

Whale talks begin

The Associated Press

BRIGHTON, England — The International Whaling Commission opened its annual meeting Monday, with the United States and other conservationist nations campaigning for a total ban on commercial whaling.

Whale-hunting nations, led by Japan and the Soviet Union, were expected to vigorously oppose any attempt to halt whaling, which has flourished for 200 years. Scientists say the industry threatens the sea-going mammal's population.

U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens from Alaska made a weekend trip to England as the official representative of the U.S. Senate

but was not scheduled to stay for the entire trip.

Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission executive director Marie Adams, and Eugene Brower, president of the Barrow Whaling Captains and the former president of the AEWC flew to England last week to participate in the meeting.

Although the quota on bowhead whale hunting is not scheduled to be considered at this meeting, the fact that bowheads are hunted usually is brought up whenever the IWC meets. IWC observers were in Barrow this spring during the spring whale hunt.

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Stevens leads delegation; commercial talks

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Late Sunday night, the anti-whaling lobby in the commission was bolstered by the addition of two more conservationist nations, Senegal and Belize, raising total membership to 38 nations.

The commission now has 27 members which have either never hunted or stopped hunting whales. Five of these non-whaling nations, the United States, Britain, France, Australia and the Seychelles, separately intend to propose resolutions calling on all members to stop killing whales.

Their resolutions are vigorously opposed by six of the

nine non-conservationist nations headed by Japan and the Soviet Union and supported by Norway, Iceland, South Korea and Peru.

Brazil, Chile and Spain have continued to catch whales for trade reasons but their position at the current meeting of the commission has not been announced.

To obtain total cessation of commercial whaling, conservationist nations need approval by three-quarters of those present. In the past, there have been absentees when such votes were taken.

Observers say the outcome could depend on how Brazil, Spain and Chile decide to

vote, as well as on the votes of China, South Africa and The Netherlands, who in the past have abstained when major issues were at stake.

The conservationists contend that during the two centuries of commercial whaling, five of the 10 greater whale species — blue, humpback, bowhead, grey and great white whale — have been driven to near extinction and are no longer worth hunting.

Of the other five — fin, sei, brydes, sperm and minke — only the minke remains relatively abundant. It accounted for 80 percent of last year's total catch of 14,000 whales.

The whaling nations claim scientific evidence has not yet proven whales are becoming extinct.

The commission was estab-

lished in 1946 to set quotas for whaling and take other steps it considers necessary to benefit the industry and protect endangered species.