# "I WAS ONCE INDEPENDENT": THE SOUTHERN SEAL PROTEST AND INUIT[1]

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*Abstract:* On three occasions in the past 20 years, the anti-sealing/animal rights movement has initiated protests which have progressively damaged one of the traditional mainstays of Inuit adaptation, the hunting of ringed seals (*Phoca hispida*). While the stated objective of these protests was control of the commercial exploitation of harp seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*) along the Atlantic coast of Canada, they have eroded the ability of Canadian Inuit to exploit a key traditional resource.

This paper is a preliminary examination of the nature and consequences of two levels of ongoing conflict over sealing between Inuit seal users and southern seal protectors. The first level of conflict is the economic dimension whereby, under cash market conditions that have existed since the end of World War II, Inuit in parts of the Canadian Arctic have developed their local economic base on the sale of ringed sealskins. The second level of conflict involves social and cultural penalties incurred by Inuit under present conditions.

*Résumé:* A trois occasions au cours des vingt dernières années, le mouvement contre la chasse aux phoques a entrepris des démarches de protestation qui ont progressivement affecté un fondement traditionnel de l'existence inuit, la chasse aux phoques annelés (*Phoca hispida*). Mais bien que ces protestations avaient pour objectif officiel le contrôle de l'exploitation commerciale des phoques du Groenland (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*) le long de la côte atlantique du Canada, elles ont affaibli l'aptitude des Inuit canadiens à exploiter une ressource traditionnelle essentielle.

Cet article se veut un examen préliminaire de deux niveaux de la nature et des conséquences du conflit actuel entre les usagers du phoque inuit et les protecteurs des phoques au nord. Le premier niveau de conflit est la dimension économique où, sous des conditions de marché qui ont existé depuis la fin de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, les Inuit, en différentes parties de l'Arctique canadien, ont développé leur

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économie locale fondée sur la vente des peaux de phoques annelés. Le second niveau de conflit concerne les pertes sociales et culturelles encourues par les Inuit dans la situation présente.

## Introduction: Inuit Sealing

Students of Inuit ethnography and ethnology, from the beginnings of systematic research in the Arctic, have documented the extensive use made by Inuit[2] of a wide variety of pinnipeds, either for food, fuel or raw materials, across the North American Arctic. Within this grouping, the sea mammals of interest, either on a year-round or seasonal basis, to Inuit and their cousins, Yupik Eskimos and Aleuts, are walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*), the ringed seal (*Phoca hispida*), bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), several species of fur seals, the harp seal (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*), the bladdernose or hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*), the harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and the ribbon seal (*Histriophoca fasciata*). Among these, only the ringed seal holds year-round residence and is generally accessible to Canadian Inuit under winter and summer conditions.

Studies on Inuit culture, beginning most notably with Boas's (1888:417) observations on the interrelationship between ringed seals, ice conditions and the presence and distribution of Inuit sea ice villages, have placed great emphasis on the ringed seal as an enabling factor in Inuit winter ecology and adaptation. Specific to this adaptation, for instance, is the winter breathing-hole toggling harpoon complex (see Maxwell 1974-75; Nelson 1969; Wenzel n.d.a.). Indeed, temporal interest in this association between the Inuit and the ringed seal extends beyond the period of reliable ethnographic observation into the Palaeoeskimo and Thule Culture archaeological record (see Mathiassen 1927; Collins 1955; Maxwell 1976; Morrison 1983).

Social anthropologists, and especially cultural ecologists, have focussed on facets of Inuit sealing which affect and reflect material culture, ethnoscience, social organization, annual cycle and cultural evolution. Of special importance are Nelson's (1969, 1981) detailed studies from northwest Alaska on the technological and behavioural complex associated with Inuit use of the sea ice environment, Smith's (1980) socioecological analysis of East Hudson Bay Inuit breathing-hole hunting with respect to adaptive efficiency, and the work of Balikci (1968), Damas (1969a, 1969b) and Wenzel (1981) on the settlement and community patterning of traditional Inuit groupings in the Central and Eastern Canadian Arctic.

From the early 1960s attention also turned to the economic aspect of Inuit sealing vis-à-vis native food production, southern markets and new technology (see Foote 1967a). It was Foote's (ibid.) work which first suggested that under cash economy conditions developing in northern Canada the "rela-

tionship'' between Inuit and ringed seal described by earlier anthropologists, explorers and historians was undergoing a subtle shift. The trend of this shift was toward the submergence of the earlier basic subsistence and barter condition, which had prevailed for some 80 years in the case of barter and much longer in that of subsistence, into the needs of a cash economy in which money, especially for the acquisition and maintenance of imported hunting technology, had become an intermediate, but strategic, resource; no longer did a sealskin represent a fixed item of exchange. In this changed economic environment, the ringed seal not only held its original subsistence value, but within a changed demographic and technological situation, such as developed in Arctic Canada from the 1950s onward, it also became the main cash-producing commodity available locally to Inuit, if only because of its temporal and quantitative availability.

This changing situation was recognized relatively early by some biologists working in the North. McLaren (1958) carried out a detailed investigation of the ringed seal fishery potential of Canadian arctic waters and the possible impact of Inuit sealing. His data, based on a sea ice/seal density index, suggested that the annual number of ringed seals present in Canada's northern waters approximated one million and that Inuit harvesting was well below the maximum sustainable yield. More recent work by Smith (1973a) confirmed the validity of McLaren's methodology and estimates.

The clearly increasing importance of the ringed seal as a commercial item locally available to Inuit, particularly given the natural and legislated limitations imposed on many other commercially valuable species, led biologists and anthropologists to closely examine the management of Inuit sealing. The *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* (Freeman 1976) demonstrated that ringed seal hunting was nearly universal among Canadian Inuit communities. In order to better cope with potential management situations, data were collected not only relating to ringed seal biology and ecology, but also on the level and distribution of Inuit harvesting. (See, for example, Smith 1973b; Smith and Taylor 1977; Baffin Regional Inuit Association 1981, 1982.) Such studies provided the baseline for understanding the subsistence requirements met through ringed seal exploitation at both local and regional levels.

The economic condition of Inuit sealing, beyond a basic cash value per sealskin, has, however, only recently come to be better appreciated. The inherent instability of reliance on a single marketable species, no matter how renewable, with little or no ability for the producers to influence that market, and the increasing costs of imported technology, including boats, outboard engines, snowmobiles, petroleum fuels and lubricants, spare parts, rifles and ammunition, had a serious effect on the maintenance of the Inuit seal hunting and, by extension, the entire subsistence harvesting regime. Fluctuating

seasonal values for sealskins, often the only commercially valuable local commodity, meant that the Inuit harvest efforts for *all* species, not only ringed seals, suffered when prices were low. This occurred because most other species, while having high food value, required the acquisition and maintenance of the same equipment employed for sealing and did not provide any monetary return (Wenzel 1978). Hence, with the material technological costs of subsistence activities increasing, ringed seal hunting and the sale of skins became increasingly important.

Müller-Wille (1978), using the novel baseline of the number of sealskins required to produce money sufficient to outfit an Inuit hunter, estimated that for Repulse Bay in 1973, a base price of $19.00 per sealskin meant that a hunter needed to harvest and sell 239 skins, having a value at that time of $4 541.00. Six years later, Thomas Smith (1979-80), using a devalued dollar, estimated the cost to a Holman Island hunter for capital hunting equipment, exclusive of depreciation and maintenance, as $10 075.00, albeit with a greater dollar value per sealskin. Overall, however, as these data show, Inuit hunting has come to require large amounts of what is a scarce new resource, money (see also Kemp et al. 1978; Wenzel 1983).

Despite the high costs, it is evident that ringed seal hunting remains an important economic and cultural activity among Inuit. Since the publication of the findings of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (Berger 1977), the importance of subsistence harvesting activities for Inuit and other northern Natives has been recognized as a means of providing high quality food, which is otherwise irreplaceable (see also Schaefer 1971, 1973; Boles et al. 1983). In addition, as reviews of Canadian Arctic renewable resource use have indicated (Smith and Taylor 1977; Jelliss 1978), ringed seals are the only species available in reliable numbers which can offer both food and cash potential to Inuit communities all year round. In this regard, the works of Nelson for Wainwright, Alaska (1969, 1981) and Wenzel for Clyde River (1975, 1981, 1983) are useful as long-term single community studies. Both show that, regardless of external fluctuations in the ringed sealskin market, Inuit in these communities have remained highly dependent on this species and that the primary reason for this consistent focus is the ringed seal's premium subsistence value.

## Southern Anti-Sealing and Inuit: The Beginning

An anti-sealhunt movement, as such, first arose in southern Canada in 1955 (see Table 1 for a summary of major events in the "seal campaign") and raised serious questions over the methods of killing and the general status of commercial harp seal hunting on the whelping grounds of the Newfoundland "Front" and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Over the next decade, rela-

tively little attention was focussed on the harp seal hunt, although the Federal Government of Canada prepared regulations concerning the licensing, weapon type and permitted hours of the hunt. Indeed, the protest, directed especially at an expanding foreign harp seal hunt component, prodded the imposition of needed regulation.

**Table 1**
**Selected Events in the Anti-Sealing Campaign**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1955 | The Nova Scotia S.P.C.A. raises questions publicly about the methods used in the commercial harp seal hunt. |
| 1965 | The Canadian government imposes tighter restrictions on the licensing of commercial sealers, weapon types, and hunting hours. |
| 1967 | Brian Davies and the New Brunswick S.P.C.A. produce the film "The Seals of the Ice Pans." The "Save the Seals" campaign formally organized. |
| 1969 | The Federal Department of Fisheries proposes a "whitecoat" (baby harp seal) ban. (Never implemented.) |
| 1970 | The Canadian government applies stringent quotas to Newfoundland and foreign seal hunters. |
| 1971 | United States and European groups join the anti-sealing campaign. |
| 1972 | The United States Congress passes into law the Marine Mammals Protection Act. |
| 1976 | Greenpeace participates in the Newfoundland protest. |
| 1977 | Greenpeace shifts its focus from an endangered species argument to outright opposition to all sealing. Brigitte Bardot visits Blanc Sablon. |
| 1982 | The European Economic Community proposes a voluntary ban on the importation of seal products. |
| 1983 | The German (FRG) delegation to the International Union of Conservationists and Naturalists seeks to have all species of seals listed as endangered. (Motion defeated.) |
| 1983 | Many EEC members reaffirm the 1982 voluntary ban. |

In 1967, however, a fresh round of protest over the Atlantic harp seal kill flared. It was at this time that a "Save the Seals" campaign came into being, ultimately developing into the International Fund for Animal Welfare. This movement, while initially Canadian based and supported, rapidly drew strength from environmentally concerned individuals and organizations in the United States and Western Europe.

The intensity of the anti-sealing protest gradually grew through the middle 1970s, albeit with periodic wanings, led by two groups, the International Fund for Animal Welfare and Greenpeace (see Hunter 1979). Characteristic of the protests in these years was their appeal to the international news media in order to bring pressure to bear on local hunters and upon the

Canadian government (see Lamson 1979; Memorial University of Newfoundland 1978). Of even greater importance during this period was a gradual shift of focus, within the movement, from a stated concern for Canada's harp seals as endangered to a *de facto* animal rights position, condemnatory of any human exploitation of any seal species (Hunter 1979:368). This shift occurred at the same time as biological evidence was accumulating establishing the viability of the Atlantic harp seal population (the original focus of the protest) under the regulatory conditions instituted by the Canadian government.

Lost within the strident tones of southern protest and counterprotest was the impact a highly emotional and politicized anti-sealing campaign would have on aboriginal, especially Inuit, access and use of ringed seals. While very little on the effects in the North appears to have been recorded during the 1950s, Foote (1967b) correlated a precipitous decline in the value of ringed sealskin during 1966-67 with the eastern Canada harp seal protest and ventured the possibility of serious consequences for the local economies of many Inuit communities. Foote (ibid.) further noted that his concern was not limited solely to economic impacts, but also to the effect the spillover of the harp seal protest might have on the ecological and cultural relationship existent between Inuit and ringed seal.

## Southern Anti-Sealing and Inuit: Escalation and Erosion

Foote's warnings of imminent repercussions for Inuit communities largely dependent on ringed seal hunting seemed excessive as the southern market value of sealskins returned to and exceeded the preprotest level. By 1973-74, the average (adult) ringed seal skin was priced near $16.00 in the Baffin Island settlement of Clyde River (Wenzel 1983:84), while ringed seal pup pelts brought up to $45.00 in the spring of 1973.

In 1976, however, the upward trend in ringed seal prices halted and drastically reversed. By the spring-summer of 1977, adult ringed sealskins had fallen in many Inuit communities below $2.50 (Wenzel: Field notes for Clyde River and Resolute Bay), while for some communities an external market was nonexistent. What was also apparent during the 1976-77 protest was the perceived linkage between the movement's stated objective of bringing to an end the commercial harp seal hunt in the south and the curtailing of all seal hunting. Also evident for the first time was the high monetary commitment which all forms of Inuit hunting required (Wenzel 1978:5), and how the whole of the subsistence component in the so-called dual economy practised by Inuit suffered.

With some recovery between 1978 and 1982, it appeared that the Inuit ringed seal trade, and with it other non-cash-producing subsistence activi-

ties, had again weathered the southern protest, much as it had in 1966-67, but the voluntary ban imposed by the European Economic Community (EEC) on seal products in mid-1982 effectively destroyed that hope (see Jelliss 1978; Northwest Territories Government 1978). At this time, arguments specific to Inuit ringed seal hunting were circulated, although not publicized (Weber, personal communication). Primary among these was the belief that as Canadian, and other, Inuit were employing non-traditional means, especially mechanized technology, and were supporting this technology, at least in part, by the commercial sale of sealskins seal hunting was, therefore, no longer a "subsistence" activity.

Until the 1982 EEC ban came into force, Inuit had remained relatively silent in the face of the protest and its effects. In 1983, however, Inuit from Greenland and Canada made representation at the 1983 International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources meeting (IUCN), thereby helping defeat the passage of a motion to place all seals on the IUCN endangered species list. In another action, an Inuit delegation, sponsored by the Greenland Home Rule government (*Atuagagdliutit 1983*), undertook a counterprotest tour to EEC member countries which supported the voluntary ban on seal imports (Heinrich 1983). At the same time, Inuit-sponsored journals carried articles, editorials and letters expressing concern about the apparent hypocrisy of the European and North American protest action, stating that it represented a new chapter of northern imperialism (Peter 1983).

Overall, the salient point of the Inuit counterargument followed much the same lines as those laid down by the Alaskan Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) in its representations to the International Whaling Commission. The argument in this case was that sealing represents an expression of subsistence lifestyle, forms an integral element of Inuit culture and is an aspect of Inuit aboriginal rights.

Despite these recent efforts, recent research in five Northwest Territories and arctic Quebec communities (Wenzel n.d.b.; Kishigami n.d.) provides some baseline information on the present situation (see Table 2). Data from Holman Island and Clyde River (Wenzel n.d.b.) indicate that the material basis of Inuit hunting in both communities has been severely undermined since the imposition of the EEC ban. In 1980-81 (the fur trading statistics are compiled on a July 1-June 30 basis), the sale of ringed seal skins through the Hudson's Bay Company in Clyde accounted for 3377 ringed seal skins from 90 Inuit with a value of $53 516.00, while at the Cooperative at Holman Island 65 Inuit sold 5702 pelts totalling $110 591.00. Two years later, during the 1982-83 fur year, the same communities produced 1238 (Clyde River) and approximately 1500 (Holman Island data based on 70 percent of the hunter population) ringed seal pelts, totalling $12 587.50 and

$24 891.50 respectively. Differences in the base per pelt price in the two communities ($10.15 – Clyde River, $14.48 – Holman Island) are explained by the different pricing schedules used by the Hudson's Bay Company and the Federated Cooperatives of Canada. At the same time, participation in ringed seal hunting at Clyde River declined from 90 Inuit (1980-81) to 63 participants two years later. This decrease in the number of Clyde River hunters is explained by Inuit as due directly to the low prices available for sealskins. It must be noted, however, that the same Inuit state that, while fewer skins are finding their way to the Hudson's Bay Company, hunters continue to seek ringed seals because of their importance as a primary food item in the community.

**Table 2**
**Capital Hunting Costs, Clyde River, N.W.T.**

| Item | 1972[a] | 1976[a] | 1984[b] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Snowmobile[c] | $1400.00 | $2500.00 | $3898.00 |
| 6.7m Canoe | 1200.00 | 1800.00 | 2998.00 |
| Trail Motorcycle | N/A | 1150.00 | 2100.00 |
| Outboard Motor (25 hp) | 900.00 | 1100.00 | 1595.00 |
| Outboard Motor (55 hp)[d] | N/A | N/A | 2595.00 |
| .222 cal. Rifle | 150.00 | 250.00 | 659.00 |
| .303 cal. Rifle | 99.00 | 150.00 | N/A |
| .22 cal. Rifle | 60.00 | 73.00 | 368.98 |
| *Semi-automatic Ammunition:* | | | |
| .222 | 5.00/20 | 7.50/20 | 11.50/20 |
| .303 | 7.00/20 | 10.00/20 | 18.50/20 |
| 12 gauge | N/A | N/A | 14.50/25 |
| Fox Trap | 1.00 | 2.50 | 4.00 |
| Duffel Cloth | 8.75/m | 13.10/m | 28.00/m |

a. 1972 and 1976 item costs have been rounded off from Clyde prices.
b. 1984 costs are exactly as charged by the Clyde River Hudson's Bay Company store.
c. Snowmobile prices reflect the cost of the most popular model present in Clyde River in each of the sample years.
d. This larger engine is now the most common in Clyde River, replacing the smaller 25 hp.

## Ramifications of the Conflict and Conclusions

Robert Hunter (1979:368), in his chronicle of Greenpeace Canada's evolution, notes that 1977 was a watershed for the organization as their anti-sealing policy solidified under the leadership of Paul Watson, who was then president of Greenpeace: "[Policy] was now absolutely rigid: no seals were to be killed by anybody, not even Eskimos or Indians." More recently,

Patrick Moore of Greenpeace, in a taped interview (Canadian Broadcasting Company 1984), responded to a question on the effect(s) of Greenpeace's stance toward hunting and trapping on Canada's native community by saying:

> These are the most difficult case-by-case situations to deal with, and there you almost have to look at each individual animal that is being killed in order to make the decision of whether or not that particular animal was killed primarily for the luxury fur industry Sure, the Indian people are doing the dirty work of going out and killing the animal, but they have been co-opted into an unacceptable economy as far as we're concerned, that is, the skin trade in wild animal skins You have to look at the native people that are taking seals in the Arctic, and those skins are going into the same fashion industry that the skins from the big commercial Newfoundland hunt are going to. (ibid.:19)

In a number of respects the statements of Hunter and Moore are a variation on one of the anti-harvesting paradigms outlined by Usher (1981:57). With cash markets accepting the fur output of Inuit and other Native harvesters, the Native participants consciously acquiesce in an unacceptable relationship. This view is carried further by Weber (see above) in emphasizing that the use of imported technology and the sale of skins by Inuit removes Inuit from the category "subsistence harvester."

The ramifications of the perspective reflected in the above quotations are several. Of immediate notice is the emphasis placed by Moore, Weber and others on the commercial and cash economic aspects of Inuit sealing. As noted previously, ringed seal hunting at Clyde River, Holman Island and many other Inuit communities did contribute significantly at the village level (see Wenzel 1983:84, 85) and this cash return declined in 1982-83. This reduction in monies earned from sealing following the European Economic Community's ban on seal imports parallels too closely similar events at the times of the 1960s and 1970s protests to be coincidental (see Foote 1967b; Wenzel 1978).

What these arguments, in fact, ignore is the nutritional "income" derived by Inuit sealers, their families and entire communities. If Inuit ringed sealing was carried on solely for commercial purposes (the extreme end of the Moore and Weber arguments), then seal harvest numbers should closely reflect the loss of market caused by the EEC ban and the protest. Inuit harvest data collected for 1981 and 1982 (Baffin Regional Inuit Association [BRIA] n.d.) for Clyde River show that the level of ringed seal harvesting between these two years (BRIA's harvest year extends from January 1 to December 31) did decrease, from 3788 animals (uncorrected for non-reporting harvesters) to 2507 in 1982 (uncorrected for non-reporting harvesters), the year of the ban. But, in those same years, Clyde River Inuit sold

1172 (1981-82) and 1238 (1982-83). These data indicate two things. The first is that the European boycott did affect Inuit participation in the selling of ringed sealskins because of lower prices offered by the Hudson's Bay Company. Secondly, that the actual harvest of ringed seals, as well as numbers of seal sold, decreased at an accelerating rate over the two years.

This steepening decline in numbers of ringed seals actually harvested reflects the inability of hunters to acquire needed money via their usual means, the selling of sealskins, for gasoline, oil, ammunition and vehicle and motor parts. Discussions with Inuit in Clyde River and three other Baffin Island communities suggested that the second full year of the boycott would find Inuit in an even more difficult harvesting situation.

For the local food economy, this presents a poor prognosis. Ringed seal harvesting by Clyde Inuit produced 53 578 kg[3] of edible meat, while caribou, the only other potential red meat source, provided 27 120 kg[4] from the harvest of 678 animals. The importance of ringed seal in the Clyde Inuit diet lies in the nutritional value of ringed seal compared to other locally available wild or imported meats. Boles et al. (1983:96, 97) have shown that the relative nutritional value of ringed seal and beef requires, for equivalent protein value between the two, 1.5 kg of beef to 1 kg of ringed seal. Perhaps even more important, elements, such as riboflavin and thiamine are, respectively, more concentrated in ringed seal by factors of four and three than in beef (ibid.:97). The difference between ringed seal and caribou, while less extreme, is marked and dietary reliance on caribou suffers from lower population numbers, poor seasonal availability and rapid negative effects of increasing harvest levels on local caribou stocks. In terms of economy, Inuit are in a double bind: nutritional impoverishment if a certain minimal level of ringed seal harvesting is unsustainable versus reliance on unsustainable dietary alternatives.

A second area of concern is the social consequences of reduced or terminated ringed seal use. Inuit subsistence activities have traditionally, and continue presently, to be the focus of a range of practices, generally categorized as sharing (Damas 1972; Wenzel 1981), which involve intra- and inter-family and community economic networks, and also social networks. Among the Inuit sealing is a sharing paradigm which serves to establish and affirm social solidarity. Damas (1972) and Wenzel (1981) have attempted to link this shared solidarity to the maintenance of the Inuit adaptive system, whereby cooperation and identity are reinforced at both a material and social level. As Wenzel (1983:91) notes, sharing in Inuit society functions to reinforce the social and ecological reality of each individual. However, as the ability of Inuit to participate in ringed seal and other forms of hunting is constrained, this reality will become remote.

Other questions of social importance to Inuit must also be viewed within

the framework of the current situation. Hunting activities, of which ringed sealing is the most tangible, are viewed by Inuit as the context in which normative values can be most easily transmitted across generational lines. This process of "teaching," *isumaqsayuq* or passing along knowledge, is seen as radically different from *ilisayuq*, as structured classroom teaching is described. The former is based on the attentiveness of the "pupil," who learns from multiple teachers by listening, watching, trying. Each person "progresses" at a self-determined rate. Inuit contrast this to the lecture methods often present in formal schooling. The resulting benefits include learning problem solving, cooperation (*iikaiyuitaguk*), patience (*qlinuinuk*) and self-control (*qliuisaatuq*). To older Inuit discussants, these are the values developed within the context of harvesting activities, values which crosscut generational and gender boundaries.

The current situation in which Inuit ringed seal harvesters find themselves and, even further, all Inuit, is one in which geographic remoteness from the actual point of the original confrontation has lost any advantage it may have held. Indeed, this remoteness acts, to a degree, as a barrier in terms of presenting the Inuit subsistence case. In many respects, this circumstance differs little from the fur trade, missionary and "governmentalization" eras which Canadian Inuit society experienced, first, near the beginning of this century and, later, shortly after World War II. At those times, the buffer which spatial remoteness offered to outside material contacts ended. At present, the cultural buffer provided by a flexible and well adapted socioeconomic environment has been eroded by an external philosophical and ideological paradigm. In part, the contemporary situation is one that had already begun to undergo a change (see Mayes 1982) in the 1960s and 1970s; however, the present conflict is one which is potentially diminishing to a complex of behaviours and strategies which focus Inuit perceptions of Inuit reality. Within this perspective, the anti-harvesting movement represents as comparable a disruptive force to Inuit society as have any of the more noted incursions of non-native values and technology in this century.

## Postscript – Since 1984

In the years since the completion of the baseline community research presented here, the socioeconomic situation of Inuit with regard to harvesting has seen little improvement either in Holman Island and Clyde River or in the Canadian Arctic in general. Smith and Wright (1989) note that in the Holman area the costs of harvesting continue to spiral upwards, while the ability of local Inuit to produce cash, as well as food, surpluses from their activities is still in decline. Their view, that the economic situation of, especially, full-time hunters, who formerly provided major inputs of country

produce into the village food system, "should be a subject of concern and attention," is echoed by subsequent work at Clyde River (Wenzel 1990). Indeed, the future role of harvesting across the N.W.T. and the need to find new ways for non-traditional resources to reach hunters has become the subject of growing scrutiny (see Ames et al. 1988).

The sociocultural dilemmas opened by the sealskin controversy have also amplified over the intervening years. Across the N.W.T., government attempts to substitute wages and transfer income for the cash losses felt from the collapse of the sealskin market are presenting Inuit with new problems. Among the foremost of these is that hunters who enter the wage stream find that little time is available to them to actively participate in harvesting. Thus, while this group is well equipped, its inability to steadily contribute to the local harvesting economy is a growing source of frustration to its members.

A second and wider concern is that the limited resources of this expanded wage-transfer system has served to spotlight the "unemployed" state of those hunters unable to find entry into the formal economy. In essence, a "have/have not" split is developing within communities that is only now beginning to be felt by Inuit.

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## Notes

1. The statement which appears in quotations is from a Clyde River Inuit hunter who wishes to remain anonymous.
2. The term "Inuit" is used here in its broadest possible sense to mean speakers of the Inupik dialect of Esk-Aleut.
3. Edible weight figures for ringed seal are drawn from Simpson 1984:1.
4. Edible weight figures for caribou (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus*) are from the above source.

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