

Greenpeace apologizes — too late

Copenhagen, Denmark — On the runway of the Uummannaq airport, located on Greenland's west coast, 300 Eskimos dressed in seal skin jackets were waiting for a rare visitor.

It was like a silent demonstration. The seal hunters wanted to see who it was, who destroyed their livelihood. On board the helicopter was Allan Pickaver, the leader of the Greenpeace activists in the hunt against baby seals.

A few days later, when Pickaver, together with a colleague and a representative of the World Wildlife Fund was invited by the government of Greenland to view the damage done by his campaign, the head of the Greenpeace action group admitted: "We spoiled the market for the hunters of Greenland; however, that was not our intention."

The action was not directed against the population of Greenland, who for centuries made their living from hunting seals, but against the brutal killing of baby seals in Newfoundland. Advertisements, protests and boycotts gave Greenpeace their first worldwide recognition.

For two years now, there have been no more reported baby seal killers in Newfoundland. Skins of baby seals are unsellable; also unsellable are the skins of the full grown seals, which hunters from Greenland hunt on their own. For them the meat of the seal is their main nutrition and the seal skins their only

sellable product. "Greenpeace is not against the seal and whale catch of small local groups," commented Allan Pickaver. However, there was no room for such differences during the emotional campaign waged by the environmental group. Jonathan Motzfeldt, head of the autonomous government, travelled through Europe in order to find understanding for the hunters of his country; he found little sympathy for his people, due to the powerful campaign.

Five years ago, the hunters of Greenland got up to 500 Kronen for a seal skin of top quality. Today, they are living on public assistance. The state buys the skins for 100-200 Kronen and disposes of them for 1/10 of the amount. Nobody wants to buy any seal skins. The warehouses are stocked with thousands of unsold skins.

Today, a seal hunter makes only 20,000 Kronen per year. The average worker in Greenland earns three to four times as much.

"More and more young men are leaving their villages," says Johannes Tobiassen, chairman of the local administration of the 82 inhabitants of Niagornat. "Soon the village will be deserted. And then we will see how the waters around the Uummannaq-Fjord will be swarmed with seals and sharks. The only endangered species here are humans," Tobiassen complains bitterly. Greenpeace does not offer him a

great deal on encouragement.

"We have to understand, that the market for seal skins in Europe and the United States has been ruined over the years," says Allan Pickaver.

Whilst the locals are looking towards Greenpeace for help with selling on the market merchandise, Pickaver is only offering financial help for alternative activities in the outlying districts of Greenland. Greenland's population, however is sceptical.

"Now the representatives of Greenpeace are very positive; but will it last once they return to their organization?" doubtfully comments Philip Lauritzen, head of the information bureau of Greenland. The invitation to Greenpeace activists was not to undo the harm they have done, but to prevent it from ever happening again.

In West Greenland, representatives of the environmental group meet also with representatives of the "Indigenous Survival International" (ISI), whose members are Inuit and Indians from Alaska, Canada and Greenland, and they are hoping to deter Greenpeace from their campaign against trapping fur bearing animals. According to ISI, a campaign by Greenpeace activists similar to the one against seal hunting in Greenland, would have the same consequential damage for the population of Canada and Alaska. **Frankfurter Rundschau, West Germany.**