

Protesters dampen furrier's sales

BY SOPHIA MAXWELL

Earlier this month, approximately two dozen animal rights activists from across Nova Scotia staged a protest against the fur industry outside of the Mitchell Offman fur store on Quinpool Road. The protest was organized by the Nova Scotia Humane Society, and a few members of People for Animal Welfare, Dalhousie's animal rights group, were also in attendance.

The theme of the protest was "Have a heart — don't buy fur", as Valentine's Day is traditionally a peak period for fur sales. Protesters urged people to buy their

Valentines cruelty-free gifts, like flowers, instead of furs. The protest, which was peaceful and quiet, lasted for three hours. As well as signs, some of the protesters wore elaborately adorned fur coats which were painted with pictures of fur-bearing animals, fake blood, and anti-fur slogans. Many motorists honked their horns in support of the protesters, although not all motorists were in approval with the theme of the protest.

Fur sales have declined by fifty per cent over the last seven years. Surveys have indicated that the majority of people feel that fur products are inhumane. Still, the

fur industry desperately tries to promote fur as a symbol of status and elegance. Rather, it is a symbol of insensitivity and cruelty. Millions of mink, foxes, raccoons, coyotes, bobcats, lynxes, opossums, nutria, beavers, muskrats, otters, and other animals are killed each year by the fur industry. Whether the animal is trapped or ranched, it suffers a multiplicity of abuses before meeting with a gruesome death.

It has been estimated that approximately fifty per cent of furs are obtained from trapped animals. The most common type of trap is the barbaric leghold trap. Animals caught in this trap

struggle desperately to get loose, causing painful lacerations and mutilating foot wounds. Eventually they succumb to exhaustion and die a slow, torturous death, unless predators find them first. In order to avoid losing animals to predators, some trappers use pole traps, which hoist the animal into the air. This leaves it hanging by one limb until it dies or until the trapper returns. About one in four animals escapes by chewing off its own foot — their chances for survival, however, once maimed so badly are extremely slim.

For those who do remain in the traps, further torture awaits them when the trapper returns. In order to avoid damaging the pelt, the animals are usually beaten or stomped to death. Also, there are thousands of "accidental" victims of these traps every year, such as dogs, cats, birds, and others, including endangered species. Trappers call these "trash

kills" because they have no economic value.

As for ranched animals, they spend their lives in appalling conditions. Once-dignified wild animals are imprisoned in tiny, feces-encrusted cages on fur farms, their short lives filled with misery. Some go mad from the stress of confinement. No humane slaughter laws protect animals on fur farms, and these animals are slaughtered by neck-breaking, gassing with hot car exhaust, injections of weed killer, and painful anal and genital electrocution.

Although I would imagine that not many Dal students were planning to buy their sweethearts fur coats for Valentine's Day, it is nonetheless important to spread the facts about furs. Please try to educate anyone who still supports the fur industry. It is only when the public refuses to buy and wear furs that the needless misery and death will end.

Countdown to communism

BY ALAN LEBLANC

The British colony of Hong Kong has emerged as a powerhouse of economic significance over the past years. However, its businesses are in danger of being dissected by neighbouring China. The lease on the city and the neighbouring New Territories will expire on July 1st, as a deal signed by Great Britain in 1898 expires. What can we do in far away Canada? Read on.

Canada may have an interest in the city because of our many trade ties with them. We have a trade surplus with the city, and China may see trading with the United States more viable and politically sensible. Canada may also be less willing to do business in Hong Kong when they find that communist ways of business tend to have more regulations and impediments. Most Canadian companies may feel trapped in the system.

The Chinese did make an agreement with the Territories that they would retain autonomy for the next fifty years. Unfortunately this contract, the Joint Declaration, is not legally binding and is unenforceable by international law. Would you expect any of the G-7 countries to go to war over the situation? It's highly unlikely.

Canada also has a vested interest in the new communist rule because many of its citizens live in Hong Kong as well. Several hundred are Canadian-born citizens, and over a hundred thousand have Canadian passports, most likely for business trips and what not. To subject our Canadian people to a government that would treat them inhumanely would be an atrocity.

Not only would Canadians not like the idea of communist rule, but many Hong Kongers would find their businesses and lives irrevocably changed. Over sixty per cent have been polled time after time that they would prefer their own autonomy and not be subject to communist rule.

The problem with communist rule isn't that they grab hold of the businesses. They in fact indirectly harm the businesses by dismantling the organizations that would prevent corruption in the system. Organizations like the Independent Commission Against Corruption may be shut down in the name of China's backward democracy. Their motive for this may be kickbacks from corrupt businesses wishing to violate laws in Hong Kong.

My idea for saving the region is for Hong Kong to become an official territory of Canada. We

would be able to increase trade ties to Hong Kong and offer solace to our Canadian citizens across the water. Whether or not they wish to have provincial status or remain a neutral protectorate will be left up to them. A provincial status may be unlikely; lately selling confederation in Canada has been difficult.

Naturally the Chinese would not agree to such a deal, because they would welcome the new territory with its many businesses. Fortunately, it is not China's decision to make. Without being aware of it, Hong Kong has always been an independent state and will continue to be so until June 30th. It is the decision of those who live there as to the fate of the Territories, and if they are willing to accept their offer, all the better for us. Of course, the idea of autonomy for Hong Kong may inspire them to become completely independent, but who could they turn to for protection?

I would encourage you to write to your MPs (I wrote to mine) and raise the question with them. I would especially suggest it to all those who live in the Halifax riding, so that a certain incumbent may enhance her credibility. After all, what better day for Hong Kong to declare its new partnership with Canada than on July 1st?

Big boys in tight pants

STUART MCMILLAN

Who is right and who is wrong? The venue at a concert is as crowded as it can get, bodies are rubbing against one another, there is a constant roaring loud noise, and a yucky stench of intense body odour. The band takes to the stage and begins a deafening show, setting the crowd into a mad frenzy. Everybody is suddenly jumping up and down, slamming themselves into others, letting frustration, angst, joy, and happiness being released all together at the same time. The floor is no longer a place where one can pleasantly enjoy and watch the band but it has rather been transformed into a type of battlefield where only the strong and "built big" can survive. This is not a place for the claustrophobic or the faint at heart.

To a certain extent it is "anything goes" in the crowd. The

ones I feel the worst for are the muscle built, steroid-enhanced, vein-pumped monsters — the bouncer who has to attempt to keep everything in order but also to let the audience enjoy the show. But are they overaggressive on occasions in their actions of taming the raging crowd?

One of the most annoying things about trying to get close to the stage is that you will probably end up in the "mosh pit" where if you do not feel your ribs cracking under the pressure of everybody a crowd surfer will probably land on you. There is nothing worse than when you are trying to keep your balance or catch your breath when suddenly a surfer gives you a really good kick in the back of the head. Those big heavy boots don't feel too nice when smacking against your skull. Ouch, that hurt.

At the same time the bounc-

ers are prowling like well-fed wolves trying to grab the person responsible for giving you the karate kick to the head and when they do get him in their grasp they generally freak out at him, maybe even kicking that person out of the venue. Is the bouncer there to protect the well-being of the fan (from getting bruised eyes) or is he there to stop fans from trying to get on stage? When there is such a packed group of people it is impossible for normality to exist.

At the I Mother Earth show last week the bouncers were very rough on some patrons of the bar, which seemed to frustrate both fellow fans and the band alike. It is not very nice for a person to be kicked out of the bar, but a lot of the time it appeared as if the bouncers were justified from controlling what a few people did, so that others would not have their evening ruined.

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