

# Seals Not Endangered

Kevin Robertson

The Harp seal is known to be a plentiful species which inhabits the North Atlantic. In October and November the mature animals leave the northern waters and migrate south to the pupping areas. The seals give birth to a single pup on the pack ice of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the northeast coast of Newfoundland.

The Harp seal is hunted throughout the year. The Eskimos take between ten and fifteen thousand during the summer to provide themselves with food and clothing. The greatest harvest is taken during the winter months by the commercial seal hunters, who are mainly after furs and blubber. The flippers are often taken as a delicacy. The carcass is also taken occasionally for the valuable hormones which may be extracted from it.

Because fashion indicates that white fur is more valuable than dark fur, it is the pups of the Harp seal which are killed, but only when they are eight to ten days old. At this time the slight yellow stain of the amniotic fluid has disappeared and the fur is still fast.

Since the 1960's there has been a great controversy over the hunting of seals, with a great many people in favour of stopping the hunt. Recently Paul Watson, an Environmentalist from the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society said: "The price per pelt collected during the hunt is eighteen dollars which means that with the total quota for the hunt, the most to be made from the hunt is \$3.6 million. The hunt costs between five to six million to stage. Approximately \$250,000 alone are spent in search operations to locate the herd"

In addition, he mentioned the cost of ice breakers used to clear a path for the sealing ships. He also claims Canada loses \$50 million annually in tourism revenue because people refuse to come to Canada while we permit the hunt to take place.

If these statistics are true, they would seem to indicate a valid reason for stopping the hunt. However, the value of the blubber taken is not mentioned. Watson also fails to mention the many products produced from the seal and the income resulting from the production of these products.

In addition to the fur which is used to make hats, coats and mittens, there is the much more valuable seal oil. It is rich in fatty acids, glycerine, and alcohols. This oil is used as a lubricant for the gear-box of automobiles and other machines. It is an ingredient of many soaps, beauty creams, cosmetics, and some candies. The glycerine is used in the production of dynamite and hundreds of pharmaceutical products. Seal oil is also found in certain computers and space exploration devices. It can be found in television sets, photographic equipment, and many electrical appliances.

In areas which experience extremes of temperature, seal oil is important as a lubricant of mechanical parts. If one could compute the total value of all these products, it would justify the money spent by the government on the hunt.

Anti-seal hunt feeling is illustrated in a letter written and published in numerous newspapers in the sixties by Peter Lust, describing the hunt as viewed from a helicopter: "From the ice below come hundreds, thousands of death cries. Two men watch from above. They look at a scene of horror - small figures covered with blood convulsing on the ground in their death throes. Tiny bloodstained beings scream their death cries into the air, among them walk men in parkas and corduroys - long wooden sticks and knives in their hands - and commit murder after murder -- they are murdering tiny innocent, helpless seals"

The convulsing of the seals on the ice is explained by Backhouse, in his book Seals, who states "Clubbing is an efficient method of killing pups, but messy, and neuro-muscular activity even after death often indicates life to the anxious observer"

Lust also uses the word murder to describe the killing of what he calls tiny, innocent helpless seals. Unless Lust is a vegetarian, he has no right to object to the killing of an animal because it is innocent and helpless. Every day thousands

of cattle, sheep, lambs, chickens and other animals just as helpless as the seals, are slaughtered to feed many of the people who are protesting the hunt. The belief that seals are often skinned alive is unrealistic, as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Faculty Forum

by Frank Ledwell, Dean of Arts

"If I were not a teacher, I would be a farmer. I would be a good farmer. I would be a scientific farmer. I would be a leader in my community." Does that statement have a remote ring to it? If you think it does, you are right. It was the kind of idealism spoken to college students forty years ago. What I'd like to know is, does it fall on the ears of the 1980's with an echo or with a quiet thud?

People feel the '80's have closed off possibility and choice. Teachers are in low demand; farming continues to go corporate along with everything else; and people are more and more disinclined to lead. The times, in fact, seem to be tailored more so to following than to leading. Either that or they are attuned to the "I would prefer not to" inertia in response to any invitation to act.

What have the idealism of the 40's to do with the university of the '80's? It reads here that forty years does not make that much difference. Although we may no longer use the metaphor of "the farmer... the scientific farmer... a leader in my community", the university's commitment to its community is still one of producing leaders. The contemporary metaphors may be recreation director, social worker, entrepreneur, teacher (the demand will be high by 1985), and yes the farmer, still the resilient, indomitable farmer. But the buzz word is still leadership.

The word characterizes what universities are about. It is the need to explore this potentiality in themselves that brings students to the university. In this context, they are a breed apart. As Horace said: "It is not everyone that can get to Corinth." They have little choice than to see themselves as potential principal players on life's stage. It goes without saying that it is the university's job to prepare them for their roles therein.

The applications of such a thesis are as myriad as the colours of Joseph's coat. At the top end, they call for a special quality of leadership in university teachers. If a teacher does not assume the role of leader, aside from being derelict in his first responsibility, he will be as ineffectual as a near sighted fruit fly on a geodesic dome. At the bottom end, they invite the mature response of each student enrolled in the university. If a student goofs off, aside from being derelict in his duty to himself, he is a carbuncle on the rear of the commonweal. All other applications fall somewhere in between.

Be reminded that the lack of leadership has its consequences. They were never better penned than by the poet in the lines:

Was none who would be foremost  
To lead such dire attack;  
But those behind cried "Forward!"  
And those before cried "Back!"