

*S. O. 29*

He set it under the tree in order to catch the animal. The animal was still alive. If you do that up here, your hands are going to freeze to the trap. They just made that movie to create more illusions and more arguments on their side.

By "up here" he meant the North.

Fur has been targeted by the animal rights activists and I suppose one reason is that a fur coat is thought of as being a luxury item; here is a way to get at the affluent or the rich. In part it is a luxury item, that is true, but it is also in my view a very wise purchase. It is a long-lasting garment. It is warm, lightweight and easily altered, and in cold climates there can be no better investment in comfort and good appearance than to have a good fur coat. That is why so many Canadians make the effort to make the purchase and why the product has been so popular among European buyers.

I believe if furs were more widely used and everyone recognized their utility, then the animal rights activists would have to choose a different target altogether. They are unlikely to get much support for a chicken or fish boycott. There are few who are ready to give up eating beef or lamb or the wearing of leather shoes and jackets, so they pick on fur. I would like you to listen to the very frank testimony given before the committee by Stephen Best, Vice-Chairman of the International Wildlife Coalition. He was describing for the committee the tactics of the animal rights group of which he is a member. He said and I quote:

If the international public was in full support of the fur industry and we were no longer able to raise funds to deal with the fur industry, we would definitely then shift over to whatever animal area we could raise funds to address. There are many animal issues.

It is estimated that about 105,000 Canadians earn all or part of their income from the fur industry. Of those, approximately 100,000 are trappers. Of that number, 50,000 to 60,000 are aboriginal people. The majority of trappers in this country are aboriginal people and that brings me to my second point.

The fur industry is of particular and special importance and concern to the aboriginal peoples of Canada. Opponents of the fur industry have promoted the myth that what we are dealing with here is a large, monolithic industry. This is a holdover from the fur trade days when the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Trading Company were virtual monopolies in Canada. Today the fur industry is made up of small, generally family-oriented businesses, composed of trappers, ranchers, marketers, processors, artisans and retailers.

Trapping is vital to the aboriginal subsistence economy. Not many Canadians are aware of exactly what the subsistence economy is. Subsistence means a great deal more to aboriginal people than simply getting by. It has a very definite cultural aspect to it. Here is a member of the Old Crow Band in Yukon talking about subsistence. He said:

Subsistence means we like to trap, we like to hunt and we like to fish and live with the land and in harmony with the land and off the land. As one person said, we do not live up here for nothing. So, with that, we also have a lot of hard work to maintain our way of life.

Indigenous Survival International is an organization set up to relay the indigenous trapping message overseas. It was established to protect and promote indigenous harvesting rights and to maintain and promote a market for aboriginal fur products. It represents about one and a half million aboriginal people living in Canada, Greenland and Alaska. Indigenous peoples themselves are rightfully taking the leadership in protecting their harvesting rights. I want to quote from an interesting document put out by that organization which talks about the land as their life:

In the arctic and subarctic we make our living off the land. The growing season is short and the soil poor in nutrients. We must hunt to survive.

We hunt, fish, and trap as a way of life that has allowed us to survive for thousands of years in this harsh and delicate environment.

For generations our people have lived in balance and harmony with nature. We respect the land and it has served us well. We are part of the land and we are a natural part of the ecosystem.

My final point is that threats to the fur industry from the animal rights movement, now supported in part by the Parliament of the United Kingdom at Westminster through its proposed labelling legislation, must be vigorously and effectively counteracted by every possible means. It must be done by encouraging and giving support to Indigenous Survival International. It must be done by raising this issue at the Economic Summit in Toronto. Today in the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs we voted unanimously that additional copies of the fur report that I mentioned earlier be printed and available for distribution in Toronto at the Economic Summit as requested by the Government.

The other way in which we can get the message to Great Britain and Europe is by means of the debate which is taking place in the House tonight. During the debate on the patriation of our Constitution the British Parliament made a great deal about its concern for aboriginal rights, but in my view this proposed labelling legislation flies in the face of that concern.

I have received many letters from my own constituency, the James Bay Trappers Council for example, written to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) urging him to lead the way in indicating to Great Britain that the action they are proposing is totally unacceptable. In Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon there are proposals that we start boycotting British goods if this action goes through. I agree with the Hon. Member for Yukon that this kind of spiralling approach is counter-productive and no one wins.

● (2100)

I conclude by repeating that the fur industry is a legitimate one. It is of vital importance to the subsistence economy and culture of aboriginal peoples. The British Government must reconsider its ill-advised action. Passing this Bill in the British Parliament will do nothing at all to enhance Canadian-Anglo relations which many of us continue to value highly, especially those among us who see the Commonwealth of Nations as being a force for understanding and good will in a world which is too frequently hostile and violent.