ECO

MV ECO GOES CRUISING

NO RABBIT + NO HAT = NO MAGIC

Last year’s St. Petersburg ATCM Report recognized that tourism was an important Treaty issue that should be the subject of detailed discussion here in Warsaw. That was last year.

So far this year, however, Parties have resorted to every possible trick in the procedural book to ensure that tourism is not subject to detailed discussion.

Initially, tourism was assigned to the working group on operational issues. Just as that meeting started (late, and without an agenda!), delegates were told that the Heads of Delegation had decided to assign the French papers and an ASOC paper on port state jurisdiction to another group - legal issues you see. The operational group was left with the technical papers plus ASOC’s substantive (but seemingly inconvenient) paper on policy issues, which were then addressed in no coherent thematic order and without substantive discussion.

Just in case this wasn’t enough to avoid real discussion of the challenges posed by the commercial tourist industry, the Aussies reached into the hat and pulled out a wombat - an 8-page paper that nobody knew was coming (even the Secretariat), didn’t have a number, and couldn’t possibly be read before the agenda item was closed.

ECO understands that this issue may make some uncomfortable. Not everyone enjoys discussing an uncertain future. For some the status quo is much more comfortable. If we had followed that advice, we’d have no Protocol.

ECO does not think that this issue should be trivialized as a game of ‘ping pong’. Despite obvious evidence to the contrary, it appears that the Parties may be buying into the idea presented by the industry when it nonchalantly stated that tourism is ‘not an issue’. If Parties believe that the development of global commercial enterprises in Antarctica does not warrant their time and attention, perhaps these issues should be brought to the attention of other fora that are prepared to act.

SPOT THE TOURIST – A PRIMER

ECO notes the propensity of some delegations to deliberately confuse “commercial tourism” with the wider category of “non-governmental activities”. This has the effect of complicating the picture, making virtually everyone a tourist – so the real stuff isn’t so obvious you see, and it also has the added advantage of sticking it to those pesky greenies!

Sure, there are non-governmental activities that are not commercial tourism:

- **Off duty scientists** and logistic support people from national programs whenever they walk out of their huts and take a photograph which is not explicitly required by their personal contracts. Apparently, hundreds of them are poised to ski to the Pole every weekday after 5.

- **Officials and Military Officers** – these are people (somehow) involved in national Antarctic programs until they have been to the Antarctic, after which they always move to another desk or leave the public service altogether. Presumably they behave so appallingly while in the Antarctic that nobody wants them near a snowcat or an Antarctic
Treaty Decision again. They leave square brackets all over the place and are the last known repository of the oral tradition codified in the SCAR Songbook. Of course, once they retire, they go back to the Antarctic as expert lecturers on tourist vessels. Naturally this has no effect whatsoever on their attitudes towards tourism while they are officials.

VIPs – These fall into two categories: politicians and the friends of the managers of national programmes. The politicians only go to the Antarctic if (a) they have no political influence whatsoever – and nobody will know that they have gone to that godforsaken place, or (b) something unpleasant is about to unfold at home and they’d like not to be there. The friends include business chums, advertising executives and art collectors. Both categories believe absolutely everything the program managers tell them.

Independent yachties – Dad, Mum, Mum’s friend Corinne, Dad’s friend Bernard and Bernard’s friend (also called Bernard). They also have a cat called Claude, who is the best navigator on board. They built their yacht, sailed it from St. Malo and would be outraged that anyone might mistake them for tourists.

Private Expeditions – the Barrington Custard-Smiths of the world. They have heaps of money, sponsorship of everything, and produce video clips – which they post to their website - about how complex it is going to the toilet in the Antarctic even though they have a more high-tech toilet there than they do at home. They usually have 4 camera crews. They are adventurers but not tourists. Sadly, they are always authors.

The Horrible Greenies – these are long-haired pinkos. They actually doubt that the unfolding of cosmic purpose necessarily takes the form of making more money. Worse still, they go to the Antarctic and tell people off. What is the world coming to when you can’t even trash an uninhabited continent or ‘scientifically harvest’ those blubbery things (which are really just fish – and we have been traditionally eating them since 1946 you know) without a barrage of moral injunctions.

But, THEY ARE NOT VERY NUMEROUS COMPARED WITH THE REAL TOURISTS. They do not pay somebody else to take them there, and so it is extremely unlikely that they will ever number into the thousands, let alone the tens of thousands already visiting the place as customers of commercial tourism. Whatever should be done with all these other people IT IS COMMERCIAL TOURISM THAT NEEDS TO BE REGULATED.

STAND UP AND SALUTE THE FLAG

In a bold new move, Antarctic Treaty Parties bit the bullet and tackled one of the key issues in Antarctic governance. Whilst less imaginative folk focused their attention on trivial issues such as governance, environmental protection and legal matters - the real discussion was underway in room B. With foresight and verve, Antarctic Treaty Parties realised that the key issue to be resolved at ATCM 25 was not the establishment of a Secretariat, nor finalising a liability regime. Sweeping trivialities aside, Parties rolled their sleeves up and got the crayons out – “an emblem!” they cried.
AUTUMN IN WARSAW

It’s been another beautiful day here in Warsaw, and Pablo is mostly content. And yet, come to think of it, there are a few things bothering him. First off, why the heck doesn’t his room key ever work? He was on his way home from a nice night out in the Old Town with some chums (mmm, pierogi, just like grandma used to make) and he missed the last bus-175 to the Gromada. Have you ever seen an overstuffed, slightly tipsy penguin trying to hire a gypsy cab? Not a pretty sight. Then, to top it all off, he was late for a date with a gorgeous Penguinette he had encountered earlier in the day. When he finally got his key working, and ran down to the disco, she had already left with a couple of Austrian delegates. So much for a social life.

Pablo is also having some problems with the discussions this week. He can’t quite comprehend some of the ideas going around. Pablo is a very clean penguin, and he doesn’t understand why you are only responsible for your own mess when you tell people ahead of time? Pablo remembers his grandmother’s (she of the pierogi fame) favourite saying, “Pablo, accidents will happen, but it’s still your responsibility.” Pablo loves his grandmother, and he hopes she’s recovering from all the hot weather down South this winter.

Pablo doesn’t care what anyone thinks he likes the emblem. There’s just one thing, when it’s on a flag, whose flag code applies? Pablo thinks this is a topic that should be discussed immediately in an emergency session.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HMS MACARONI CAUGHT IN SEA ICE FOR DURATION OF ANTARCTIC WINTER!

Pablo Penguin has recently learned that the research and supply vessel HMS Macaroni has sent out a distress signal. The Master of the ship reportedly radioed logistics coordinators requesting immediate rescue after weather conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that the vessel sought refuge in a protected cove.

Unfortunately, bad weather, sea-ice movement and an underwater rock (who drew those charts anyway?!) have caused the vessel to begin to break up causing a massive oil leak. The command for all penguins to abandon ship went out. All flippers had a tough time reaching an ice floe, especially as the oil spread across the cove – good thing penguins are great swimmers and enjoy really cold water!

As nobody else was around to help, and no Antarctic Treaty Parties were close by (they are all apparently in Poland of all places), there was little to be done to minimize harm to the environment.

The Master and crew made it safely to a nearby penguin colony and warned them all to move elsewhere as quickly as possible. The colony was destroyed. When the penguins went searching for the Master to get compensation, they found he had disappeared into a colony of Macaroni penguins to avoid the possibility of any potential future legal action. Lucky for him all penguins look alike.