

## Save the planet, screw the whales

IT'S BEEN ALMOST A WEEK SINCE A JAPANESE whaling fleet left the port of Shimomoseki in southern Japan on what the Japanese Fisheries Agency hails as the largest-ever scientific whale hunt—but the wave of criticism its departure has generated continues to grow.

The crew members of the Antarctic whale hunt, which is expected to last through April, have stated that they hope to kill as many as 50 humpback and 50 fin whales, plus 935 minke whales. Numerous environmental groups have chastised the project, and its motives are also being scrutinized by members of several governmental bodies from Australia, New Zealand, the US, and the European Union.

But while jumping on the anti-Japanese bandwagon is all the rage lately, there's little consensus as to what the problem with the whale-hunt really is.

Technically speaking, Japan is within its legal rights: under the International Whaling Convention moratorium on commercial whaling that took effect in 1986, scientific whale hunts are permissible for research purposes.

Some critics are claiming that Japan uses science as a cover for commercial whaling, but so far, no concrete proof has been produced showing that whales killed on "scientific hunts" end up on dinner tables.

Even though this is believed to be the first time that hunting of humpback whales has occurred since they were put under international protection in 1963, there's no proof that this count will endanger the species that's since been moved into protective status.

Whether or not it's necessary to kill whales in order to conduct research on their reproductive and feeding patterns, as Japan claims, is debatable. But without evidence that the number of whales killed on this hunt will endanger their overall populations, a preference for using an alternative for whale studies that don't involve killing the sea mammals isn't a legitimate reason to peg Japan as the big, bad whale killer of the east.

There are no legal or sustainable grounds for opposing the whale hunt, and the conceivable reason that so many people are still opposed to the hunt lies in a desire to feed into the romanticized cause to "save the whales."

People like to personify whales, thinking of them as gentle giants of the deep. And it's this mentality that leads to them unjustifiably confusing the act of killing whales with barbarism.

There's nothing inhumane about killing whales, if not for the simple fact that the sea creatures aren't human. And the current high-seas showdown the Japanese whaling-hunt now faces with environmental groups only exemplifies the illogical reasoning of most anti-whaling yuppies.

Expedition protester David Walsh has claimed that "it's a large ocean, but we're going to track them down," apparently without regard to the amount of resources the pointless protesting is wasting. It would be interesting to find out, for example, how much oil is currently being used to propel Greenpeace's ship, the *Esperanza*, around in circles to track the Japanese fleet.

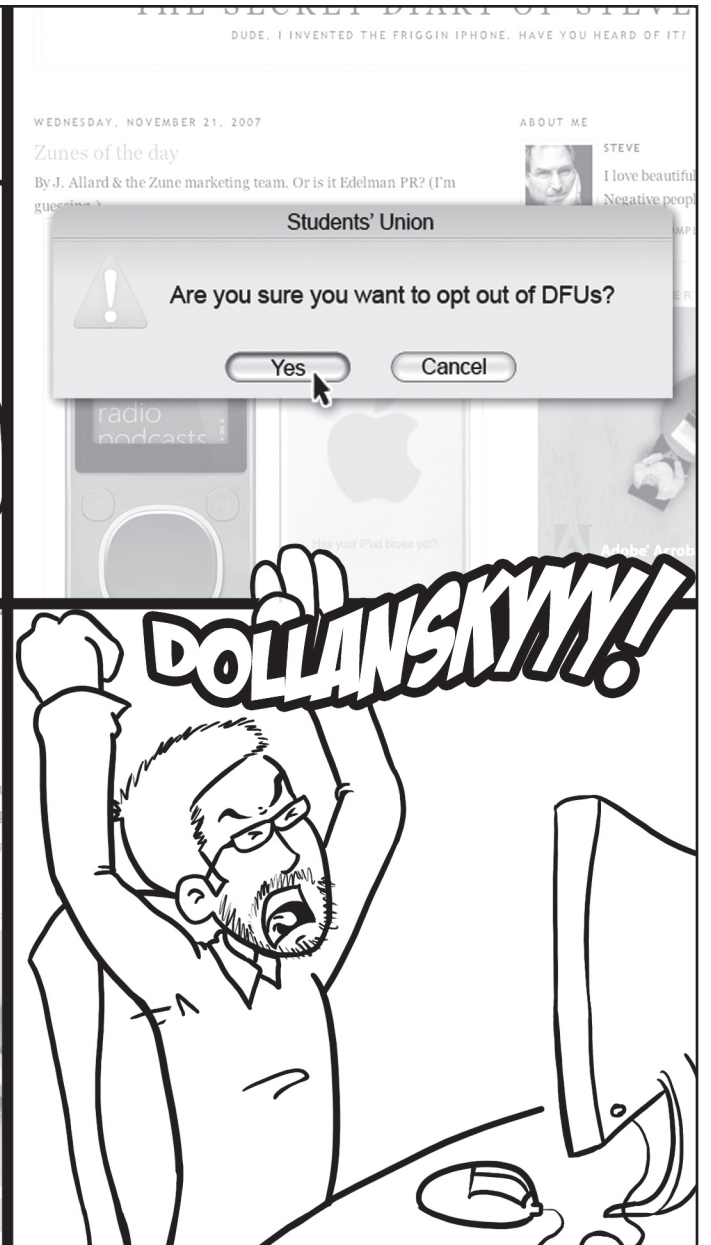
Japan shouldn't be given free reign to suck in all the sea life it wants, but if sustainable whaling is possible, then there's no reason to disallow hunting them for scientific or even commercial purposes. After all, an animal is an animal, and let's not forget the plethora of lab rats that are given various diseases for our benefit.

And while there may be no direct correlation between researching dead whales and benefiting humans, we could still eat them. I've had whale; it's kind of chewy, and not all that bad.

A lot of people just need a cause to cling to, and this recent anti-whale-hunt fad is no different. Whales aren't even cute. The idea of trying to "save" something is just a ploy to soothe the modern radical environmental activist's guilty conscience of all the past unsustainable practices humans have engage in—lest we forget the bison.

The whole whale hunting debate has become sidetracked by such types, who just need to fight for something. But unless the International Whaling Convention decides otherwise, Japan should sail ahead with their hunt—and in the meantime, I'll save the whale for dessert.

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA  
Senior News Editor



MIKE KENDRICK AND CONAL PIERSE

## LETTERS

### Canada should compete for beard glory

I was happy to read about beards and moustaches at the University (re: "Drop those blades—you'll look better without a shave," 20 November). I'm hoping the trend will continue beyond November.

Do you realize that Canada has never competed at the World Beard and Moustache Championships? Even Albania has been there. Some people are wondering if Canada is even a real country.

Someone needs to do something about this, and I nominate [Conal Pierse]. The next championships will take place in Anchorage, Alaska in May 2009, so there's plenty of time for Team Canada to grow those beards into championship form.

Seriously, I will help you with this project. I'm involved in planning for Anchorage, and we want our neighbors (or neighbours) to come.

PHIL OLSEN  
Captain, Beard Team USA  
Via Email

### The handlebar 'stache seen around the world

Paul Blinov: I agree, the handlebar brush is the way to go. Mine is ten feet long. It was in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1995—I think it was eight feet long then.

PAUL MILLER  
"Mr Moustache"  
Via Email

### CF no longer the CAF

(Re: "More spending needed to bulk

up CAF," 20 November) I feel that I need to point out that the CAF no longer exists—as the title implies.

It did once refer to two organizations—the Canadian Air Force, as it was known before gaining its "Royal" title in 1924, and the Canadian Armed Forces. The latter is now known however as simply the Canadian Forces, with the appropriate acronym being CF.

TAMARA SUTHERLAND  
Arts III

### Commies won't change

In your response to the article "China has to shape up before they can host the Olympic Games," (20 November) I'm afraid that it's just too late. As long as the Communist Party is in control, the only path that they are able to see is to continue and escalate their bullying, both internally and internationally. The only hope for an honourable outcome is the elimination of the Chinese Communist Party.

KATHLEEN GILLIS  
Via Email

### Why didn't we write a two-page feature on this?

If anyone hasn't gone for a tour of the new Espresso Book Machine yet, they should definitely check it out. I took a look last Friday and was really impressed. The Bookstore's director [Todd] Anderson was nice enough to give me a tour and let me watch the printing in action, and he also patiently answered questions and gave me some background on how the University purchased it.

The Espresso is already making a name for itself by letting local artists publish their own work for

cheap. Combined with things like Project Gutenberg, the Open Library Project, and the University's ability to get printing rights through the Open Content Alliance, the Espresso becomes a very valuable tool. If you can print almost any book in just a few minutes at a cost of five cents per page, what's not to like? Instead of paying \$30 for a philosophy text, or even \$16 when buying it online, you can now pay \$4. Better yet, you can have the book in your hands in time to finish that last-minute homework project.

Todd Anderson and everyone else involved in the purchasing of the Espresso Machine deserve both praise and thanks for helping to keep the U of A on the cutting edge. The Espresso Machine combined with digital book distribution makes it feel like the future has finally arrived.

DAVE SCHAEFER  
Comp Sci IV

### Swimming after the Bear Scat boat

I would like to add my voice to the majority of U of A students who expect and demand that our elected Students' Union respect the mandate given them by voters on the promise of continued support for Bear Scat. Bear Scat is an essential service to the many thousands of students attending this school due to the incredible increase in efficiency it allows when registering for courses.

It may be that the SU is being pressured to drop Bear Scat support thanks to the inordinate amount of money spent by the University to develop Bear Tracks. Quite frankly, this is irrelevant, as the student body didn't make that decision. Bear Scat was created for the students by the

students (one Steve Kirkham, long may his name be praised).

By refusing to support a service so strongly endorsed by the vast majority of U of A students, you as the Students' Union executive are flagrantly disregarding the best interests of the students of the U of A, whom it is your job to serve.

I attended the U of A for four years and may be returning next year to study medicine. During those years, I experienced the phone registration system, the sudden switch to Bear Tracks, and the immense relief that was provided by Bear Scat. I can say without question that Bear Scat contributed to my academic success at the U of A, particularly being extremely busy as a student-athlete and chorister. I attribute Bear Scat with enabling me to balance my academic demands and achieve higher grades.

I would ask that each of you return the good faith displayed by Mr Kirkham in his efforts to serve the U of A student body and offer the SU's support to the continued functioning of Bear Scat.

STEWART MAWDSLEY  
U of A Alumnus

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