

Sealing: Facts vs Farce

Why the EU, British and American sealing policy is hypocritical and anti-democratic

By Jim Winter



During the most recent seal harvesting season, I was reminded again about how much inflammatory information is circulated by anti-sealing groups. Much of it is believed by those who might mean well in their protection of animals but don't realize that it's not the seal population that is under threat, but the people who legally and humanely hunt these animals for food and for a living. I hope that the following clears up a few things.

Seals are abundant

Canadian sealing is a sustainable use of a natural resource carried out by licensed, well-trained sealers under the rules and regulations of the Government of Canada, which have been developed based upon both population science and humane killing techniques, and apply to all Canadians. The population of the harp seals we hunt is about 7.5 million today, more than three times what the population was 40 years ago. None of the seal

species we hunt have ever been on any reputable list of either endangered or threatened species. The Canadian hunting quota for harp seals, as established by federal scientists, is 400,000 animals a season. But being conscientious conservationists, we only take what the market will bear, what we can use, and that varies from year to year and has rarely been more than 100,000 a year in the last decade or so.

Few people in Western society believe in animal rights

In the US, Britain and the EU, surveys suggest the animal rights philosophy (i.e. no animal use for any reason) is adhered to by less than three per cent of people. Because of this lack of popular support, animal rights corporations can only further their agenda by using their multi-million-dollar war chests to lobby politicians to pass laws denying citizens their right of choice: anti-democratic to say the least. Like autocrats throughout history, these wealthy activist corporations don't trust individual citizens to do "the right thing."

Protecting morals?

The World Trade Organization (WTO) enquiry found that the "EU seal ban" was against its rules, but in the interest of protecting the "morals" of EU citizens the ban would stand. An interesting decision given that many countries within the EU and Britain continue to kill seals legally in the Baltic and North seas. The US continues to allow harvesting of northern fur seals in the Pribilof Islands, creating an exemption to its own Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), despite the fact that the IUCN (International Union for Conser-



vation of Nature) lists the species as "vulnerable" and cautions that the Pribilof stock "has experienced a significant, steep decline in recent years." Yet it bans the importation of Canadian seal products under the same MMPA, despite the fact that the harp seals killed (nor any of the other seal species killed by Canadians) have never been on any reputable list (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, for example) of endangered or threatened species. Hypocrisy reigns supreme.

These are rural people earning a living

Sealing in Canada is about people earning a living. It is about selling the products and using the products for personal needs. Tens of thousands of rural Canadian citizens are directly and indirectly employed in the sealing industry. Sealing is part of an annual mosaic of income for rural Canadians, whose money is derived from a number of individual activities that in total provide a livelihood that enables them



to live in their communities. The same thing applies to Canadian farmers, ranchers, trappers, hunters and so on: the only difference is the species killed. Few rural Canadians have the luxury of a guaranteed annual salary.

Animal rights groups keep on about a “buyout” for those in the sealing industry. A one-year buyout? A two-year buyout? Or an annual buyout till all those involved have died? And a buyout for whom? For sealers, plant workers, truckers, diesel suppliers, insurance agents, garment manufacturers, artists, artisans, grocery suppliers, gun and ammunition stores, vehicle sales people? For all or only some of them? Will they pay the many millions involved? No. These American-headquartered multi-million-dollar corporations want the Canadian taxpayer to subsidize their ridiculous views.

Baby seals?

The use of the word “baby” is simply an anthropomorphism (the Bambi syndrome) designed to influence and upset urban people who have a total disconnect with the sources of their food, clothing, medicines and other objects of daily use. The seals killed are fully weaned, are independent of their dams and are on their own to survive or not. This is nature, not the fictional life of Yogi or Pooh Bear. Seal harvesting is more akin to killing lambs and calves, but quicker and with less emotional trauma and no landfill pollution issues. “Young” is an urbanite construct and not reflective of nature. Seals are not helicopter parents. In fact, there is only one parent present, and after the pup is weaned she takes off looking for a male to continue the cycle.



Death is instant, humane

About 98 per cent of Canadian seals are killed by a gunshot to the head. It is instantaneous, as found by innumerable studies by independent veterinarians from Canada, the USA and the EU. The only negative studies have been bought and paid for by animal rights groups. The reality is that no animal-killing is pretty. It is ugly. But pretty and ugly are not synonyms for right and wrong or good and bad. Sealing is simply an outdoor abattoir without the offal problem of land-based abattoirs: dumping it in landfills. What seal harvesters cannot use we leave on the ice to return to the ecosystem as food for birds, marine mammals, fish and crustaceans – ecologically correct and green.

Travesty of fiction over fact

The reality of the 50 years of animal rights corporations’ propaganda has been the diminution of the incomes of thousands of Canadian citizens while these American-headquartered groups have collected hundreds of millions of dollars from people who have been misled into thinking they are supporting animal care and conservation. To paraphrase Winston Churchill: never have so many been so misled by so few for such nefarious reasons.

For decades these corporations have said nothing new, yet their comments are deemed “newsworthy.” They and their celebrity friends utter ridiculous comments and no journalists challenge them. It’s a circus, a travesty of fiction over fact, and proof that hypocrisy reigns supreme. It is media manipulation of the highest order. Propaganda is an insidious thing and unless countered by a free press prepared to ask the hard questions, it will continue ad infinitum. It is time for individuals, politicians and media to remember the immortal line of Pogo: “We have met the enemy and he is us.”

Animal rights is not animal conservation or welfare

The goal of animal rights corporations like HSUS (Humane Society of the United States and its extension, Humane Society International) and PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and others is not to end sealing, but rather to end human use – not just killing, but any use – of all animals for any reason. Read their mission statements. Seals are the tactic, not the goal.

Anti-sealing is the epitome of George Orwell’s position in *Animal Farm*: all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

The animal rights anti-sealing corporations may have won some battles, but not the war. If they win the war, you will have to look around to see who among you will be the next victim. The beef, pork, chicken or lamb producers? The trappers, hunters or fur farmers? The clothes manufacturers, shoemakers, auto manufacturers or furniture makers? Anyone who uses animals for any purpose at all? You?



Markets exist but are denied

Despite the comments of the animal rights groups, global markets for seal products (food, Omega-3 fatty acids, oil, fur, leather) continue to exist. They exist but are inaccessible because the decades-old animal rights corporations’ propaganda campaigns have co-opted (bought?) politicians in the EU, the USA, Britain and other countries that have enacted a “ban.” This ban denies their citizens their democratic right to choose to buy seal products – or not. That right has been stolen by politicians reacting to the propaganda of multi-million-dollar lobbying corporations with war chests approaching a couple of hundred million dollars. When propaganda wins, democracy loses.

Nobody in the Canadian sealing industry wants people to buy their products if they do not wish to. Canadian sealers only want all citizens of all countries to have their democratic right to choose for themselves to use or not use seal products. 📧



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