

**EXFURMINATING
THE FUR
INDUSTRY**

Canada Actions

Back in August of 1987, some friends and I were fighting British Columbia's oldest industry, the fur trade. No letters, no banners or signs, our tactics were less conventional. Late at night we would gather our pre-constructed paint-bombs, spray-paint, wrist-rockets and liquid steel and off we would go into downtown Vancouver to express our rage against the fur trade, A.L.F.-style. Unfortunately, our weekend forays followed a routine, and eventually we were arrested in late September.

In October of that same year, an International Commonwealth Conference in Vancouver canceled a proposed fur show intended for the Queen of England due to "recent threats of animal rights extremism." Also, that same week, we discovered through our lawyers that two of our targeted fur shops were closing down due to our direct action attacks on their businesses. All in all, despite our arrests, we felt our actions and their subsequent impact on the fur trade were successful.

The Animal Liberation Front, and its campaign of economic sabotage against the fur trade has resulted in countless fur shops going out of business, and in recent years here in America, thousands of mink and fox being liberated and decades of research for the fur trade being destroyed.

A.L.F. Demolish British Fur Trade

In Britain, animal liberationists discovered that what the animal welfare movement failed to do in decades of lobbying, the A.L.F. was able to accomplish in a few short years. With a relentless campaign against the fur trade, the A.L.F. is singly responsible for forcing all major department stores in Great Britain to drop their leases to fur salons. This happened after a nationwide incendiary campaign where cigarette box-sized incendiary devices were placed in department stores causing sprinkler systems to trigger creating millions of dollars worth of damage to merchandise. Though the tactic was much criticized by the above-ground animal rights movement, no one was complaining as each targeted department store announced its intention to stop selling fur.

For an industry such as the fur trade, with declining sales and a shrinking domestic market, economic sabotage is a serious threat. Profit margins are thinning as retail furriers find fewer customers and fur farmers buckling under as threats of mink liberation cause them to expend thousands in expensive security systems.

American History: A.L.F. Style

1995 was not the first year the fur trade found themselves targeted by the A.L.F. In 1988, on Fur Free Friday, the A.L.F. completely destroyed a fur shop in Santa Rosa, California with an incendiary device. This well-timed action received national media attention, lending a clearer understanding of the A.L.F.'s mode of operation in the fight against fur.

Traditionally, this form of urban guerrilla warfare, when used by the animal liberation movement, has proven to be our most effective tool in stopping the fur trade, and has never (here or in the UK) resulted in the injury or loss of life of human or animal people. If the animal liberation activists are serious about their objective to destroy a 500 year old industry, we must recognize that some risk and sacrifice is necessary to achieve it. That sacrifice, when made by participating in small-scale economic sabotage, can, on average, be no more than a year in prison at the very worst, with the scale increasing as a direct reflection of the effectiveness of your actions. The greater impact, the longer sentence if caught.

The bargain I ended up with was four years in prison for one fur animal research lab shutdown, \$800,000.00 in damage to a fur farm feed distributor, a mink farm pushed out of business, more than 30 years of fur farm animal research destroyed, over a million in damages, and 30 coyotes, 10 mice, and 8 mink liberated. A deal I consider well worth it. Why? Because 50 years from now when my grandchildren ask me what I did to stop the destruction of millions of wild animals slaughtered for their fur in my presence, I can answer them that I did what I knew was right, though it may have been illegal at the time. For each one of us are responsible for the actions of everyone in our generation. Just remember for the animals we are self-appointed to represent in the fight against the fur trade. There is only death at the end of a miserable life in intensive confinement or in the jaws of steel traps.

We all could stand to gain strength through our willingness to sacrifice a few months or more of our comfortable existence in exchange for the liberty of millions. The animals held captive in fur farms and on trap lines are no different from the companion animals we love and live with and they should inspire within us the same willingness to defend them as we would our own dogs, cats and other animal family members.

Now lets get out there and make this a fur season the murderers of this nation's wildlife will never forget!!

This was just the tip of the iceberg as the A.L.F. has waged a smaller-scale campaign of economic sabotage on fur retailers nationwide. Independent activists operating autonomously have for many years spray painted, paint-bombed, slingshot, liquid steeled, window-etched and sledge-hammered fur shops in this country alone. All of these actions have comprised a major threat to U.S. fur retailers and in many cases has forced fur shops to close their doors.

These closures are often measured by the above-ground animal rights movement, but rarely attributed to the A.L.F. Its hard for a movement to give credit to a tactic that is far more effective then its own more "acceptable" means of protest. But, as is the case in England, this fight is about putting the Fur Trade out of business not guaranteeing we are given credit for it.

In the early 90's it is suspected that the A.L.F. was behind a failed incendiary device campaign in San Francisco and Chicago though the A.L.F. never accepted responsibility for the actions.

Operation Bite Back: Parts I & II

By 1991 the A.L.F. proved the effectiveness of direct action when it attacked the nation's primary experimental fur farm at Oregon State University. Within six months, the laboratory, which had for 65 years conducted experiments on mink for the fur trade, shut its doors forever. Later that same year, another A.L.F. raid on an Oregon mink farm prevented the farm's sale to another fur farmer when its pelt processing building was destroyed by fire.

Whether the above-ground animal rights movement recognizes it or not, beyond a doubt, the A.L.F. has proven that illegal direct action has succeeded where other tactics have failed. And now, as phase two of Operation Bite Back has been launched with over 20 raids on fur farms across North America, the list of fur farmers pushed toward the brink of economic extinction is growing. Already at least three fur farms targeted by the A.L.F. in the last year have announced plans to go out of business.

Demonstrations Vs. Damage

Over the years, protests and demonstrations at fur stores have failed to attract the media attention they once did in the 1980's. This does not mean the efforts are worthless - they are not - but as grassroots animal liberationists we should constantly be re-evaluating our tactics to ensure that we are maximizing our effectiveness against an industry that has already began to crumble. We must not measure our effectiveness in network coverage so much as the loss of economic revenue of our intended targets. It isn't negative publicity that hurts the fur trade - it's actions that cost the fur trade customers thousands in increased insurance premiums and security systems.

Most fur wearers today are determined, wealthy individuals who don't give a damn what animals went through to make a fur coat. They are only concerned with adorning themselves with an antiquated status symbol that displays their affluence. Sheared mink, and other "fun furs" are beginning to make a comeback in fashion shows and department store apparel and it is imperative that animal liberationists take necessary action to prevent the fur trade from recovering from its decline in the late 80's and early 90's. Individually, our obligations are up to us to decide.

Many activists attend fur demonstrations purely out of feelings of obligation, without much faith in the effectiveness of their actions. In many cases, solitary activists have proven to be successful when they singly maintain a vigil outside the same fur shop every weekend, thus not only being seen as a permanent fixture turning away potential customers, but also proving to be a type of psychological warfare, reminding furriers of our relentlessness. But possibly, what remains as our greatest untapped tactical resource is for more and more protesters and demonstrators to try their hand at small-scale economic sabotage.

Campaigning

I'm not saying that each one of us needs to molotov their local fur shop or department store which sells fur, but if those of us who can camouflage our appearance to fit the average fashion consumer and infiltrate these retail outlets, much could be done. I used to always carry a sliding razor-blade cutter, of the type used to open cardboard boxes and many times I was able to enter department stores or leather shops which also sold fur and covertly run the knife along the inside of the fur coat cutting through the liner and slashing the fur causing hundreds if not thousands in damage.

Back in the late 80's, I remember reading of a traveling fur sale having \$400,000 in furs slashed in this fashion by solitary individuals acting on their own accord.

Some animal rights activists, quick in their attempts to discredit this effective tactic, claim this leads only to more animals having to be killed to replace the coats. This is a cheap attempt to avoid bringing less effective legal tactics into question. Fur coats have already been purchased by their retailers when they are placed on the racks, and making these coats unsellable reduces drastically the profit margin necessary for a furrier to stay in business.

Other simple tactics I have heard being used involve filling squirt guns with red dye or battery acid and spraying fur coats covertly either on the rack or very carefully on the fur wearers back. Battery acid will cause the hair to fall out on a fur coat. In a jam, chewing gum or shoe polish can always be stuck to a fur coat. For those of us more likely to draw attention inside a fur shop or Department store fur salon, there remains the tried and true tactics of economic sabotage.

Profit Prevention

For silent action, glass etching fluid obtained from your local hobby shop can be applied to a wet sponge and used to write friendly greetings on store front windows, as well as liquid steel or solder available in tubes from auto parts stores inserted into locks. Etching fluid takes about an hour to eat into glass and liquid steel about the same amount of time to harden, but it costs furriers hundreds if not thousands in replaced glass and locks not to mention raised insurance premiums. Then there is always paint-filled projectiles, ball-bearing shots with wrist-rockets through windows, spray-painted slogans and paint-stripper (or brake fluid which works just as well) on delivery vans or furrier's cars.

Class A fire extinguishers normally filled with water and pressurized with any air compressor can also be emptied and filled with thinned red paint. The nozzle can then be into mail slots for quick and efficient discharge. Be creative. It's amazing what one or two individuals can do when they make the bankruptcy of their local furrier a personal objective.

So the next time you're feeling guilty about missing the annual anti-fur demo, make up for it with some individual direct action. Yes, the risks of arrest are very real but so is the likelihood that one day your targeted fur shop will place a "going out of business sale" sign in its window and then it will all have been worth it. There is nothing more empowering to a budding A.L.F. activist then to see the fruits of your efforts in another animal abuser put out of business.

The Consequences of Compassion

Of course, A.L.F.-inspired direct action carries with it a greater risk than simple civil disobedience arrests. Property destruction is a greater crime than the destruction of life in today's society and the consequences should never be seen as insignificant. A.L.F. activists must recognize that destruction of property is not seen as anything less than a felony when damage exceeds \$5,000 and often can carry with it a stiff penalty. A politically argued defense in court when attempting to justify a criminal action in today's political climate only makes the accusation of domestic terrorism more plausible.

The Department of Justice and the corporate interests of America which they protect, do not care about sit-ins and once-a-year intentional arrest scenarios. Such actions are predictable and, more importantly, controllable. But when you no longer play by the rules of the game which they create, you become a sincere threat because of your unpredictability, economically destructive tactics, and unwillingness to respect laws that prioritize property over life. Stepping out of the realm of legitimate protests, A.L.F. activists are able to discover every furrier and fur-farmers worst nightmare; uncompromising defensive action on behalf of earth and animals which targets the products of exploitation and the machinery of life's destruction.