

Hunter on Greenpeace



Dal Photo / Walsh

Bob Hunter of the Greenpeace Foundation lectured to a pitifully small audience.

by Wayne Ingarfield

"I'm not red or white, I'm green! And I don't give a shit about your politics!" replied Bob Hunter, President of the Greenpeace Foundation when harassed by "political activists" who attended the "Greenpeace Conspiracy", a lecture held in the McGinnis Room on Monday, Sept. 20.

The purpose of the lecture was to outline what Greenpeace is and to show the Greenpeace version of the major news events they have been involved in since the group's organization in 1971.

The Greenpeace Foundation was formed when a group of concerned people decided that it was up to them to oppose American nuclear testing in the Aleutian islands. They used a method devised by the Quakers. They bought an old halibut seiner which they sailed into the test site. Since the Americans could not detonate the device without risking injury to the Greenpeace people, they postponed the tests for a month. As a result, the Greenpeace sailors eventually ran out of supplies and fuel, and had to leave the test site. They were invited to enter an American port by the U.S. Coast Guard, accepted, and were immediately arrested for violation of a tariff regulation enacted in 1920, and, added Hunter, "probably never used since then." The tests were finally carried out, but they were the last of such tests carried out in the area, now a bird sanctuary.

The method of sailing directly into a "trouble spot" and innocently interfering with an activity, whether nuclear testing or the killing of whales, is a simple yet an extremely effective method. By making sure that they are in international waters, they are breaking no laws and as such cannot be boarded, let alone arrested, for merely being in the way. Any attempt by a foreign country to do so would constitute piracy (by international agreement) with a resulting maximum sentence of death if convicted. No one has yet been convicted of piracy, but the episode which occurred with the French in the Phillipines could produce the first such conviction.

The trial is now taking place in Paris.

The charge of piracy was laid by Greenpeace Foundation, when their boat was boarded and crew beaten by a group of French commandos during the protesting of the French explosion of nuclear devices in the atmosphere. At the time France was the only country other than China continuing detonations. Since the Greenpeace episode both countries have discontinued these tests.

Another area with which the Greenpeace Foundation has been involved is the preservation of marine mammals. Hunter stated that of the ten species of whales hunted for profit, eight are now commercially extinct. The east coast harp seal population has dwindled steadily from an estimated 30 million at the turn of the century to one million or less today.

The Canadian Government still seems to be under the impression that we continue to have an extremely large excess of seals to harvest. In five or ten years, the harp seal will be virtually extinct unless the Canadian government realizes that something must be done.

In 1975 the Greenpeace Foundation decided to try to end this senseless slaughter by spraying the baby seals with a harmless green dye, making their pelts commercially worthless. As soon as these plans were made public, the federal government banned the spraying of seal pups, since they claimed it would prevent the female seals from identifying their pups. This finding was contrary to research carried out by biologists working for Greenpeace. It's hard to imagine a mother seal refusing to nurse her pup because it has some green dye on it when she will attempt to do the same after the seal has been killed and skinned (not necessarily in that order).

The argument in favor of sealing which politicians hold up to the public, and can always expect some segments of the population to sympathize with, is that so many poor maritimers depend on the sealing industry to survive. While

this may have been true years ago, Hunter states that it is simply not the case today. A commercial sealer earns one dollar for each baby seal he skins. He must also pay for his room and board on the ship, and doesn't make a cent until the ship shows a profit, Hunter said. The middleman makes \$20 per pelt Hunter told the audience and the company makes \$150 per pelt. Now try to guess where the pressure is coming from for the government to discourage the Greenpeace from drawing attention to the hunt. In the end, Hunter said, the average Newfoundlander makes an average of between \$300 and \$400 per year from sealing.

When Greenpeace arrived in Newfoundland to launch its protest campaign they were greeted by a public ready to lynch them, as the Newfoundlanders certainly had no use for anyone who was about to try to deprive them of a source of income they had inherited from their forefathers. This the press played up very big. The only thing they failed to emphasize was that in the end Greenpeace and half the community willing to go out on the ice with them.

So the Greenpeace representatives prepared to fly to the ice floes in their helicopters. But the federal government stepped in again, prohibiting a helicopter landing within three miles of a seal herd, as it would disturb the nursing females. No provision was made to prevent a huge ice-breaking sealing ship from crushing right through the middle of the seal nursery.

Evidently, a nursing seal is not disturbed by being crushed to death by a sealing ship.

Since the Greenpeace were now prevented from spraying the seals, they instead placed themselves between the defenseless seals and the sealers, as a result a few dozen seals were saved.

When it came time to collect the pelts the sealing ship simply sailed right through the nursery, crushing a few hundred more seal pups which could not get out of the way. The greenpeace then decided to save some of these helpless seals from being crushed by picking them up and moving them out of the way. Once again the Greenpeace were hampered by the Federal Government, this time being informed by Fishery officers that it was illegal to pick up a baby seal.

For next year the Greenpeace Foundation has formulated plans to obstruct the sealing operations, but this time they are not going to make public their new plans until their operations actually get underway, thus being ensured the government will not be drawing up new legislations at the same time as the Greenpeace are enroute the sealing grounds.

Two years previous to this, Greenpeace undertook the complicated task of making public the plight of the whale. At this time the only two countries still commercially hunting the whale to any great extent were Japan and the Soviet Union.

The method they used was the same as the one used to obstruct the sealing operations, only on a larger scale. They positioned themselves between the whales and the harpooners preventing the whalers from getting a clear shot at the whale without endangering the lives of the Greenpeace.

After locating the Russian whaling fleet, the Greenpeace went ahead according to plans. The Russians could not get a clear shot

at the whales when the Greenpeace got in the way so when they tired of the game they simply packed up shop and moved to a new location. The ship used by the Greenpeace Foundation was unable to follow because it did not carry a sufficient fuel supply for an extended journey. As a result of the Greenpeace endeavour nine whales were saved.

The following year Greenpeace leased a retired Canadian mine sweeper which was one knot faster than the Soviet whaling vessels. Whaling operations were at this time being carried out in southern waters just off of Hawaii. This time the Soviets (once they realized that they could not simply outrun the Greenpeace) halted their whaling operations and even went as far to cover up their harpoon guns, which are equipped with telescopic sights and explosive heads.

The Soviets recognized that they were the target of the media and they wanted no part of being held up and used as an example of a country willfully exterminating an endangered species. Eventually the Soviets sailed home without completing their operations. A truly significant number of whales had been saved from the bowels of the Soviet processing ships.

Of all the money claimed to be made from whaling in the neighborhood of 200 million dollars) the fact is that more money is made from live whales, books and films about whales, whales in marinas etc. A conservative estimate would be in the range of 500 million dollars.

Another example of the demented rational the Soviets and Japanese like to give the public is their claim that the whale is an important supplier of oils and protein...The fact is that everything provided by the whale can now be produced synthetically, and in any case, at the rate the Soviets and Japanese are exploiting the industry they are going to have to get used to finding alternate sources of protein when the whale becomes commercially extinct in another five years.

The Greenpeace Foundation is not only concerned with such endangered species as whales and seals, much of their activity concerns another endangered species man. Their main concern in this field is the development of nuclear energy. Greenpeace views the development of nuclear energy as being totally unacceptable. Hunter claims that anything possessing the destructive capabilities such as found in nuclear wastes should not be allowed to be developed for any reason whatsoever. If man had pumped the same amount of money into developing an alternate energy source to petroleum products such as solar or wind power he would already have developed an efficient cheap safe source of power.

"Canada", claims Hunter "is becoming a dealer in death". As it stands now Canada will sell a nuclear reactor to almost anyone who has the bucks to afford it. As a result any politically "Stable" country which wants nuclear capabilities can purchase them from Canada. This may include South Korea and Brazil, two countries noted for their brutal repression of dissidents.

In any case I'm quite sure the Campus Community joins me in wishing the Greenpeace Foundation every success in their future endeavors. Anyone wishing to join the Greenpeace Foundation, or wishing to get more information on their activities is invited to write the following address:

The Greenpeace Foundation
2108 West 4th Ave.,
Vancouver B.C.