

Prof questions wolf threat to caribou

by John Watson

Approval has been given to begin hunting wolves near the northern Alberta town of Grande Cache in an attempt to reduce the pressure

the wolves put on a dwindling caribou population.

Wolf hunts may not have the intended effect though. According to Dr. Lu Carbyn from the Boreal

Institute on campus, wolf hunts carried out from helicopters generally do not eliminate an entire wolf pack. The surviving wolves may break up into a number of "smaller killing units," according to Carbyn, "it's better to have one large pack than two or three smaller ones."

And, says Carbyn, even if the hunt is successful, "all the other problems of saving caribou are still in place."

Part of the caribou's problem stems from the high populations of other prey - which have kept the wolf numbers high. And the wolves in turn have kept pressure on the caribou.

Carbyn questioned whether the government should be controlling wolves to save caribou, or if the wolf is being used as a scapegoat. "Is this just a way of expanding wolf control (for the hunters)?" he said.

There has been a strong lobby to control wolf populations for a number of years.

"There are a lot of people in a lot of wildlife (Canadian Wildlife Service) branches that are pushing for wolf control, and caribou is a foot in the door," said Carbyn.

The desire to control wolf populations comes from the modern view that wolves are in competition with man for game.

This creates a moral question said Carbyn, the wolf "has to hunt to maintain itself in the biosphere," yet man hunts for sport.

Wildlife management theory says there should always be an even supply of game for sportsmen, but

that is not the way nature works.

Animal populations naturally oscillate from low to high numbers over a period of 30 to 40 years, said Carbyn.

We don't have enough information to know if the low numbers of caribou should be a major concern.

The question, said Carbyn, is "How threatened are the caribou?"

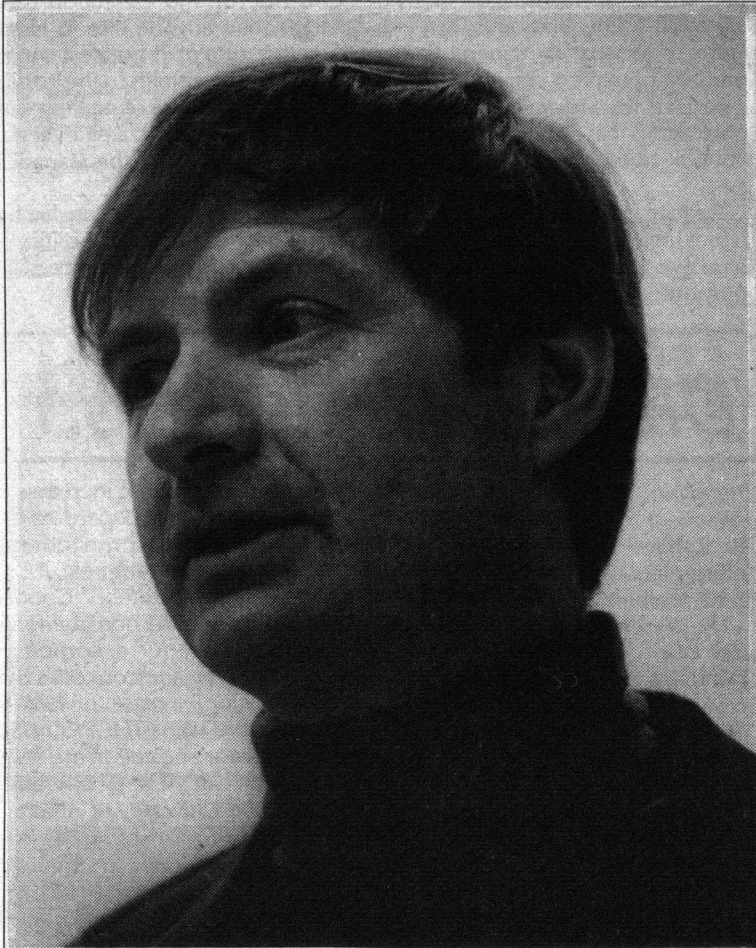


photo Keith Zukowski

"How threatened are the caribou?" asks Dr. Lu Carbyn.

Prof nukes cruise testing

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Canada should cancel cruise missile testing in response to the recent U.S. violation of the 1979 strategic arms treaty, says a political scientist at the University of British Columbia.

"Our attitude should be to suspend cruise missile testing, at the very least as long as the policy of SALT II break-out continues," professor Michael Wallace told students at UBC recently.

The U.S. violated the strategic arms limitations treaty Nov. 29, when the 131st B-52 bomber, modified to carry cruise missiles was deployed in Texas. Canada has tested the cruise, each spring since 1984, and the government is expected to announce this year's first test in the near future.

Noting the missile's part in the treaty breakdown, Wallace said SALT II was "the one thing which

maintains offensive strategic stability... and therefore we cannot be seen to be involved in its dissolution."

SALT II, signed by U.S. president Jimmy Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, but left unrati- fied by the American senate, was commonly regarded as one of the most important arms control agreements to date. But Wallace assessed the initial significance of the break-down as symbolic.

"It was done to appease the radical American right, rather than as a substantive military gesture," he said. He later explained that a Pentagon decision to refit aging Poseidon I submarines, instead of dismantling them also contributed to the treaty breakdown.

Wallace criticized Canada's willingness to comply with Reagan administration strategies, but said a

more independent Canadian foreign policy was unlikely, given the Mulroney government's overwhelming desire for a free trade agreement.

Quoting an unidentified official in external affairs, Wallace said: "The Canadian government wants to play ball with the Americans all the time. But we learned a long time ago that if you play with the Americans, all you get is a bat up the ass."



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