

## GOD, CULTURE AND WOMEN

by Stephen Best

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I want to start off by thanking Dr. Wenzel for asking me to participate in this symposium. I'm not at all clear why I was asked and I am not at all sure what it is hoped this meeting will accomplish.

I know why I came. As someone involved in attempting to affect the political climate surrounding wildlife issues, it's an opportunity to meet the lobbyists on the other side. That's always useful. But in terms of the overall issue, there is little chance of any of us changing our minds; few Liberals become Conservatives, and fewer wildlife protectionists become hunters. And what should also be remembered is that many of us are paid, directly or indirectly, to promote one side or the other of the seal hunting issue. So, it's unlikely that positions will be changed.

Having said all that, however, it never hurts to have a good chin wag.

As we all know, the title of this symposium is *The Canadian Sealing Controversy: Biological, Cultural, and Ethical Perspectives*. As everyone of the participants either supports or is actively involved in the commercial and/or recreational exploitation of wildlife except me, I suppose it was intended that I would balance the proceedings. Nine to one seems fair enough.

I had hoped Dr. Wenzel would have invited a seal to participate. But, it's always the same thing: the killers get invited, but never the killees.

The list of participants made it difficult for me to choose a topic of discussion. There is nothing I'm going to be able to tell the people here that they haven't already heard. There seems little point in discussing the new ethical considerations concerning wildlife and animals that many of us are exploring. The sealers, Inuit and others here have already rejected these ideas long ago as stupid, nonsensical, impractical, naive and unfounded. Kirk Smith of the

Canadian Sealers Association has said that Dr. David Suzuki was "... defy(ing) logic ..." when he discussed these same concepts while on tour promoting his new television program *A Planet for the Taking*. Well, if Kirk Smith won't accept Dr. Suzuki's ideas he certainly won't accept my saying similar things.

There is little point in my discussing science, as representatives from the Canadian Sealers Association, Inuit, and various veterinarians and wildlife conservationists are here—all who know far more about seals and fish and their parasites than I do—as they will quickly point out without even being asked. As well, Dr. David Lavigne from the University of Guelph, who really does know more about harp seals than anyone else here, is in attendance.

Also, since over the years many people associated with sealing have referred to me on various occasions as a blackmailer, a hypocrite, a liar, an international political terrorist, a conman, a bigot and a coward, and have accused me of destroying cultures, being ethno-centric, committing ethnocide, destroying livelihoods, turning people to drink and drugs, and most recently making it impossible for Newfoundland students to go to university, I doubt that anything I could say would carry much weight anyway.

And so, I don't doubt for one minute that whatever I could speak about would be either rejected and ridiculed, or cause a nasty confrontation.

Now, I had thought about talking about the political strategies and tactics that caused the collapse of the sealing industry, as I played a small part in it. I even began to write a presentation on that subject. But as I was writing, it became obvious that I would be introducing to the pro-seal hunt lobbyists participating in this seminar all sorts of skills and concepts that they hadn't yet started to use. The reduction by almost 90% of the number of seals being killed over the last few years has been, in no small way, caused by the incompetence and deficiencies of those representing the sealers and Inuit. I would like their ignorance to continue. There are a great many wildlife issues left to deal with in Canada that will involve Inuit and people from Newfoundland. The less they know about political lobbying the better it will be for animals.

So, what I have decided to talk about is God, culture, and women. And the reasons are simple. Over the years that I have been involved in the seal issue in particular, and animal issues in general, it's been very clear to me that an awful lot of people talk about things they don't know anything about. Therefore, on this occasion, I've decided to do the same thing. I've been told that's what I do

anyway and this time I freely admit and plead guilty to it.

I don't know anything about God but I'm going to talk about Him because according to some He gave us the right to kill seals.

I don't know anything about Inuit and Newfoundland culture but they are the cultures that incorporate seal killing into their day-to-day expression, and these are the cultures that I stand accused of destroying.

And I don't know anything about women, but I'm tired of the hook and bullet boys criticizing the protection of wildlife because great numbers of women are involved in the struggle to stop people killing animals.

First, with no idea what I'm speaking about—God.

On February 9th, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) program *Sunday Morning* carried a segment by Chris Brooks about the Canadian government's *Royal Commission on Seals and the Sealing Industry in Canada*. Brooks was particularly concerned with the effect that the decline in seal markets was having on Inuit and Newfoundland communities. During the course of the program an Inuit spokesman said, "We have a God-given right to hunt seals!" At the Royal Commission's hearings in Toronto, one of the witnesses uttered the same sentiments: "God gave man dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea for his own purposes." So spoke Sonny Tompkins. Even Paul Okituk, an Inuit and researcher with the Makivik Corporation, made the God point to the Royal Commission on Seals and Sealing concerning the right to hunt seals.

The argument that Man has God-given dominion over all the animals is suspect. There is no doubt, in my mind, that Man often dominates animals, but saying that this dominion comes from God may be going a little too far. For example, assume an unarmed man, made in the image of God with dominion over the animals, accidentally encounters a grizzly bear, or a black mamba, or a Nile crocodile in a confined space. It may be difficult for the man to convince the creature of his supremacy prior to being bitten, mauled or consumed.

But rather than dismiss the Bible and its teaching categorically with such blasphemous and naive arguments, let's pursue these God-given rights. Where does this idea of dominion over the animals come from? How valid is it? And what else does the Bible say about Man and his relationship with animals?

Bearing in mind I don't know the Bible from Adam, this will not be an exhaustive analysis. But for interested scholars, I've used the dusty old Bible that was tucked away and forgotten on my bookshelf called *The English Version of the Polyglot Bible Containing the Old and New Testament with Copious and Original Selections of References to Parallel and Illustrative Passages* as my source. It's over 100 years old.

What this Bible actually says is this:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

As you can see the Bible does not say, as Sonny Tompkins claimed, that this was done "for ... (Man's) own purposes." Moving along, it seems whales and possibly other marine mammals were given special attention by God. Genesis Chapter 1, verse 21 says:

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

It seems that great whales, and presumably other marine mammals as well, are quite different from fish, as far as God is concerned, which is quite important to this discussion as we shall see later. There is something else that must be pointed out; God seems to make an important distinction between Earth and Sea:

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

So if I'm interpreting the Bible accurately (and I may not be because I've yet to figure out who God was speaking to all this time), Man has dominion over "... fish of the sea ... fowl of the air ... cattle ... the earth ... and every creeping thing." The list leaves a lot out including clams, lobsters, scallops, polar bears, lynx, cougars; I could go on but the point's been made. I'm basing this idea on my

casual observations that polar bears, beaver, lynx and the rest don't creep, but then maybe my definition of creep is off the mark.

But for our purposes it does seem that marine mammals are definitely off limits. There does not appear to be a God-given right to hunt seals. Let me explain a little further. In Genesis Chapter 1, verse 27 to 28 the Bible says this:

So God created Man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Moveth! All right, polar bear, cougar, and lynx; those go back on the dominion list. Too bad, there aren't a lot of those left. For a while I thought they were safe. I knew full well they didn't creep. And God said:

Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

A few points should be made here. According to the Bible, Man was given dominion over the "earth" not the "sea" and, as far as the sea is concerned, Man was given dominion only over the fish.

However, it has been said by those with far less biological understanding than God, most notably the Newfoundland clergy, that seals and whales are fish. But God knew precisely what the difference was. Leviticus, Chapter 11 describes a conversation that Moses had with his boss. In that conversation God spells out what animals Moses and his followers are allowed to eat; God was very specific. In verse 9 to 12 He tells Moses this:

These shall ye eat, of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.

And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you.

They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in a abomination.

Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.

Pretty clear stuff. The same thing is said later on in Deuteronomy, Chapter 14; so it would seem that seals, which have skin, hair (or fur) and flippers, and not fins and scales, are off limits and that anyone who has been eating or hunting seals may have a lot to answer for. Abomination is no picnic!

Of course maybe they're answering for it now. It may be reasonable to suggest that, as the Bible says, the people of Canada who are killing seals are indeed having the seal carcasses "... in abomination ..." considering what we're told about the crushing and devastating effect that the closing of the European fashion markets is having on the communities where sealing takes place.

But let's go back to Genesis for a minute and assume that having dominion over the fish includes seals and whales and that the authors of the Bible got the Lord's word a little wrong. It can be called a misquote. After all when one considers that the Bible we use is a rather poor translation of a variety of Greek translations commissioned by a second-rate English King, one can expect the odd mistake. Remember too that in Newfoundland, for religious purposes, seals are considered fish.

Now, there is no requirement that if dominion over the beasts has been granted to Man that we must interpret that to mean the killing and exploitation of animals. By way of example, I think we can all agree that it's clear from the Bible that God has dominion over Man, and yet he frequently chose compassion in the exercise of his dominion. Just such an occurrence is described in Exodus Chapter 32, verses 7 to 14. It seems that God was very upset with the Children of Israel for making a molten calf and worshipping it. The Lord called for Moses, who was representing the Children at the time, and said:

... Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which though broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made a molten calf, and worshipped it, and have

sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

... I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them ...

God damn, the Children were in real trouble now. Moses had no illusions about what was happening here and he had to think fast or his constituents were in for a nasty bit of cultural destruction.

It was obvious that the Lord was not at all thrilled with some molten calf getting the credit for all the work He had done. And, He wasn't going to put up with it for one more minute; it was time for hot wax.

On the other hand Moses, the first political organizer, had a lot of experience in dealing with the Lord and decided to appeal to Him by saying two things: first, if you kill all these people the neighbours are going to talk and second, you made a deal and a deal's a deal. He said to God:

... Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Moses knew that the Lord was not above a little flattery. He went on, having got the Lord's attention:

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Moses was a straight shooter and had no qualms about telling the Lord in no uncertain terms that what He was contemplating was simply not done, if not downright immoral, and that the pesky Egyptians would blabber to everyone about the Lord's mischief.

But Moses still wasn't quite sure that he had the Lord convinced. He continued on and appealed to the Lord's sense of honor by reminding Him that a deal is a

deal. Moses said:

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self [a little more flattery], and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.

As usual, Moses was right and the Lord knew it. The Egyptians, a group prone to gossip, would indeed talk and, as Moses had reminded Him, He had made a deal with Abraham and the others. So, as the Bible says, "... the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." One thing is certainly true about the Lord, He was always willing to admit a mistake.

So there you have it. Man was not given dominion over the seals and even if he was that doesn't necessarily mean that seals should be killed and sold to the European fashion markets. And as for eating seals, as we found out earlier, that is a complete no-no; and that comes right from the Lord himself. It's an abomination!

Before leaving the wisdom of the Bible it may be useful to explore the New Testament. It's often said by Inuit and Newfoundlanders that they have a "true" appreciation of seals and all animals because they harvest wildlife for a living (harvest is an old hunting term meaning kill); the seal is part of their way of life, their culture.

Proverbs 12, verse 10 says, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The clubbing, shooting, netting, drowning, hakapiking, breaking off of lower jaws and harpooning of seals to turn them into fur trim and trinkets could reasonably be considered "... the tender mercies of the wicked ..." for, in my opinion at least, they are certainly cruel.

The same chapter, verse 1 says, "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish." It's certainly true that the members of the sealing communities dislike reproof. Does that make them brutish? Maybe I'm just reading the Bible all wrong.

But the Bible gives us one last insight into our dominion over the animals that I think is truly worth noting. Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 is a fascinating chapter. It is

the chapter that begins, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

Verses 18 to 20 of Chapter 3 seem to be particularly applicable not only to the seal hunt but also to the way we perceive ourselves on this planet and our relationship with animals:

I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and they might see that they themselves are beasts.

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

What I think all this means I will get to later on, but for now I'd like to turn to the second thing I know nothing about—Culture.

Culture is a tricky topic to talk about.

First, I come from an urban society (although I do live out in the country) where, it would seem, we are considered to have no culture at all, if one is to believe the various critics of those who protect wildlife. And, because of this, we are suspected of being genetically incapable of developing a true and valid appreciation for animals and Nature and certainly not a real understanding. In my case, in particular, I am further handicapped in developing this appreciation because I don't hunt animals or even fish. As well, great offense is taken when "urban liberals" like me presume to even consider commenting on Inuit or Newfoundland society.

(I should confess right now that I am a "bleeding heart." I don't think I was born that way; it just happened one day after going to a seal hunt. But, now it won't seem to go away.)

Also, by talking about another person's culture, I run the very real risk of being accused of racism because to be critical of Inuit is, apparently, to be racist. If I criticize the Newfoundlanders it isn't racist because I'm the same color as they

are, give or take a few shades, although I have even been called a racist by Newfoundlanders.

(But I would like to say, the desire to maintain a strong cultural identity and political and economic autonomy, is found in all peoples—southern urban Canadians included—and I, for one, applaud it and support it.)

Then, of course, Inuit don't get along with Dene people from Alberta; both complain about those “eastern bastards,” and the landsmen sealers have problems with the ship-based hunters. I guess we all have our little likes and dislikes. There was even a time when Inuit complained about the Newfoundlanders and their baby seal hunt.

Because I don't know anything about Inuit or Newfoundland culture, in preparing this section I decided to avoid any publications or sources that were critical of them. In other words I've only used pro-seal hunt, pro-Inuit and pro-Newfoundland sources for information.

Given all the dangers, I will press on.

It is well known that one of the most widely used arguments for the continuation of the Canadian seal hunt has been that of “culture.” The Newfoundlanders have been sealing since the 1700's. The Inuit, or at least their forbearers, were certainly sealing over a thousand years ago. The “cultural” value that the Newfoundlanders and the Inuit place on hunting seals (and other wildlife) is apparently very high, and that fact is recognized not only by the sealers themselves but also by anthropologists, journalists, scientists and the Canadian government. Of course, the cultural value given to sealing and hunting is highly selective. There are few Newfoundland sealers who would enjoy being left on the ice to die by a latter day Captain Keane or who would wish to have unheated ships to hunt from or who wouldn't want warm homes with television sets to return to and, I suppose, there are few Inuit who would choose to go back to the bad ol' pre-European days of starvation, children dying, infanticide, dog teams, igloos and no rifles. This is all perfectly understandable. Most people cherish the technological advances that make life easier, more enjoyable, healthier and safer. Inuit and the Newfoundlanders have amply demonstrated and embraced the same appreciation for civilization. Nonetheless, the culture of hunting and sealing is important. According to the author of *Second Nature: the Animal Rights Controversy*, Alan Herscovici:

Inuit and other hunting people study and respect animals because their lives literally depend on them. It is when we are no longer dependent on our environment, or think we are not, that contact is lost and, with it respect for life.

Herscovici also quotes George Wenzel, a McGill University anthropologist, as saying:

There is a constant flow of information about animals and the land, moving through (Inuit) society, from older generations to younger generations ... The idea, that man and animal share the same environment means that you look at an animal the way you would approach a human being—as an entity that deserves respect, and has to be treated in certain ways, and is not open to misuse—and this means that you have to be in constant contact with an animal or with a species.

(Considering what Inuit do to animals, I'm very pleased that they don't respect me. I'm assuming George Wenzel is being quoted accurately, but this may not be the case.)

Herscovici's book is touted by the sealers and the fur fashion trade as the definitive argument against the case for animal rights and the definitive argument for hunting and trapping and fishing and clubbing and netting and skinning and whatever.

A publication from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada called *Canada's North: a Reference Manual* says this:

For the native people the recreation value of wildlife is also very great, even though they obtain significant economic value from harvesting fish, fur and game on a year round basis.

The “lifestyle” question, however, is as much a cultural as an economic matter for native people. It is important to realize that native cultures are rooted in a comprehensive and complex relationship linking man and nature, where nature includes wildlife, rivers, lakes, landforms, and even the sky and wind. Thus native concerns about wildlife involve the very question of identity. To continue hunting, even when the economic need is minimal, has

importance for many reasons; for example, social transactions, often involving gift giving or ceremonial acts, utilize meat or parts of animals, and the social development of young people is marked by their acquisition of traditional skills usually associated with the procurement or processing of natural products. In addition, the native cosmology is based upon events in the natural world that are significant to members of a hunting society. The recreational aspect of native hunting thus involves complexities simply not found in recreational hunting by non-natives, the most obvious of which is the spiritual component.

However, what is referred to as respect for wildlife on the part of the Inuit may not be based on a deep understanding of nature, but rather on a fear of it. The National Museum of Man puts out a book called *Indians of Canada* by the ethnologist Diamond Jenness who wrote in 1932 that:

The religion of the Eskimo brought them little comfort. They visioned a numberless host of supernatural beings around them, many of them harmless, perhaps, a few on rare occasions helpful, but all of them pregnant with power for ill. The being that the majority of Eskimo dreaded most was a sea-goddess reputed to control weather and to regulate the supply of seals. With unremitting care, too, they conciliated the souls of animals, which would surely take offense if the people failed to observe the time-honoured rituals and taboos, especially those related to game.

About the Newfoundland sealers, Dr. Keith Ronald, Chairman of the Canadian government's Committee on Seals and Sealing, wrote this:

... I would like to return to the seal hunter, a man impressive in his honesty, and fatalistic in his approach to life. I have mentioned the isolation and hardship, I must also suggest that as we have our "christmas" (sic) so do the sealers. Every year they live 50 weeks under oppressive conditions (oppressive to so-called highly civilized people). For two weeks in the "spring of the year" they join the hunt, their "christmas." During the day they spread across the ice working under hazardous conditions, killing, skinning, and hauling pelts. They fall into freezing water, they fall heavily onto sharp ice, then get cut off from their fellows and their ship. There is no radio nearby, no ambulance ready, indeed no welfare cheque if

they don't go sealing.

Every night they return across broken ice to their wood or steel floating microcosm called "Chester" or "Minna" or "Polar Fish." They dry off steaming in the blood and blubber of the day's catch, they have returned to their fellows.

There is excitement; to us perhaps this excitement would mean a near miss with death, to them a story to tell their friends for this two week period. This is their excitement, this is their "christmas," this is their repertoire to be used in the other 50 weeks of the year. What happens if you remove it? Are we really to make a decision that leaves a group of men without their "Christmas?"

There you have it. There is apparently something special going on here: special people, special things.

Let's put aside the question about whether this cultural component of a hunting tradition is even worthwhile or beneficial to the people that maintain it, because that is far from clear. And let's put aside the fact that this respect for wildlife is used to supply the trinket and fashion industries so that wealthy women and men will look divine on their way to Maxime's or the Rialto or Regine's or Studio 54. And let's put aside the fact that this same respect for wildlife is wiping out beluga whales, narwhals, hood seals and is reducing the caribou herds, and the wolves, and almost destroyed muskox, or that this hunting wiped out walrus in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. And let's put aside the question of whether animals should die so that someone can have stories to tell or for social interaction and gift giving.

I've been involved in the wildlife and animal issues of Australia, Peru, the Philippines, England, Nicaragua, Korea, Japan, Canada and the United States. In every case there was a cultural and an economic argument.

Human beings kill animals for cultural and economic reasons. Human beings stop killing animals when the animals are all gone or when the cultural and economic reasons for killing change. (I'm tempted to say "whichever comes first" but I'd probably get a long argument about sustainable yields.)

The work I do is based on analyzing societies, institutions and individuals, and working out methods to convince them not to kill, or prevent them from killing

animals. In virtually every issue in which I have been involved I have been told that “this society,” “this killing,” “this situation” was somehow unique; these people are not like the others.

My experience, though, has been somewhat different: all people are, essentially, the same. They all, predictably, react the same way to the same things. And right now it seems to me that Inuit kill for the same reasons as Newfoundlanders, as South Africans, as Scottish fishermen—to sell skins to the European fashion markets and make some money. They may believe otherwise, but then again everyone else believes otherwise too.

I'd like to digress for a moment and make a comment or two about the criticism of the treatment of Inuit by Europeans, something about which I know nothing, and like all people who know nothing, still hold an opinion based on this lack of information.

Europeans are usually and rightly blamed for the problems of the Inuit and in fact all native peoples. The descendants of those Europeans are now being blamed for the destruction of Inuit culture again because a segment of the southern urban society (certainly not all, unfortunately) feels that the taking of wildlife for fashion purposes and sport deserves to be questioned.

It is true that the arrival of Europeans in North America had a profound and permanent effect on Inuit. At the same time, however, the Inuit readily accepted and employed European goods and weapons. It is true that Europeans introduced disease; it is also true that other Europeans introduced the cures. Until Europeans arrived famine was a constant threat to the survival of the Inuit. Infant mortality was at epidemic levels. The old and the infirm were abandoned. The penalty for theft was death. Blood feuds were the method by which family and community disputes were settled. Life was short, often unpleasant and terrifying, and painful. It is true that the European culture, through ill deed and good, almost destroyed the Inuit as a society and as a people. At the same time, however, it was the people of the European culture who recognized the effect they were having and moved to ameliorate it. Today, if it were not for southern Canadians supporting the aspirations of Inuit, they would have great difficulty maintaining any distinctive culture at all.

No doubt some would argue that we are simply paying for a terrible injustice, and that may be true, but it doesn't alter the fact that without the support of the urban Canadian culture, Inuit culture would be less viable. That fact applies just

as accurately to the culture of the Newfoundland outport sealer.

The truth is that neither Inuit nor Newfoundlander has a self-sustaining society. Or at least, they are incapable of maintaining a self-sustaining society at the modern technological standard they've come to rely upon without the support of southern urban Canadians. The result of all this is that Inuit and Newfoundlanders, like it or not, are as much a part of the southern Canadian urban culture as I am. We are of the same culture. In their recent direct fund raising program, the Inuit Tapirisat state that:

My people are the Inuit, the Eskimos of Canada. Long before the first European explorers, the Arctic was our home. We understood its beauty, the complex forces that bring life to the land, its plants and animals. The arctic is part of our heritage. Now we want to share it with you.

That is why my colleagues and I at the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (the national organization of Canada's Eskimos) have created the Arctic Society. The Arctic Society is devoted to teaching about the wonder and mystery of the North, and helping to preserve its unique environment, its heritage and culture.

Your membership dollars will help support programs sponsored by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, to make a better life for the people of the North. They will pay for programs to protect the environment and the wildlife of the north ...

The direct mail piece was sent to "urban liberals" to raise funds but I wonder if the "urban liberals" who responded to the direct mail appeal were aware that their funds would be used by an organization that actively works to promote the killing and marketing of wildlife? Not surprisingly, this important cultural aspect of "Canada's Eskimos" was avoided in the mailing piece.

There are sufficient accounts of routine abuse of animals by Inuit and Newfoundlanders to put grave doubts into anyone's mind about the claims of respect for wildlife put forth by the sealing communities and their spokesmen. Beluga whales are slaughtered only to have the skin or muktuk removed, a delicacy—or simply for sport. The rest of the animal is left to rot. Narwhals are killed only for their long tusk, which is sold in urban markets, and again for a little muktuk. Caribou are shot only to have the tongue and a haunch removed:

the rest left for carrion. Small birds are killed simply for fun, for no use at all. The right to hunt polar bears is sold to wealthy American sportsmen. All of this is done with all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, spotter aircraft, motor boats and powerful rifles. None of this is any different from what happens anywhere else in the world when man kills animals.

Now it may very well be that Inuit, with their hunting tradition, believe to the core of their souls that they are doing something different. But in fact all that is different is that they think it is different and, as I said before, everybody thinks what they do is different and special. But the results are the same: millions of animals die. It wouldn't matter if we were talking about fox hunters in Britain, poachers in Kenya and Peru, iguana hunters in Nicaragua, Japanese whalers, kangaroo hunters in Australia, or ad executives on private game preserves in Germany. They all say the same things about their particular killing. Remember, we all have a hunting tradition if one chooses to go back far enough.

So if Inuit are different, tell me how. George Wenzel argues that the way they use "artifacts" is different: artifacts such as video-cassette recorders, TV's, rifles, airplanes, Adidas running shoes, Coca Cola, Michael Jackson, Mary Tyler Moore and telephones. The list of artifacts includes everything that can be found in any Hudson's Bay store or on satellite television.

I would ask, "Different from whom or what?" What is this norm that has been established to determine this difference? And, even if Inuit and Newfoundlanders are somehow different, does this mean that I or anyone else should have to buy their animal products?

The concern that Inuit, the Newfoundlanders and the fur industry have is not with the beliefs held by animal rights activists. After all, they consider those beliefs stupid, absurd and naive. What concerns the fur trade's participants is that the animal protectionists are speaking out and promoting their beliefs, and that the fur trade's traditional customers are beginning to respond warmly to the idea of respecting wildlife: a respect that means life, not death, and a reduction in fur fashion sales. It's far easier to sell a sealskin coat if the buyer is unaware of the sacrifice a marine mammal has made to supply the garment. You'll find no honest articles about sealing or trapping in Vogue or Flair magazine, or seal hunt displays in fur salons.

This fact is well understood by the major financial supporter of the sealers: the Government of Canada. To crush the idea of ending sealing, the Canadian seal

hunt is surrounded by an iron curtain of Draconian regulations designed to stop people seeing what is going on. Because what killed the European seal skin market was the public realization of where the seal products were coming from and the shocking way in which they were obtained.

Which brings me to something else I know nothing about—women.

There is a process in politics identified as “deviantizing.” It's done by putting demeaning labels on or attaching unpleasant adjectives to the opposition. So we have “bleeding heart liberals,” “misguided animal lovers,” and “professional protesters.” One of the ways of deviantizing the movement towards protection of living things has been to say that it is made up of mostly women. As if, somehow, this makes it less valid or less well thought out or reasonable. Janice Henke, a New York wildlife scientist, made this point in front of the Royal Commission on Seals and Sealing in Montreal. One of the Commissioners, Dr. Patrick Geistdoerfer, even referred to women protesting the seal hunt as “frigid suffragettes.”

Henke is correct. The largest base of support that animal protection organizations enjoy is women. But you should also know, and I say this as someone with a fair degree of knowledge on the matter, that women are also the major supporters of cancer research, political parties, churches, educational institutions, the Peace movement, human rights organizations and virtually every other institution that is trying to improve society. Men are very poor at supporting these programs compared to women. Are we to assume then, that all these causes are suspect because they are supported by women? If it were not for women there would not be an environmental movement today; that is not an exaggeration.

Now on the other hand, the fur industry which Inuit and Newfoundlanders supply and support is also based on women—women's fashion—not on women's intelligence, ideals, sense of morality or compassion, but on their vanity. Our critics condemn women who abhor what Inuit and Newfoundlanders do for fashion by saying that women don't understand hunting and trapping. The same critics support the selling of fur garments, using false flattery and praise. Am I being asked to believe that the women who buy fur coats, or have them bought for them, understand what happens to animals who are caught in traps or are clubbed and shot? Am I being told that Fifth Avenue fashion models and high society matrons are more in tune with Nature and wildlife than women who oppose the seal hunt?

It seems to me that there is no better group of people able to kill the market for a product than the customer.

This brings me to “The End” of the topics I know nothing about and to one thing I do know a little about—politics.

There are no animal rights. There are no human rights. There are no rights to free speech, life, liberty, or rights to know, or rights to jobs, or even a right to be alive—beyond that which we are prepared to work and fight for.

The World Wildlife Fund is concerned about extinction. “What right has Man to drive a species to extinction,” they profoundly ask? By God, we do it all the time, or at least we try: to smallpox organisms, locusts, termites, athlete’s foot fungus, rats, roaches, starlings, dandelions, mosquitoes, twitch grass, and gonorrhoea. We assume the right to drive all kinds of species into extinction.

So what about the right to make a living or a God-given right to hunt seals or take wildlife? If God put the creatures on the Earth for our dominance, what about my dominance then? Where is it written that the animals are for the killers to dominate? Doesn't the protectionist have a right to say, “No, those are my animals, you can't touch them?” Just who gave the animals to the killers? God? If so, why did He put culture-destroying people who think like me on this planet?

And if Inuit and Newfoundlanders have a right to make a living killing seals and make it part of their culture, do I not have a right to make a living saving them and make that part of my culture? If they can sell animals that are dead and left to hang in fashion salons, can I not sell animals that are alive and left in peace?

Everyone in this room, in this city, in this country, on this dear old busted-up, broken-down, polluted planet can decide anything they want about these questions and all the other questions we face second by second, day by day, and year by year.

But the ones who decide what happens are those who have the greatest amount of political power. Right now those that pollute the air, the water, and the land, and sell dead animals, have the say; they make the rules.

If the people who want animals left alive get more power than the hunters, trappers and the polluters, then they will make the rules and there will be more

living things on this planet.

It's as simple as that. And no matter what happens, either way, for wildlife or against it, someone's culture will suffer and someone's economy will be affected.

Change does that. Always has. Always will. And it's never pleasant and it's never easy.