



Celebrity Advocates Stumble in Canada

With their campaign against Canada’s seal hunt failing to galvanize public outrage and a boycott of the nation’s seafood products gaining little attention in the United States, animal rights groups turned to international celebrities to boost their media coverage.



The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and International

Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) are both well known for promoting celebrity endorsements of their campaigns, the latter most notably with former James Bond star Pierce Brosnan.

HSUS – which is not related to the Humane Society that runs animal shelters throughout the United States – targeted Heather McCartney with an invitation to join its anti-sealing campaign and thereby co-opted her music legend husband, Paul. After being photographed close to a seal pup, both appeared on the CNN talk show Larry King Live on 3 March, along with Danny Williams, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Timed with the interview, HSUS sent out an email message in the

couple’s names asking supporters “to make as generous a gift as you can to help The Humane Society of United States continue to fight to save Canada’s baby seals.” The donation request was made in bold face and underlined. According to the McCartneys, the money raised “will enable HSUS to send a team of experts, journalists and videographers to the ice.” HSUS has an annual income of almost \$100 million; McCartney is one of the wealthiest Britons.

During the interview, Williams accused the McCartney’s of being used by animal rights groups. Earlier, Paul told Larry King: “This is one of the things being an international celebrity, this is one of the advantages of it... you can get time on a show like yours and discuss these issues.”

Heather McCartney told King: “You know they say, ‘Well, we don’t kill white baby seals,’ you know, but they lose their coats after twelve days. That’s like saying a baby is no longer a baby once it’s a month old, you know. It’s barbaric, sorry archaic, and really brutal.” The hunting of harp seal pups (whitecoats) has been illegal in Canada since 1987.

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At one point during the show, Heather McCartney proudly displayed her boots. “These boots, they look like leather that I’ve got on and they’re not... They’re just plastic.” Plastics are manufactured from non-renewable petro-chemical products.

Williams explained that the hunt is necessary to manage seal population levels, stating that it has increased from 2 million to 5.8 million. “If we allow this seal population to completely overpopulate, the inhumane consequences of that is that these seals will starve... some of these starving seals are actually going into fresh water rivers in order to feed.”

Contrary to the McCartneys’ claims, Williams also stated that ninety per cent of seals are killed

by bullet, rather than clubbed: “It’s very efficient and it’s very quick.” And he explained how seal products are used: “The product that comes from seal is not only fur, it’s meat. It provides shelter. It provides fuel. It also provides omega-3 oils, which are used for heart problems, arthritis problems, menstrual problems, liver problems.”

Two weeks after the interview, Canadian Fisheries Minister Loyola Hearn announced a new Atlantic Seal Management Plan for 2006-2010, setting a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 325,000 harp seals for 2006.

Meanwhile, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Minister Hearn refused to meet with former French movie star Brigitte Bardot to discuss the seal hunt. Hearn said: “I think giving



Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper

people like that attention and publicity just furthers their cause.”

Canadian fishery officers regulate the seal hunt through aerial patrols, surface vessel patrols, inspections of fishing vessels at landing sites and inspections at buying and processing facilities. ■

Editorial : The Return of Fur By Eugene Lapointe

It was noticeable how many athletes proudly wore fur at the opening ceremony of the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. This seems to reflect a step change in public attitudes towards the wearing of animal skins. Romanians, Russians, Norwegians, New Zealanders, Italians and Mongolians all looked warm and comfortable sporting fur, if you pardon the pun.



Public opposition to fur once was one of the most symbolic protest campaigns, as high profile models were recruited to the cause and consumers were shocked, shamed and cajoled into choosing alternatives.

For those leading the campaigns, all utilization of animals is unethical.

Many of the protesters have promoted their vegetarianism alongside their anti-fur credentials. To most consumers, however, the argument against fur poses the far less clear ethical dilemma of whether it is less acceptable to breed and kill animals for their skins, than it is for their meat.

That furs are increasingly being worn again by young people, suggests that the ethical case against fur has not been made. In the U.S., more than half of all furs are bought by people under the age of 44. To many, fur is a desirable luxury good. Sales in Canada and the



and protect habitats from the negative consequences of overpopulation. As new urban developments flourish, they also reduce the propensity for unregulated conflict between humans and local wildlife.

As they seek to impose their moral values on society, environmentalist groups often tout alternatives that are supposedly as good as, if not better, for us.

U.S. reached \$2 billion in 2005 while global sales increased by 9.1 per cent to nearly \$13 billion. Over 400 of the world's top fashion designers now use furs.

Heather McCartney displayed her plastic boots on U.S. television recently, to prove my point (see "Celebrity Advocates Stumble in Canada").

Environmentalist groups tend to define their campaign issues in terms of moral choices, usually advocating what we – or other people – shouldn't do. They tell us what we shouldn't eat, wear, display in our homes, drive, how we shouldn't generate our electricity and what we shouldn't do to secure further medical advances.

In all cases, however, the alternatives carry consequences of their own. In the case of faux fur, alternative textiles require chemicals and petroleum products to be manufactured and transported, creating waste that has to be disposed of and risking accidents. Similar processes are needed to create plastics. Of course, these activities are attacked by environmentalists too.

Yet the positive impact on conservation that comes from a regulated fur industry is undeniable. Fur is a renewable resource. Trappers undertaking wild harvests have always worked to conserve natural wildlife habitats. They hunt beaver, mink, muskrat, raccoon, coyote, marten, fisher and fox according to seasons and scientifically calculated quotas. Their sustainable hunts help prevent the spread of disease

It is unlikely that the athletes in Turin gave much thought to all these issues. That they didn't suggests that the influence of political correctness has become a diminished commodity in the fur industry. Users of wildlife need to work together to keep things that way. ■

Grizzly Situation in Alberta



The scientist in charge of the grizzly bear research and recovery team in Alberta, Canada was removed from his position shortly before the province announced a suspension on hunting the animals.

Dr. Gordon Stenhouse, recovery plan chairman for the past seven years, spoke out publicly against the government, saying it had stalled in making decisions against hunting. He is now working as a researcher for Foothills Model Forest, a private non-profit conservation organization

The provincial government says it doesn't have a reliable estimate of the grizzly population and has

suspended the spring hunt while it collects DNA census data.

Sustainable Resource Development Minister Dave Coumts said: “We are doing more proactive work than ever before on grizzly bears in Alberta. Our goal always has been – and continues to be – to conserve grizzly bears and a wide range of species on the Alberta landscape. Alberta is committed to applying

the best scientific advice to its decision making processes.”

Dr. Stenhouse’s grizzly recovery team called for a complete cessation of any further hunting, arguing that the population – thought to be around 700 animals – needed to rebound before the activity would be beneficial to bears and their environment. Ten bears were killed by hunters in 2005 and six in 2004.

Animal rights groups have been campaigning to designate grizzlies in Alberta as an endangered species. The grizzly population in neighboring British Columbia is estimated at nearly 14,000.

Alberta is taking steps to educate residents on ways to avoid bear-human conflicts and is increasing law enforcement efforts to curtail poaching. ■

Healthy Fish

The Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF), an advocacy group in Washington, DC, says there are fallacies in a Greenpeace and Sierra Club report that allegedly demonstrated dangerous levels of mercury accumulating in women who frequently eat fish.

Instead of confirming a danger, the report carried out for the NGOs actually found insignificant levels of mercury to have accumulated in women who had been consumers of fish. The problem is that these findings were suppressed by the NGOs.

In addition, while Greenpeace and the Sierra Club noted that “one in five American women exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's "Reference Dose" for mercury”, they failed to disclose that the EPA reference dose for mercury is “not a safety limit, as it includes a 1,000-percent safety margin.”

Describing claims of allegedly high mercury levels from fish as “a mercury scare” and a scam, CCF notes that the two NGOs omitted a number of pages that contained information contrary to their ideology when they distributed the report to media outlets.

The CCF has now obtained the entire study in its original version and has published it on its own website for the world to examine. The CCF states the following:

“The twelve-page report, conducted by the University of North Carolina-Asheville's Environmental Quality Institute (EQI) included a "summary and conclusions" section, although you wouldn't know it from the Greenpeace and Sierra Club websites. Leaving out five offending pages, the groups advertised a truncated seven-page version as "the full report" and "the entire report issued by EQI.”

“Bottom Line: No one is in danger of acquiring damaging doses of mercury by regularly eating fish, and this was independently confirmed by the American Centers For Disease Control back in 2002. It appears that the media release by Greenpeace and Sierra Club “omitted a page” that includes the conclusion that "the current results do not provide evidence of an increasing or a decreasing trend ... in mercury concentrations for a given amount of fish consumption.”

Fish is widely regarded as a healthy and wholesome food for humans. The chemical composition of the proteins and oils in fish are thought to contribute to improved health and longevity. Ironically, a study that was designed to highlight supposed dangers that could be associated with consumption of fish has instead, confirmed its benefits. ■

Shrimp Industry Replacement Criticized

Before the disastrous tsunami struck Aceh and many other populated shores around the Indian Ocean, there were many shrimp aquaculture facilities operating and producing product and income for many communities. However, in order for these facilities to be built, mangrove swamps, the natural barriers to wind and waves, had been removed.

In the post-tsunami effort to rebuild local economies there have been many different approaches to recovery. The scientific community has strongly suggested that mangroves be replanted and protected with professional expertise in order that they become well established, instead of putting in more shoreline area aquaculture facilities. The reason is that the natural barriers are felt to be the best insurance for Southeast Asia against a tragic re-occurrence, should another tsunami hit.

A recent meeting of a Seafood Summit conference in Seattle, Washington, brought to light plans that have been defined as short sighted and unwise. Alfredo Quarto, Executive Director of the Mangrove Action Project, has since called for reconsideration of the re-establishment of shrimp aquaculture facilities in areas where mangroves once covered the coastlines.

Quarto strongly criticizes the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), and the affiliated Sustainable Aquaculture Alliance for their plans to establish new shrimp raising facilities in the Aceh area and elsewhere in the region. It appears that the plan may have been given a boost by a Walmart decision to enter into a certification arrangement with the MSC.

Walmart has “signaled” that it will buy only certified wild caught shrimp within three years and, because Walmart is the world’s largest retailer, this announcement is thought by Mr. Quarto to be a direct encouragement to those who wish to support the shrimp industry re-development, which he believes is unwise.

In the near future, the supply of wild caught shrimp is expected to fall below that of farmed shrimp and the belief is that Walmart’s requirements are encouraging this new and – to some – questionable development plan.

Many marine scientists have written of the ecosystem stability that results when mangrove stands are left intact in undeveloped coastline areas, where they are the only practical barrier in the way of disastrous high waves. The WWF and MSC have stated their intentions to aid the redevelopment of this stricken area and the many communities that have depended on developed aquaculture, but this particular plan may receive more criticism than encouragement in the months and years to come. The world scientific community will be watching policy development as it proceeds amidst conflicting economic and ecosystem interests. ■

News in Brief

Scheduling Dilemma

Wildlife officials in many small and developing nations may have to choose between attending CITES COP14 in the Netherlands and IWC 59 in Alaska. Schedulers currently have the 2007 meetings taking place only 2 days apart. While this may not present a problem for large countries, it presents serious logistical issues for countries who send the same delegates to both meetings. Some are already asking whether this is a conspiracy or an oversight.

Greenpeace U-Turn?

Executive Director of Greenpeace USA, John Passacantando, supports the sustainable use of marine animals. Or does he? In a webcast with washingtonpost.com on 28 February, Passacantando was asked about Greenpeace's stance on farm-raised fish. "Against it", he declared, adding: "There not enough out there to eat all the time, but when you do, the wild, non-endangered stuff is what you want." Japanese diners could be

forgiven for wondering if this approach extends to catches of wild, non-endangered minke whales. And if not, why not?

A Well Crafted Law?

Two Americans, fined for selling crafts they made from marine mammal parts in Alaska, were unaware that their business was illegal. Under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act, this type

of business can be undertaken only by native Alaskans. The two men could have lawfully sold crafts made by native Alaskans. According to the Anchorage Daily News, the parts came from whales that were washed up on shore and some were purchased from native Alaskans unaltered. One said the law should be changed to allow non-native crafters to buy the raw materials. ■



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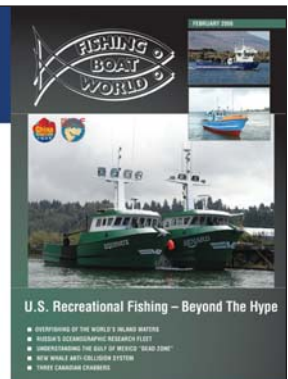


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