁹ This inefficiency was caused by the dominance of pelagic factory whaling ships since their process was wholly based around cooking the blubber and not the production of guano or bone meal. Pelagic ships always played catch-up with land-based whaling stations in terms of technology, but as whale oil refining became better on pelagic ships, production of auxiliary material remained the same. This was caused by the profitability of whale oil and the nature of pelagic ships; when ships could follow migrating whales the need of utilizing the whole whale went down since whale oil was more accessible.⁹⁰ Likewise, when whale oil prices went up due to low whale numbers in the early 1930s, more of the whale needed to be used in order to make a profit, which partly explains why Heyerdahl is appealing to this economic aspect. Pelagic whaling should become more efficient in using every part of the whale in order to make a better profit, Heyerdahl argued.⁹¹ As such, research is needed if the industry is to reach its productive peak.

In that sense, Heyerdahl agrees with Sigurd Risting that the technological innovations are part of the natural evolution to the whaling industry. Similarly, they share the positive perspective on technology and science, believing it is mostly good for the whaling industry if it is implemented correctly, and they also agree that Norwegian whalers should adopt technology early to gain an advantage. There were other motivations to use other parts of the whale than just the blubber. Heyerdahl goes on the assumption that a hunter should not let a killed animal go to waste, such would only be reminiscent of the buffalos on the American plains (a metaphor commonly used with whaling).⁹² This is not to argue to align people of the 1930s with animal rights movements or environmental conservationists since such ideas were not common, and in many places outright unknown of. However, Heyerdahl never appealed to any higher authority in the article, he simply appealed to the common notion most humans have, that wasting a killed animal is wrong since effort can be made into preventing such. As an engineer, Heyerdahl was more concerned with the ethical implications of inefficiency which he saw as a problem in need of fixing, not necessarily because of the well-being of whales, but more because he was in a profession where efficiency is the higher ideal.⁹³

Different from Aagaard's solution, Heyerdahl wanted private corporations to solve the issue with as little governmental intervention as possible. Where Aagaard appealed to the fall in international reputation of Norwegians, Heyerdahl warned that Norwegian whalers would

⁸⁹ Dorsey 2013: 9

⁹⁰ Tønnessen 1969: 6

⁹¹ Heyerdahl 1932: 3

⁹² Tjernshaugen 2018: 170

⁹³ Ibid: 4

fall behind others if they did not improve their technological efficiency. If Norwegians did not hunt whale, others would do so with possibly more wasteful techniques, which is why he favoured improved productivity as a better solution than governmental regulation.

In short, Heyerdahl provided suggestions for improvement to the pelagic whaling industry. By viewing the issue as a matter of lack of technological innovation and need of better efficiency, Heyerdahl argued measures should be taken to improve the whaling industry's economy and moral use of hunted whales. His viewpoint should not be interpreted as an early sign of environmental concern nor of animal activism, but rather as an engineer wanting a more efficient whaling industry.

5.4. Conclusion - Period of crisis and consolidation

The crisis shook the industry and changed the discourse. Aagaard meant the international reputation of Norwegians had to be saved by abandoning the industry, while Heyerdahl suggested that national prestige could be restored by improving the technical efficiency of pelagic whaling. Importantly, we see a stop of the previous chauvinistic sentiments towards foreign competition, due to the decline of Norwegian whaling.⁹⁴ Aagaard wanted government regulation to help solve the issue, and saw international cooperation as the best way to ensure whale conservation. Heyerdahl proposed improved efficiency to avoid government interference and loss of sovereignty to an international supervisor. Technologically, Aagaard's scepticism stood in contrast to Heyerdahl's optimism. Aagaard shared distrust of the international margarine producers with previous discourse opinions during the economic expansion. Both Aagaard and Heyerdahl agreed that the industry had to change if it was to survive, but they disagreed on how to achieve this.

⁹⁴ Dorsey 2013: 46

6. Conclusion

Through my analysis, I have come to the conclusion that the media discourse on pelagic whaling from 1925 to 1932 was characterised by a heightened sense of national pride in Norway, starting with the technological invention of the stern slipway. This economic nationalism rose and fell with the same rate as whaling itself, and Norwegians felt a sense of ownership over the industry, as can be seen in the interest of regulation during the crisis.

Sigurd Risting expressed his enthusiasm for the invention and how it was a part of the technological evolution, only waiting to be adapted. Simultaneously, Næss focused on the Congo incident and how the stern slipway created polarisation within the industry and between nationalities. Both articles enforce the notion of Norwegian pride in the discourse. The second phase was characterised by expansion of whaling in economic and industrial terms. A local article displayed the feeling of economic nationalism that arose, wanting more growth and less international interference from large corporations and governments. Another article expressed pride over Norway's role in regulating the industry and conserving whales, but still being cautious since too much regulation could have resulted in worsened profits. Pride in the industry diminished when the crisis hit in 1931, which resulted in a fall in the previous nationalism displayed during the expansion period. Aagaard proposed to restore national pride by abandoning what he deemed a failed industry, this would be achieved by using governmental action to stop whaling. Heyerdahl sought to consolidate the industry by improving the technological efficiency of whaling, increasing its yield of whale oil. Both agreed that the whaling industry had to change.

Broader themes and patterns developed throughout the years of the discourse. Technology was met with both enthusiasm and scepticism, dependent on the interests of the individual expressing the opinion. Additionally, some advocated for efficiency in the technology, but this came in different ways. Risting celebrated the increased hunting capacity brought by the slipway, but Heyerdahl wished for a more efficient way of processing the caught whale. Because the technology was Norwegian, articles in the media reflected the feelings of heightened nationalism.⁹⁵ At first, the nationalism was a sense of pride in the Norwegian legacy of modern whaling, but as the industry kept increasing so too did chauvinistic sentiments towards foreign whalers. Despite this, the nationalistic pride faded when its foundation, the economic strength of the industry, diminished. Nonetheless, distrust of foreign intervention

⁹⁵ Despite previous attempts, Sørle's patent is considered the first legitimate patent of a slipway for whaling; Tønnessen 1969: 52

from both other companies and governments was high, with the exception of conservationists such as Bjarne Aagaard. Similarly, regulation of the industry was not wanted when its economic potential seemed endless, but when the limitations of the whale stock were obvious, people expressed a more positive outlook on regulation. When some wanted regulation, they either fell into the category of private- or governmental effort.

Another significant theme in the discourse from 1925 to 1932 was the increasing partisanship and amounts of subject positions. The mentioned polarisation during the Congo-incident illustrates how Petter Sørille's slipway divided the industry by allowing some whalers to conduct whaling without concession, sparking the conflict between "the pelagic" and "the concessioned" whalers. Furthermore, zoologists interested in whale research clashed with whalers during this phase when whaling kept growing in numbers. Later, during the expansion period, the nationalities of whaling companies became more important, shown through the increased nationalistic presentations in the media. It is during the crisis we see a clear divide between the engineering solutions to the crisis as opposed to the scientists' proposal. Engineers focused on increased technical efficiency while scientists offered a more hard-line solution of stopping the industry in interest of whales. Engineers seemed to favour the industry over whales while scientists seemed to favour the conservation of whales over the industry.

Apart from the thematic patterns, the discourse itself had a cumulative nature since most of the articles contributed with new representations, and on few occasions did articles reinforce or refute previous statements. The result was a nuanced discourse spectrum comprised of several opinions. Additionally, NWG's articles had less controversial messages as it was the authoritative publisher on whaling. In contrast, the articles in the daily newspapers were more expressive in their messages as they had no obligation to the whole whaling community. Through the analysis of the discourse, the articles show clear changes at dramatic events such as the invention of the slipway, the increasing economic expansion and the launch of Kosmos, and the crisis. Granted, the limited nature of this bachelor thesis restricts the scope of the conclusion, but it can nonetheless direct further research towards important issues in the history of modern whaling.

In relation to historical research of modern whaling as a whole, the results of this analysis show that Norwegians felt a strong connection between the whaling industry and their national identity. Moreover, the results illustrate how the discourse evolved when technological innovations were introduced, and how the industry polarised into several subject positions opposing each other on how to solve the issues within the industry. The results also exemplify how discourse analysis can provide insight to historical development of technology within an

industry. For further research, a more comprehensive analysis should be done to a fuller extent to create an even better understanding of the period, and use discourse analysis to help illuminate on issues in pelagic whaling.

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