

SCIENCE / ENVIRONMENT

The fur is still flying

BY NAOMI FLECSHHUT

It would seem that February is the month that those prone to protesting seem to be unusually active. Students with slogans are almost a common-place occurrence this time of year.

Downtown, people bearing placards displaying slogans like "Fur is Dead", "Animals Are Not Ours to Wear", and "Would You Wear Your Dog?" accompanied pictures of animals crowded in filthy cages on fur farms, and those suffering in leg-hold traps. A sign with a picture of the unintentional victim of the indiscriminate traps — a domestic cat — drove the point home quite nicely to animal lovers and pet owners alike.

Yet, considering the few people who strut around in fur coats nowadays, passers-by might have wondered why they were there.

Though fur coats aren't the raging fashion they once were, according to the Nova Scotia Humane Society (NSHS), the fur industry is still alive and thriving. Fur stores still display their wares behind barred windows in many cities. Though large department stores have shied away from selling furs outright, they now settle for the more subtly-added accents of clothing lined or rimmed with portions of pelts.

This tenuous hold on fashion dollars by the fur industry ensures that close to three million animals will be forced to live in fur farms, only to endure painful deaths. A similar number of creatures will suffer for days with nearly severed limbs in leg-hold traps while awaiting the appearance of the trapper — and death. In fact, by the time you finish reading this, about three hundred animals in North America will feel the excruciating bite of steel into flesh — about one every two seconds.

So, once one examines the brutal realities of the fur industry, there can be little doubt of the pain endured by animals in the name of fashion.

Indeed the general goodwill of busy downtown shoppers directed at the 30-to-40 protesters reflected their support of the anti-fur campaign. An NSHS representative remarked that people accepting pamphlets, asking questions, waving and honking were all marks of the generally positive public response to the fur

protest.

However, an interesting point was brought up by the odd passer-by who remarked on the footwear of most protestors.

Leather. If protestors ask the question, "would you wear your dog?" why is the parallel not extended to cattle? One of the main tenets of animal activism is the belief in the intrinsic right to life for all animals. This being the case, how can activists (who tend generally toward vegetarian and vegan diets) justify wearing the skin of one animal while protesting the

By the time you finish reading this, about three hundred animals in North America will feel the excruciating bite of steel into flesh — about one every two seconds.

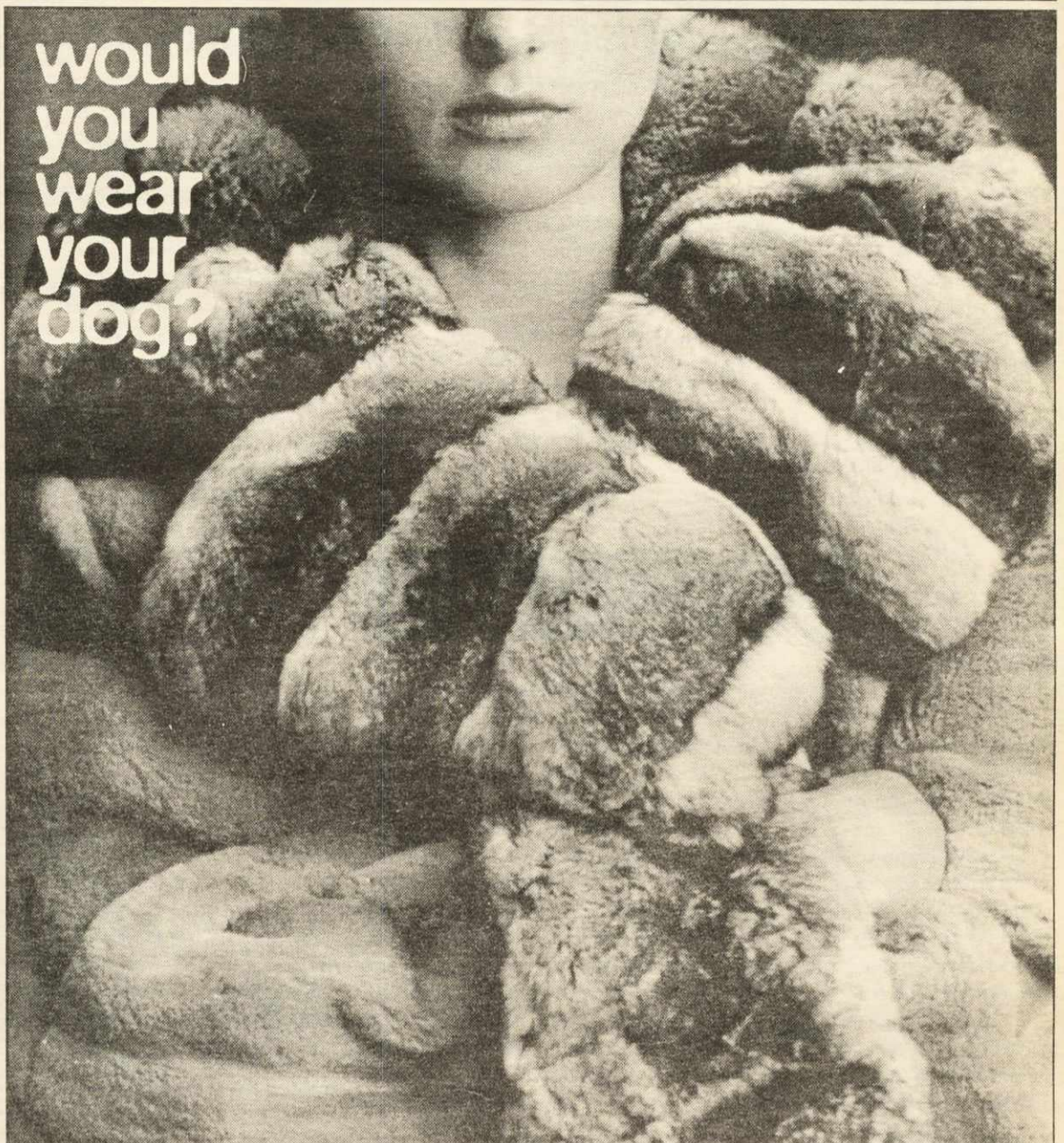
skinning of another?

The NSHS representative said there are significant differences between leather and fur. Leather is only the by-product of meat produced by the animal agriculture industry, while animals are slaughtered by the fur industry for the sole purpose of their pelts.

In addition, we might consider the fact that in the case of leather, it is often hard to find acceptable alternatives. There are a few companies, mostly based in the UK, who specialize in providing cruelty-free shoes and accessories. But price being a determining factor in the shopping habits of most students, and indeed most people, mail ordering these shoes is not always an option. People can only do what is in their means to make their purchases ethical in an imperfect world.

Companies that still sell leather accessories do so because people support them. Many activists choose not to contribute by buying second-hand leather items instead, and work towards the day when demand for alternatives will be met by their supply.

Which brings us full circle to the purpose of Saturday's silent protest. Protestors peacefully raised the issue in the hopes that discussion, critical thinking, and perhaps even ethical buying would be instigated in the fellow consumers walking the streets that day. In our material society, it is money that talks. It is our job to ensure its voice is humane.





Fly free to London!

Now, for a limited time, you can fly for free to London when you book selected Contiki Europe tours. For full details, drop by your nearest Travel CUTS.



Participants must have a valid International Student ID Card (ISIC). Tours must be paid in full by March 31, 1999. Valid on departures from Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal or Halifax only. Departure deadlines apply depending upon the tour. Additional tours also available with flight to London for only \$299! Full details available at Travel CUTS.



TRAVEL CUTS

Plugged-in to Student Travel
Since 1969

3RD FLOOR SUB 494-2054

Owned and operated by the Canadian Federation of Students



HOLIDAYS for 18-35s

