

# Animal rights activists are misguided

by Sen. John Binkley  
for the Tundra Times

JUNEAU — A few weeks ago you might have read or seen news accounts of a demonstration of animal rights groups against the annual Nordstrom fur sale in Fairbanks. That's right, Fairbanks.

## OPINION

The pro-animal, anti-trapping movement is no longer just in New York, or London, or some other far off, distant place; it can also be found right in the heart of northern trapping country.

I have no doubt the people standing outside the fur coat sale chanting slogans and waving signs were very sincere in their beliefs, but I am equally convinced that they're also very misguided.

While I don't believe it's a bad thing for human beings to treat animals with respect, I also believe too many of these folks are blindly advocating for animal rights without considering just how much their cause infringes on the rights of human beings.

In our state's case, if they were to be successful in putting an end to trapping, it would mean snuffing out a way of life — and a way of making a living — for many Alaskans.

Trapping was Alaska's first cash industry, and in many rural areas of our state, it remains the only significant

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source of income available to supplement the subsistence lifestyle of most residents. There simply is no cash alternative for most of these trappers.

Some animal rights advocates say these people should stop trapping and the government should step in and provide income for them.

For one thing, most governments don't have the money, and for another, that seems an awfully steep price to pay in human dignity just because some people don't like trapping.

Animal rights advocates also claim trapping is cruel to animals and shows a lack of human respect for their lives. Certainly to die in a trap is not pleasant, but then the deaths these furbearers suffer at the jaws and claws of other predator animals can't be fun, either.

Though some would say such predation

is part of the natural way of things in the wilderness and trappers are an outside intrusion, I'd argue that man is a part of the natural order, too, and deserves to continue playing his role in it.

As far as respect for the animals goes, I believe these trappers have more respect, and certainly more understanding of these animals, than most of those who stand around in front of department stores and demand to make trapping illegal.

Trappers also understand the responsibilities of their own role in the ecosystem better. Whether you travel by snowshoe, snow machine or dog team, trapping puts one about as close to the country and the animals inhabiting it as you can get.

Although you can always find a few unsavory people in every area of



human endeavor, I believe most trappers honor the rules and regulations in not overharvesting their quarry. They know there is nothing emptier than a trapped-out area, and with few exceptions they fully understand the need to avoid endangering the animal populations they depend on.

Canadian trappers, having been under assault by animal rights groups longer than we in Alaska have, are actively exploring the development of more humane trapping methods without reducing the effectiveness of the trap.

There's nothing wrong with that, and I've never met a trapper yet — including this one — who would object to such an advance. Just don't tell us we have to give up our human rights solely to satisfy other people's misguided ideas about animal rights.