

THE HERRING FISHERY

by

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Since ancient times the herring has had a vital effect on the social life and activities of the people living on the Norwegian coast. In a New Year greeting to the people of Stavanger in 1860, the newspaper "Stavanger Amtstidende" ranked "peace, work and herring" as its three most important good wishes for the New Year.

The three good wishes were closely related as the influx of the herring gave work to the unemployed and peace was necessary to secure herring exports. The story illustrates the importance of the herring to the people living along the Norwegian west coast. If, as occasionally happened, the herring failed to appear, the inhabitants of the coastline suffered greatly.



Fishing gear. The oldest herring fishing gear is the land seine which has been used in Norway for centuries. The drift net came into use in the second half of the 19th century, and demanded vessels which could operate in the open sea. The purse seine, which was operated from dories, came into use at the beginning of this century, and this was the main fishing gear until the early 60's. Before the invention of the echosounder the herring were detected by a hand-operated lead-line.



Herring processing. In addition to the catching operations the industry employed people in various herring processing activities. Herring were iced and exported fresh, but most of the catch for human consumption was sold gutted and salted. A small part of the juvenile catch was canned, but most of the herring was used for reduction.

The weapon. The introduction of the power block in the purse seine fishery in the early 60's, and the improvement of equipment for detecting herring, revolutionized the efficiency of catching, and "herring-killing" techniques. Coupled with ignorance of marine ecology in general and the failure of international fishery management actions to protect the stock, these technical advances meant the beginning of the end of the herring fishery in the Norwegian Sea.

