



Should Conflict Generation Be Rewarded by Non-Profit Benefits?

By Teresa Platt, Executive Director, Fur Commission USA

Generating Conflict for Dollars

In order to raise money, many non-profit groups in the U.S. specialize in generating conflict, not consensus, on environmental and animal use issues. For example, a U.S.-based non-profit, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, states in its articles of incorporation that its purposes are: “To promote awareness of environmental problems...,” and “To initiate action to prevent misuse of natural habitat...,” among other purposes.

However, Paul Watson, the president of Sea Shepherd, states on the group’s website:

“In 1979, I hunted down, rammed, and permanently retired the pirate whaler *Sierra*.... In 1980, my crew sank the Spanish whalers *Ibsa I* and *Ibsa II*... In 1985, a Sea Shepherd crew obstructed the sport hunting of pilot whales in the Faeroe Islands... In 1986, a Sea Shepherd commando team under my command scuttled two of Iceland’s four whalers, the *Hvalur 6* and *Hvalur 7*... ...on December 26th, 1992 two crewmembers and myself scuttled the Norwegian vessel, *Nybraena* in port at Steine on the Lofoten Islands....”

Watson goes on to state:

“The Sea Shepherd conservation society which I founded in 1977 is not a protest organization. We are [a] self-appointed policing organization given credibility by the terms of the United Nations Earth Charter of 1982.”

While acting as president of a U.S.-based non-profit organization, Watson has served time in several foreign prisons for his criminal attacks on legal fishing/whaling vessels. Recently, Watson was sentenced to 120 days by Norwegian authorities for his attempt to scuttle the fishing/whaling vessel *Nybraena* in 1992, a sentence he served in the Netherlands in 1997.

U.S.-Based Terrorists?

“These terrorists issue their threats from bases in the United States. Therefore, the U.S. government has a special responsibility to bring this activity to a halt,” states Rune Frøvik, secretary of the Norwegian-based High North Alliance, representing sea-faring people from five countries. Sea Shepherd has tax-exempt status in the US. “Sea Shepherd can in no way be said to fulfill the criteria required for a charitable organization. This status must therefore be revoked immediately.”

U.S. Congress Battles Terrorists

The *Report to the U.S. Congress on Animal Enterprise Terrorism** notes that underground direct-action groups such as ALF maintain “connections with legitimate, above-ground animal rights advocacy groups.” These “legitimate” organizations romanticize and publicize the attacks since underground groups have obvious problems about appearing in the media.

The motive for the sabotage is to force the government to change its policies.

Terrorism is defined by the FBI as “the unlawful use of force or violence, committed by a group(s) or

* To see the full text of this report, visit the FCUSA website at <http://www.furcommission.com/resource/perspect2.htm>

two or more individuals, against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”*

Raising Funds in America, Havoc Abroad

The Animal Enterprise Protection Act was passed to combat acts of animal rights terrorism in the U.S. However, Sea Shepherd raises funds in America while engaging in sabotage abroad. There are recorded incidents of harassment by Sea Shepherd vessels against fishermen fishing legally on the high seas and within the territorial waters of Costa Rica and Mexico. After announcing their plans to take five gray whales (out of a stock of 20,000 animals), the Makah Tribe of Washington State became the first U.S.-based target of Sea Shepherd wrath, hopefully triggering some U.S. government interest in the patterns of this group.

In 1997, the Norwegian government stated that the international public was accepting the regulated and sustainable whaling activities of Norwegian citizens. Sea Shepherd responded, “This arrogance in ignor-

*FBI Terrorist Research and Analytical Center, Terrorism in the United States: 1994, Washington, DC, U.S. Department of Justice, 1995, p.24.

ing the moratorium is being rewarded by a campaign of attacks on Norwegian whalers meant to keep insurance premiums high and to increase security costs for the purpose of impacting the outlaw whaling industry economically.” Sound familiar?

After Sea Shepherd’s continued attempt to damage family-owned Norwegian whaling/fishing vessels, Watson stated, “I think the conservation answer to this arrogant pronouncement has been delivered.”

What Do YOU Think?

- Is sabotage, as celebrated by Sea Shepherd, the “conservation answer”?
- How far should legal, peaceful protest go?
- Does the end justify the means? Should groups supporting the end ignore the means of extremist groups, romanticizing and publicizing their illegal actions?
- Should groups generating conflict be rewarded with non-profit status and subsidized by taxpayers?
- Does giving non-profit status to conflict groups advance societal change or foster illwill among neighbors?

We’d like to hear your opinion.