

日本環境報

Published more or less monthly at 400 Yamanashi-ken, Kofu-shi, Saiwai-cho 18-11, Kofu, Japan. Email:

RLDAVIS@DCTWCS.DAS.NET

Nature Network: NNX00027

Nifty Serve: MHB00556

E-NET: ENET009D

Editor and Publisher: Rick Davis (Kofu)

Address: Same as above.

Telephone/fax: 0552-28-5386

Co-Editor: Maggie Suzuki (Shikoku)

769-29 Kagawa-ken, Okawa-gun,

Hiketa-cho, Kureha 279-1, JAPAN

Telephone/fax: 0879-33-6763

Staff: Kakuta Naoko (Saitama)
Prabuddha (Yakushima)
Richard Forrest (Washington)
David Kubiak (Kyoto)
Noike Motoki (Nagano)
Aoki Harumi (Kanagawa)

News Shorts Editors:

Steve Hesse (Yokohama)
George Crane (Nagoya)

Art Editors:

Chris Stone (Shizuoka)
Miho Akasaka Stone ("")
Advertising/Circulation Managers:
Richard Evanoff (Hachioji)
Takahashi Atsuko (Tokyo)
Todo Mariko (Kamakura)
Sakai Kinoto (Isehara)

Poetry Editor:

Scott Watson

□ JEM was conceived as a publication meant to bring news from Japan of concern to the worldwide green/grass roots movement, and to link Japanese organizations and activists with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

□ Subscriptions for one year: ¥5,000 in Japan, payable directly by post office transfer (Kōfu 4-8887); US\$35 abroad, payable in cash or by international postal money order in US\$ (no checks, please). However, payment in the United States may be made by check. To subscribe or renew in the US, send payment by check (US banks only) made out to Japan Environment Monitor to 1941 Ogden Road, Wilmington, OH 45177. Please allow several weeks for processing.

□ Typesetting and production by editor; printed on recycled paper.

□ Funding: Subscriptions, reader donations, and editor's pocketbook.

Japanese Post Office Transfer Account:

日本環境報-甲府4-8887

(Nihon Kankyō-hō, Kōfu 4-8887)

□ JEM welcomes contributions from readers and grass roots activists. Manuscripts and other information may be sent to either of the editors.

□ Information in this journal may be used without prior consent, but we ask that credit be given to the publication and to individual writers and translators.

□ Subscription expiration dates are shown on mailing labels. For example, 1090 means that person's subscription expires in October, 1990.

NOTE: Japanese names and addresses in JEM are in the Japanese order. Family names precede given names. Thus, the prime minister of Japan is Miyazawa Kiichi, not Kiichi Miyazawa. Addresses in Japanese proceed from large divisions to small, a logical convention, really.

*Responsibility for the content of bylined articles rests with the authors, as do any copyrights.

*JEM is totally a volunteer effort; no one is paid, not even the editors.

*Cover calligraphy by Sano Miyoko

How Environmental Issues Degenerate into Nationalistic Issues

by Richard Evanoff

The following is a letter I sent to the editor of the Japan Times, which to my knowledge has not yet been published. Maybe it was too long, or maybe they didn't feel the point of view was representative of anyone else besides the single hardcore environmentalist way out in left field who wrote it. Even if the letter has appeared in the Japan Times by the time this goes to print, it might be worth reprinting in JEM because it points out, I hope, some of the problems that develop when debate over environmental issues degenerates into nationalistic posturing.

Dear Editor:

The Japan Times reported in its Tuesday, June 23 issue that hundreds of politicians, Buddhists, bureaucrats, and celebrities gathered for a banquet of whale meat to protest what they felt was the "cultural imperialism" of environmentalists who would like to permanently ban commercial whaling. Let me reassure those who attended the banquet that environmentalists have no racist or discriminatory intentions when they call for a ban on whaling. The issue is not, as Fishery Agency official Shima Kazuo said, a "cultural war" between Western civilization and Japanese who eat whale meat. Whaling is first and foremost an environmental issue, not a cultural one. In the current environmental crisis the advanced countries of the world — including both the West and Japan — must curb overconsumptive lifestyles which threaten the environment.

Environmentalists must object, however, to the oversimplistic thinking which sees Japan as a "whale-eating culture" and the West as a "meat-eating culture." In the first place, it is obvious that since meat is widely consumed in Japan as well as in the West, Japanese themselves are also to blame for the environmental destruction caused by meat production. In the second place, other countries besides Japan have a legitimate environmental interest in whales, even if they do not eat whale meat. Japan does not have sole ownership over whales in international waters simply because it classifies itself as "whale-eating" and other countries as "meat-eating." The whales belong to no one country. The real "cultural imperialism" isn't coming from environmentalists working to protect whales on behalf of all the people of the world, but from a minority who feel they have a "right" to kill as many whales as they like, with total disregard for the majority of the world's countries opposed to whaling and in defiance of legitimate international measures taken to protect the whales. If the Japanese ban-

queters are truly concerned about "cultural imperialism," why did they fail to make the connection between the disposable wooden chopsticks used at the banquet and the cultural genocide of the Penan natives who live in the Malaysian rainforests, currently being devastated by Japanese companies that profit from Japan's wasteful consumption of wood products?

Japanese who are concerned about the environment should be encouraged to speak out against whaling in order to demonstrate that Japan is not in fact totally "homogeneous" in its attitude towards whaling. Until this internal criticism is more fully developed and recognized among the Japanese themselves, arguments against whaling will be regarded as "foreign pressure," no matter how legitimate they are on purely environmental grounds. Instead of looking at the real issues, pro-whaling advocates can simply dismiss the criticism of non-Japanese environmentalists as "Japan bashing," and thus shift public attention in Japan away from the environmental damage caused by those who make enormous profits from whaling. By cooperating with each other, ecologically concerned Japanese and Westerners can confront any country's attempt to legitimize environmental destruction by appealing to cultural traditions. The "cultural war" is not between Japan and the West, but between those who are ecologically sensitive and those who are not, regardless of nationality. The banqueters themselves perpetuate cultural chauvinism by twisting a purely environmental issue into a confrontation between Japan and the rest of the world. Instead of inflaming racist and cultural tension, concerned citizens in Japan and the West should be working together to overcome our common problems of overconsumptive lifestyles, corporate profiteering, government irresponsibility, and the environmental destruction which results.

Sincerely
Richard Evanoff

1992 World Congress on Adventure Travel and Eco-Tourism

September 20-23, 1992. For reservations and information contact: The Adventure Travel Society, 6551 S. Revere Parkway, Suite 160, Englewood, CO 80111 USA. Telephone (303) 649-9016, FAX (303) 649-9017.