



Canadian club: The image that could haunt the stores.

Supermarkets and seals

A NATIONWIDE campaign to boycott Canadian fish products in Britain, until Canadian fishermen stop slaughtering seals was launched last week, writes *CHRISTINE MOIR*.

Just as Newfoundland sealers began the first hunt — of pregnant cows — the International Fund for Animal Welfare's 'Save the Seals' campaign flooded four-and-a-half million British households with a plea to boycott Canadian fish sold in supermarkets.

The direct-mail envelopes, which cost £360,000 to produce, each contain two postcards pre-addressed to major supermarket chains, for householders to fill in.

They read: 'Canadian fishermen kill baby seals. This is my pledge to boycott Canadian fish products.'

The postcards are addressed to key executives at J. Sainsbury, Tesco, Fine Fare, Safeway, Waitrose and International Stores.

The aim is to persuade the stores either to cease stocking Canadian fish (mostly tinned salmon) or to lobby the Canadian Government.

The corporate target already appears to have been missed. Each of the supermarket chains has told 'The Observer' that it intends

to go on stocking Canadian fish products.

The supermarkets take the view that they cannot get involved in moral issues.

But the 'Save the Seal' campaigners may have more success with consumers. An earlier postcard drive, from a mere 100,000 IFAW supporters, produced what Tesco described as 'sacks of mail.'

So the supermarket chains are standing by for an avalanche of postcards.

Safeway has written to the Canadian High Commission.

A spokesman for Tesco says: 'We shall forward all the cards to the High Commission.'

The fund is also attacking manufacturers of fish products, such as fish fingers.

It has persuaded Findus to say it will not use Canadian cod while the seal slaughter issue is unresolved. Birds Eye will give no such guarantee.

The main seal hunt takes place in the St Lawrence area of Newfoundland in mid to late March, soon after the pups are born. Because of import bans throughout Europe, the demand for sealskins this year has dropped to some 60,000 pelts. Most of these will be from young animals, though the sealers claim they no longer club infant 'white coat' pups.