

What in the world

by Wayne Kondro

They are a non-profit, non-violent, non-political ecological pressure group. Their ultimate goal is "to bring about a basic change in thinking towards planetary consciousness." Their tactics have been to place themselves in positions which leave their opponents one choice, that is, the pursuit of madness will have to be done at the expense of human life. Currently, their efforts concentrate on nuclear testing, the whale hunt, the seal hunt, and mercury poisoning. They have played major roles in the stoppage of atmospheric nuclear testing, the reduction of whaling, and the education of mankind in environmental issues. They are the Greenpeace Foundation, and without doubt are one of the most potent environmentalist forces to date.

The Greenpeace Foundation grew out of the Don't Make a Wave Committee, which was organized to stop American nuclear testing in Amchitka. In the words of Robert Hunter, president of Greenpeace, it was "a bringing together of the peace and environmental movements." The organization chartered the boat Phyllis Cormack, renamed it Greenpeace I, and sailed it across the Gulf of Alaska from their home base Vancouver, in the hope that their presence would detain American authorities from proceeding with their planned underground nuclear detonation programs. The nuclear test program was delayed and the crew went ashore at Akutan and were promptly arrested for 'crossing the American border illegally.' As protests spread across the continent and thousands of students blockaded the border at Blaine, Washington, a second boat, named 'Greenpeace Too' sailed from Vancouver only to be detained by weather and unable to reach the detonation site. Directly, their efforts were of little avail, but indirectly, the Foundation's protest and massive support resulted in the closing of the Amchitka test site by the U.S. Atomic Energy commission and the conversion of the island into a bird sanctuary.

Shortly thereafter, the Foundation sponsored the sailing of Greenpeace III, a 38 foot ketch 'Vega', owned and operated by Canadian citizen David McTaggart. Employing the same tactic of sailing directly into the nuclear test site, McTaggart and his two man crew sailed to Mururoa, hoping to combat French atmospheric testing over Mururoa Atoll. After arriving at the site, Greenpeace III was harassed for days by the French naval cordon and in a final flagrant violation of international rules of the sea, rammed by a naval vessel. The boat was given minimal repairs and towed out of the test site under protest from McTaggart and his crew. After

arriving in New Zealand McTaggart flew to Canada and immediately instituted legal proceedings against the French government. In the process the 'Vega' was repaired, McTaggart and fellow crew-member Nigel Ingram, with their ladies, made a second voyage of the Greenpeace III into the French test site and were immediately seized upon and beaten with truncheons by the French navy, the incident causing partial loss of sight in McTaggart's left eye. Both incidents were carefully documented and photographed, offering definitive proof of French violation of human rights and international rules of the sea. To this date McTaggart has been involved in a legal battle for compensation with the French government. McTaggart's voyages, the sailing of Greenpeace IV, under the command of Rolf Heimann, massive public protest across the world, and Greenpeace education programs conducted in France in conjunction with other environmental groups culminated a movement which resulted in the curtailing of French atmospheric testing in the south Pacific.

Greenpeace's opposition to nuclear testing and proliferation is based on very well-founded concern. There is a tendency in our society to view the nuclear issue with a very reluctant and obedient eye. In the last few years we have been fed political publicity which implies that concern over the nuclear issue is alarmist and irrational with respect to the commanding intelligence of the world's authorities.

Unfortunately, this PR job has worked. Yet while we maintain our silence the proliferation of nuclear arms has been extensive despite full knowledge of possible destructive consequences. Let's look at a few of them. When the atoms of uranium-235 are split, you get some leftovers. These include strontium-90, cesium-137, and iodine-131, all of which are known causes of cancer. The heavyweight product of this process is plutonium, which is used to make atomic bombs. Hundreds of tons of plutonium are being produced although a beer mug full would kill all of mankind. The problem with all of these processes are the leftovers. So they've devised a process of burying them underground in huge storage tanks. This radio-active waste is left sit to decay for the next few thousand years, plutonium, for example, has a half-life of 25,000 years, which means it will take 250,000 years for total decay. Understandably there are handling and storage problems so we are told that the amount of radiation that leaks into the atmosphere is minimal. Yet radiation itself is accumulative. Although all radiation is considered dangerous, our governments set radiation levels to



which we can be exposed. (Incidentally, Canadian levels are a hundred times higher than American ones.) Added to the difficulties future generations will have in dealing with all of this nuclear waste that is being funnelled into the earth is the danger of present genetic breakdowns in life-forms, and the com-

plete destruction of environmental ecosystems.

But, yes, of course, there is the issue of national defense. This same issue which allows our governments to stockpile arms which currently are world overkill factors in the hundred fold. An issue which allows us to flood

And why do

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With the annual race for the preservation of the harp seal underway we are entreated with pleas to prevent the senseless slaughter in the face of ecological holocaust. Considering the persistent idiocy of mankind with regard to environmental concerns, we would do well to turn our attention to the fate of threatened species.

Commercial seal hunting has been practised on this continent since the arrival of the Europeans, who prized the mammal for the commercial value of its oil and leather. Still earlier Eskimos hunted the seal for food and protective clothing. Such days are gone. Only rarely (and only by the very poor) are the seals hunted for domestic purposes. In the last few centuries mankind has escalated his decimation of the species because of a quixotic peculiarity which leads man to attire the female of the species in lavish furs, undoubtedly to persuade the viewers of 'the female' into thinking that the less aesthetic portions of the female anatomy, or a wayward and backward mentality, is more than compensated for by the lasciviousness of the attire.

Roughly two hundred years ago, it was discovered that this lasciviousness was even further enhanced if one were to obtain the furs of the baby seal, that is, those younger than three weeks of age harbouring a soft white pelt. Estimates of the Canadian seal population during the centuries prior to European infiltration range from 30 to 35 million. By 1900 the population had dropped to ten million. 1976 estimates vary from 700,000 to 800,000, when done by independent agencies, to 1.2 million when done federally. Using federal statistics this represents 95% elimination. As for quotas to prevent this demeaning display of mankind's mentality the first were set in 1850 at 300,000, remaining at that figure for one hundred years of Canadian sealing and not including quotas set for foreign sealing vessels. In the 1960's, the quota was recued to 200,000 representing an annual kill ranging from 70 to 90 per cent of all seals born in a specific year.

The birth rate is dependent upon balanced ecosystems and ecological conditions. In 1971 the government-appointed Committee on Seals and Sealing advised the Fisheries department to implement a six year moratorium on hunting. This was ignored. The 1972 TAC (Total Allowable Catch) was set at 150,000 of which

30,000 went to Newfoundland Eskimos, and the same went to the Canadian sealing industry and daily remaining 90,000, to foreign interests. In that year independent groups report that there was an overkill of 40,000 plus. Last year TAC was 128,000. The actual number of seals is estimated at 170,000. This represents an overkill of 40,000. Romeo LeBlanc, federal Fisheries minister, claims the overkill was made by Newfoundland fishermen and Eskimos who exceeded their quota of 30,000. With an estimated 200,000 seals born last year this would be that roughly 30,000, or 15 per cent survived last year's hunt. With the Fisheries department has seen fit to raise this year's quota to 32,000.

Why is our federal government doing this? They maintain that the seal is not an endangered species and the sealing industry is essential to the livelihood of the Newfoundland man. We are told that the sealing industry generates \$2.3 million for Newfoundlanders and that the average fisherman this represents roughly \$2200 yearly. With rough mathematics would suggest that those hundreds of Newfoundland sealers who act those dollars are reaching their pockets. Not included in this total is the Norwegian sealing industry's estimated yearly income of \$12 to \$15 million. economic argument hardly justified. Incidentally, foreign interests have been exempted from the new two hundred mile limit.

Another argument being put forward is that the seals eat as much of the fish as the fishing industry harvests. In words of Romeo LeBlanc, "Seals eat the top of the marine food chain. If such, they were predators, which assumed a great amount of fish which were, in effect, in competition with coast fishermen." In spite of this scapegoat-seeking, LeBlanc is suading a lot of people. The fishing industry has exhausted its fishing population, and estimates even the common cod fish are at dangerously low levels. As an issue you've heard about the poverty of the Maritimers, now look at the local fish and you'll get a fairly good idea where the dollars are going and what is being done with our fish. mankind seemingly destroying our environment, think about future days

