

EDITORIAL

We have recently heard from a number of sources that the provisions of Annex II of MARPOL (see also page 4), governing the prevention of marine pollution by noxious liquid substances, while in themselves perfectly adequate may be prejudiced by the physical limitations of harbour reception facilities, either existing or likely to exist by April 1987 when the annex is supposed to come into force. We are pursuing some enquiries into this matter and hope to be able to report in a future issue.

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This Summer's IWC Meeting (see also page 8) illustrates the remarkable change which has come over the Commission. Only a few years ago it was agreeing quotas for hundreds of sperm whales and now finds itself monitoring an almost total moratorium for commercial whaling. This success, however, presents a difficult challenge, for the Commission must readjust to its new and vital role as an arbiter of the scientific basis for the proper management of whales. No-one should forget that the moratorium is not for ever.

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Page 20 contains a photograph of the former UK Secretary of State for the Environment receiving a plaque of the World Charter for Nature. Readers may have noticed that since then, Prime Minister Thatcher has appointed a new Minister, but although Ministers change, the plaque on the wall — and the commitment it represents — remain unaltered.

William Waldegrave, the UK Minister of State for the Environment visited recently the Federal Republic of Germany, to study the problems of marine pollution in the North Sea and the possible causes of tree damage, especially in the Black Forest area. While there he made a major speech on UK environmental policy, in which he illustrated how environmental priorities and practices differ in both countries, due to differences in geography, history and politics. In this regard he pointed out the UK "quality objectives" versus the "limit value" approach to pollution control, which have been publicized as being obstacles to the development of a common policy in the Community — but stressed that it was wrong to think that differences of philosophy or practice are necessarily incompatible.

In his opinion one of the biggest problems the community has to face, is to ensure that the price support policy of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), is commensurate with the needs of conservation of the environment. He called overpricing under the CAP an "engine of destruction" for the countryside as "The drive for ever increased production beyond what we need for food ... has sometimes forced farmers over the limits of ecologically sound land use."

Questioned at a press conference on the proposal for special area status for the North Sea under the MARPOL Convention to deal with the problems affecting this area, he replied that the UK could support a project to deal with specific problems of the North Sea (e.g., in the southern part of the German Bight) but was not in favour of a plan for the whole of the North Sea area.

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William Waldegrave