

has been criticized, as has been the taking of seals itself. Other methods have been considered — gunshot, drugs, carbon dioxide poisoning and concussion bolts — and each has been found to be less humane. The blow with a hardwood bat kills the seal outright or renders it irreversibly unconscious.

Most Canadian sealing vessels are captained and manned by Newfoundland fishermen. The average income earned by each sealer during the harvesting month is around \$2,300, a sum which may provide 40 per cent or more of a sealer's annual family income.

The Problem at Martinique Beach

Some years ago the government of Nova Scotia laid a gravel road half a mile out on the dunes of Martinique Beach. Officials added parking lots,

change houses and picnic tables. The beach stretches for over a mile, across the entrance of Musquodoboit Harbour and contains a game sanctuary used by thousands of migrating Canada geese and a variety of other waterfowl.

Hunters soon began to drive beyond the road to launch their boats, and other people drove dune buggies across the sands. According to *Nature Canada*, the motorized human presence has hastened the rate of natural erosion by hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. *Nature Canada* has reported a breakthrough by the sea at the far end of the beach and concluded that several more breaks are imminent. The Nova Scotia Resources Council has recommended that the existing road be closed and that vehicle-proof barriers be erected to prevent dune buggy riding. The Nova Scotia Wildlife Federation, on the other hand, has recommended that the existing road be extended through the bird sanctuary and that a full-time warden be hired to make sure that the motorized visitors are confined to this road.

Drilling in the Beaufort Sea

In 1973 the Canadian government gave "approval in principle" to exploratory drilling for oil in the Beaufort Sea on condition that a comprehensive study of possible consequences be made. The study stated that extensive drilling operations would have substantial environmental and sociological impacts, whether or not a major polluting incident occurred. It concluded, however, that drilling of two exploratory holes would not produce a sufficiently large increase in activity to have a major impact unless an oil blowout occurred.

The Canadian Cabinet balanced the study against the need to determine Canada's potential resources and gave permission to drill exploratory wells. Drillers were required to maintain elaborate technical backup equipment and to stop a full month before the end of the 1976 operating season. The incident most feared — though not the most probable — was a blowout, which would spout oil until the well was exhausted or until a relief well was drilled. No blowouts occurred during the six-week 1976 season.

Dr. R. W. Stewart, of Environment Canada, was the chairman of the committee conducting the study. The excerpts below are from an interview with him in *Contact**

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Q. What is the chance of a blowout?

A. There is no objective way of ascertaining the probability. . . . We used existing information to judge that the probability was somewhere between 1 in 1,000 and 1 in 10,000. Doug Pimlott of COPE [the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement] puts the probability between 1 in 200 and 1 in 500 and John Hnatiuk of Gulf Oil uses a figure of 1 in 20,000.

Q. What effects would a blowout have on native peoples?

A. It is probable that the major effect would be on their attitudes. It would affect their view of the industry and of government. The mess that would be produced would affect their view of the area in which they live. The economic effect would probably be fairly small.

Q. What is the capability to control a blowout and clean up oil?

A. There is as yet no known way of controlling a blowout which does not seal itself, except by drilling a relief well. The problems of drilling a relief well are . . . about the same in difficulty as those of drilling a well in the first place. . . . The difficulty with the Beaufort Sea is that one cannot be sure that the required time will be available. . . .

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