



Canadian Sealers Fight Back

Canada's Seals and Sealing Network staged two counter-demonstrations – one in Ottawa and the other in The Hague, in the Netherlands – to the “international day of protest against the Canadian seal hunt” on 15 March. The Network was alerting journalists and the public “to what really constitutes animal welfare, sound conservation principles and respect for wildlife, while countering the misinformation regularly propagated by animal rights extremists.”

In Ottawa, over 100 supporters from Newfoundland, Nunavut and Quebec joined together for the “Up the Anti” rally. Speakers at the morning press conference included Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, Tom Rideout, Newfoundland Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Paul Suvega, Government of Nunavut Assistant Deputy Minister and Rob Cahill, Executive Director of the Fur Institute of Canada.



Welcome to the 170th and 171st Parties to CITES

The Republic of Montenegro deposited its instrument of continuation on 26 March 2007, meaning that it recognizes that it continues to be bound by the obligations it had already under CITES before its separation from the Republic of Serbia. This takes effect from the date of its independence, i.e. 3 June 2006. The Republic of Montenegro becomes therefore the 170th Party to CITES.

Also on 26 March 2007, Solomon Islands deposited its instrument of accession to CITES, and will so become the 171st Party to CITES on 24 June 2007

Senator Hervieux-Payette said: “I appeal ... to Canadian and foreign Parliamentarians to ensure that their decisions are not based on speeches from manipulative and profit-driven lobbyists. Be proud of our country and the human values our ancestors passed down to us that we have so far been able to preserve.”

The group then made its way to the counter-demonstration at the Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill. Supporters carried flags from across Canada, sang traditional songs from Newfoundland and Nunavut, displayed seal flipper pies and frozen seal sausages, and staged a fashion show that featured fur jackets, coats, mitts and hats made from seal skin.

On the same day, the Seals and Sealing Network, in partnership with

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Polar Bears – The Extreme and the Mean

Editorial by Eugene Lapointe



In this month's issue of Sustainable eNews we take a close look at the sealing issue, which gains negative publicity as a result of the actions of animal rights groups. But those who live in the Arctic and watch the local wildlife are equally mystified by the recent US federal government listing of the polar bear on the endangered species list. According to many observers, including scientists who specialize in knowing about polar bear adaptations and biology, and a political analyst, Jim Beers, who has intimately known the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the listing was done for political, not biological reasons.

Polar bears hunt on land when necessary, always have, and always will, if and when the sea ice is diminished. They have adapted very well to climate changes over the last 13,000 years by increasing to around 50,000 animals in the circumpolar Arctic. Their prey, seals and sea lions, are also increasing, aided by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which prohibits commercial harvests for no good reason. When seals come to rest on shore, the bears will be there to greet them.

Jim Beers and others who have seen the progression of political trends in “protecting” species that do not need this service, are still speaking up in defense of the primacy of scientific judgment rather than political pressure when policies about environmental protection are made. The coal and oil industries are not responsible for any impending demise of the polar bear or its habitat. And polar bears, more numerous now than at any time in the last hundred years, are not going to go away.

On the other extreme, a polar bear was born recently in a Berlin zoo, and he and his sibling were abandoned by their mother. One cub died, and a zoo employee raised baby Knut on a bottle, giving him personal attention. Knut has thrived on this and will soon be on public display; a happy infant animal successfully raised to add his genes to the pool. The German public is delighted. Ironically, some in the animal rights movement in Germany have demanded that Knut be killed because in their view it is morally wrong to cuddle and tame a bear. Their view is that a fierce predator must not be influenced by humans in such a way as to cause it to be social with people. Therefore, it should be euthanized.

This highlights a contradiction amongst animal rights advocates. Some want to destroy our lifestyle because they believe loss of industrialization will “save” the environment, at the price of millions of human lives and welfare. Others demand that a small animal must be eliminated rather than allowed to live in a manner that is alternative to what would be experienced in the wild. What does all this mean?

Increasingly, it looks like this is all about humans expressing power over one another and the world we live in. Fortunately for Knut, he will be spared arbitrary death to live a life of luxury, human companionship, and abundant food. Unfortunately for the management of wild polar bears, these animals cannot be hunted by Americans, who are forbidden to bring home the pelts or mounts of this “marine mammal” because it has become a political icon. Thus conservation of these creatures will not be partially funded by the dollars of those hunters.

IWMC is a strong proponent of the importance of science in wildlife management and in proper assessments of the state of the environment. Politics can never be eliminated in the policy making process, but it should not take precedence over the recommendations of sound science. Political “good intentions” will turn out to be un“bear”able if real world conditions are misrepresented. ■

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the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, held another counter-demonstration in The Hague. Jim Winter from Newfoundland and Inuit Aaju Peter and her son Aggu from Nunavut countered a demonstration against the seal hunt outside the Canadian Embassy. Afterwards, Canadian Ambassador Jim Wall introduced them to the members of the parliamentary committee sponsoring the bill to ban seal imports to the Netherlands. Addressing the committee members, they

explained that their communities have centuries-long traditions as seal hunters and are dependent on the hunt to survive in their villages.

They also presented a petition to the Committee that pointed out that the Dutch Government has signed numerous international agreements supporting the sustainable use of natural renewable resources. ■

Seal Time 2007

Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans is preparing once again to oversee and manage the harvest of harp seals on the ice in parts of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the eastern coast of Newfoundland, on the "front". In both areas, fishermen will shortly deploy their boats and crews for the annual seal fishery. They will take seals in the legal, humane, scientifically justified manner that has been prescribed by scientists and veterinarians for the past thirty years. Sealers, who are educated in proper methods of killing seals, processing them and reporting their kills, are licensed and overseen by federal fisheries officers while out on the ice. At the end of each day, the owner of each registered sealing vessel reports his take numbers to the government via marine radio. The quota is therefore monitored centrally.

Sealers will probably be harassed in some areas by animal rights activists, as the government allows a few organizations to observe the hunt at a specific short distance from each kill site. Fishermen hope that no serious provocations by outsiders will take place this season, as they go about their business of collecting the pelts, meat and fat, the sale of which makes up a significant proportion of their annual income.

Ninety per cent of seals taken will die instantly from a center fire rifle shot to the head. The remainder will be legally clubbed while on the ice. This method is judged by scientists to be a humane slaughter technique, as it results in instant unconsciousness and is immediately followed by bleeding out, with death resulting in 15 seconds or less.

The eastern Canada stock of harp seals is still overly abundant, having been estimated at over five million animals.



Yearly fluctuations of pup production are observed and adjustments in the harvest are made to ensure that the herd continues to thrive in these waters. This year ice conditions in the southern Gulf are such that the hunt may be curtailed in certain areas, but the northern Gulf and the Front are both noted to hold millions of seals and the hunt for weaned and molted young of the year will go on as before.

Canadians, both Native representatives and Newfoundland spokespersons, have traveled to The Hague, Netherlands, to face down animal rights hunt protesters and to explain to members of the European Parliament and Commission that the hunt is biologically and economically necessary, humanely conducted, well monitored, and culturally important to those who depend on its products. They have explained that seals need to be managed for the benefit of the herd itself, for the benefit of the marine environment, and for the benefit of the many people who live from the fruits of the sea. ■

Give the Outcast Something Real to Whine About?

Every time a nation informs Paul Watson that it has rescinded his right to wave its flag over one of his pirate vessels, Watson shrugs and claims that Japan must have convinced them diplomatically that it was the only right thing to do. He paints himself as some sort of victim.

Watson's flagship, the Farley Mowat, was originally classified as a "pleasure vessel" yacht, but last year Canada reclassified it as a commercial vessel to more accurately reflect its actual use. When Watson sailed into South Africa in 2006 he found that his paperwork was invalid, the ship was detained and he was unable to legally sail away. Watson claimed that his problems were all due to pressure from Japan and Canada. He lives on the Farley Mowat and it is his own yacht and he says there is nothing "commercial" about it.

After being de-listed by Belize and rejected by the United Kingdom, Watson has finally been granted the right to fly the flag of the Netherlands. At some point Watson may realize that it is he – and not Japan, Canada or any other country, entity or individual – who is responsible for his difficulties.

Meanwhile, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, which is headquartered in Washington state, maintains its 501 (c) (3)

status with the US Internal Revenue Service, which means that any American can claim a deduction on his or her tax return to the value of their donation to his organization. So, despite the fact that Dr. Bill Hogarth, Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, issued a statement on 9 February calling on Sea Shepherd to resist violence (a request that was duly ignored), the United States, an anti-whaling nation, is effectively facilitating the organization's militant and illegal approach to international conservation issues. Watson can, with impunity, commit illegal acts on the high seas and be rewarded for his behavior in the form of tax-free donations.

Many wildlife experts believe that dangerous and illegal acts of assault, causing physical damage and personal injury, should not be financially rewarded by any nation. Hogarth stated: "The safety of vessels and life at sea is the highest priority for the United States and the nations that respect the rule of law on the high seas." At some point the Internal Revenue Service needs to think long and hard about Watson's "charity" status. And the Netherlands needs to give serious thought to the wisdom of flagging his vessels. ■

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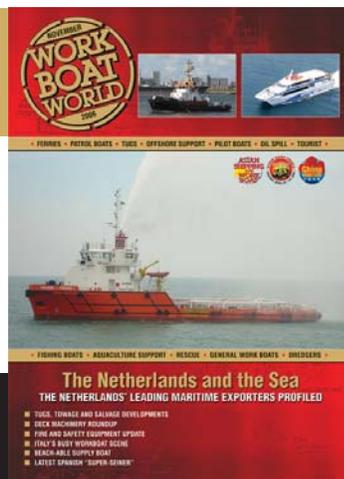
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Seals: Mors tua, vita mea [Your death is my life]

Special Feature by Davide Sapienza

On one side, animal-rights campaigners and world public opinion; on the other, indigenous Inuit peoples and their traditions. In the defendant's dock, the seal hunters. After constantly being branded as barbaric killers, they now give their side of the story: "We kill to survive".

The seal hunt. Dark scenarios. Heated discussions. Heavy charges against the sealers by animal rights groups and officials in European countries. For forty years, campaigns by environmental groups have shifted public opinion to a greater awareness about using resources and our place in the circle of life. But we should also consider the emotional reactions caused by these movements that have had a resounding political impact.

This year the Canadian government decided to focus more on its own sealers, and less on international protests. Sealers wanted to tell their story by showing how they live. Seals are hunted in Canada, Japan, Russia, Norway, Denmark, Namibia and Alaska. Depicted by cruel images of blood on Atlantic ice floes, the seal hunt is subject to the unilateral condemnation of a controversial industry. Sealers from Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and the territories inhabited by the Inuit reject being called "barbaric killers" and wholly defend their role as human beings.

For the Inuit— indigenous inhabitants of the Arctic regions and one of the two main Eskimo groups—the seal hunt has always been an integral part of their culture and survival.

"In the last three years, the number of harp seals caught in the Atlantic Ocean was about 325,000 per year. In total, the Inuit take less than 10% of this amount. And only in icy Arctic waters"

The answers they seek are different from those sought by the inhabitants of Newfoundland whose roots and motivations differ from those of the Francophone inhabitants of the tiny Île-de-la-Madeleine in Quebec. Nonetheless, on February 27, 2007, Paul Okalik, Premier of Nunavut—the large region of the Arctic archipelago that is home to the Inuit—in response to those in Canada who oppose the hunt, stated: "The Inuit join Newfoundland and Labrador in defending the seal hunt and in expanding our market which



is essential for all of us. We oppose the proposal for a ban launched by the European Parliament in September 2006". In short, the Inuit are no longer going to keep quiet and the balance of power from the international perspective has changed forever.

A few numbers for clarification. In the last three years, the number of harp seals caught in the Atlantic Ocean and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence was about 325,000 per year, whereas in total, the Inuit take less than 10% of this amount in the Arctic. The total number of animals that are born and raised in captivity for the purpose of being slaughtered and finally end up on our dinner tables each year exceeds 2.5 billion worldwide. For years in Canada the hunt has been regulated by very strict rules: since 1982*, there is a ban on hunting whitecoats— young seals with a white coat that are less than twelve days old and not yet weaned (only the Inuit are allowed to catch them). Yet newspapers and animal-rights websites often use photographs of whitecoats to stir the emotions of unsuspecting nature lovers and motivate them to "take action".

One fact in particular reveals the difference between perception and reality: in Canada, the hunting-related industry generates a sales revenue of about 60 million Euros per year, which is slightly more than half of the funds collected by animal-rights activists like the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) or the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). With their aggressive tactics against the hunters, these groups have access to means and

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resources that are able to draw international public attention to their cause. A recent example is that of Paul McCartney, who was photographed last spring on the ice-floes of the Gulf of St. Lawrence with, naturally, a whitecoat seal pup in his arms (photo below).

Such resources are inconceivable for fishers or sealers from Twilingate or the Gulf of St. Lawrence, let alone an Inuk from Iqualuit or Nunatsiavut. The only means of communication available to them is that of being hunters, who in a few days on the ice-floes in the Atlantic, kill 300,000 seals, surrounded by blood and activists' helicopters. Blood, rifles and hakapiks (the hooked club authorized for the hunt) create an image that is unacceptable in our eyes but has been a part of their culture for thousands of years.

Seal-hunt quotas were introduced in Canada in 1970, and since then, a series of rules have resulted in a population of 5.8 million harp seals in the Atlantic Ocean. But numbers are not sufficient to placate the clash between on the one hand, a sensibility to nature filtered through an urban milieu, since the major environmental groups are all based in cities; and on the other, a lifestyle that relies on a culture of subsistence, a more instinctive and sincere relationship with natural resources.

The moving documentary by Anne Troake, *My Ancestors Were Rogues and Murderers* (to be shown at the next Film Festival in Trento), tells the story of a sealer, Garry Troake, who died in October 2000, and who had been able to raise the self-esteem of his fellow Newfoundlanders. After having lived for many years in Vancouver far away from her roots, Anne Troake began this project silently reconnecting with her community in Twilingate—a small rural town of fishermen who practice seal hunting. There, old Jack Troake, Garry's father, tells of a life "that has been like this for 400 years. That does not mean it cannot change. I remember when, as a boy, I began going out to sea with my father. Our working conditions were desperate, but that was our life. We are not barbarians: we are people who are hurt by what is being said about us."

At age 70, in his eyes, there is only one certainty: the sea.

"No one can guarantee the preservation of species better than those who depend on them for their livelihood. Besides, the killing of seals is just a drop in the ocean compared to all livestock that is killed."

"In any case, no one can guarantee the protection and preservation of species better than those who depend on those resources for their livelihood." The issue of humane killing, which the government emphasizes in public discussions, has been examined in a five-year study by an independent veterinarian working group, made up of nine veterinarians of different nationalities. According to one of them, Charles Caraguel, "the hakapik remains the most efficient tool for killing the animals in a humane way, i.e., without causing unnecessary suffering. As opposed to rifles, with a hakapik, 98% of the animals die immediately, and sealers are required to check immediately that the animal is dead by feeling its skull". Blunt words that are a clear indication of the difficulties that arise when we try to talk about facts. Dr. Caraguel, a veterinarian, continues: "The IFAW published a so-called study in 2001. We asked for a meeting and documented proof. They never got back to us."

Fishermen hunt seals because it provides between 10 and 30 per cent of their annual income. On average, their annual income is about 12,000 to 14,000 Euros, which is below the poverty line in Canada. Almost all the pelts are exported (Norway, Southeast Asia); the fat is used for Omega-3 pills against cholesterol. It is not a coincidence that heart diseases and high cholesterol among the Inuit were almost unheard of before contact with Europeans. Even the sale of seal meat is increasing. There remains the ethical problem for those who would like to see the seal hunt stopped. However, for the sealers, the hunt is their only possible means of survival in an inhospitable and inaccessible land where agriculture is out of the question.

Garry Stenson, a scientist in charge of the Marine Mammals Section in Newfoundland, explains: "Scientific studies on this mammal have evolved like in no other marine sector. I wish this were the case for all species of the Atlantic Ocean—an ocean that is being exploited by sixteen countries resulting in the near total extinction of codfish with nothing being done to stop it." Canada applies "the precautionary principle that indicates the minimum tolerable level for an animal population, which must stay above 70% of the maximum number of animals". Translated, this means that the minimum threshold under which hunting is suspended is 4 million seals. The next census should be held by 2008, but already this year the maximum quota will be lowered to less than 300,000 seals.

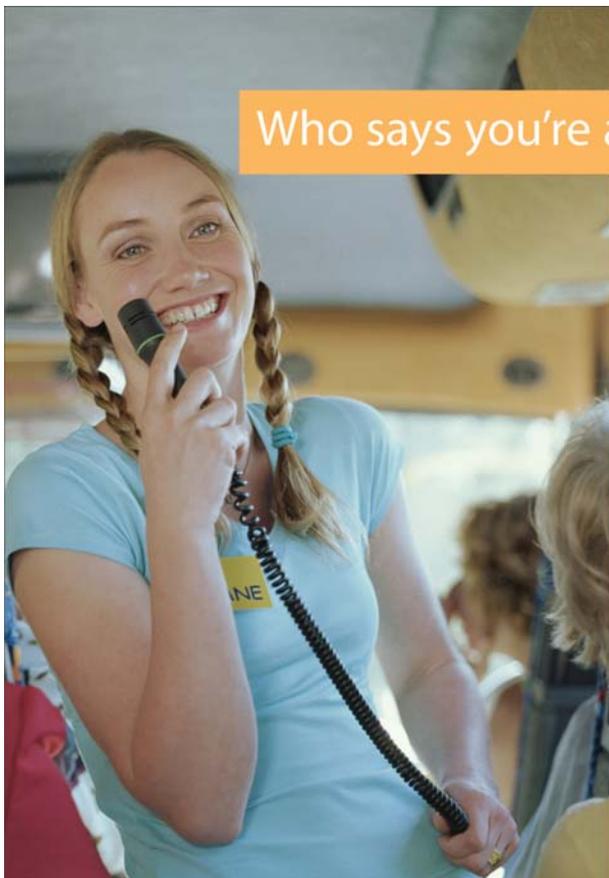
One horrible accusation is that bloodied sealers will skin seals alive (the hunt focuses on seals whose fur has turned black that are about two months old, after they have been weaned and are over two weeks of age). “It would not make sense to destroy the source of one’s livelihood since the pelts must be in perfect condition in order to have a market. It’s in no one’s interest to do such a thing. Rationally, we know that the blood spilled on the ice is a tiny fraction of the amount of blood that we spill every day of every year for our food, often in areas where there are food alternatives that we do not have here,” explains Jean-Claude Lapierre, president of the Sealers Association of Île-de-la-Madeleine.

The webmaster for www.thesealfishery.com (which contains legislative texts, instances of self-irony, and provides space for the most varied opinions) was forced to hide his own identity after receiving death threats, and a former CBC radio journalist, Jim Winter from St. John’s, Newfoundland, received a letter stating: “We would like to skin your children alive so that you will understand what a seal feels.”

In this tense atmosphere, a woman, film director Anne Troake, offers a broader view: “Vilifying the hunt is part of a process that removes us from the natural state and widens the rift between our understanding and our participation in the natural order of things. Urban life removes us from the experience of death, which is actually part of life. But death cannot be denied. The loss of the hunt is also the loss of intimacy with nature and the creatures that live with us on the planet. It may sound strange, but the better I understand northern societies—that live by hunting, fishing and animals—the more I understand the depth of their respect, because the type of compassion that you find in people who procure their own food is essential to a deep understanding of how Nature works.” ■

(Source: (Editoriale *La Stampa*; Torino, Italy www.lastampa.it); www.davidesapienza.net)

*Editor’s note: should read 1987



Who says you’re a fisherman, not a tour guide?

We do.

While you’re busy earning your livelihood, the future of fisheries is being decided in international meetings.

Guess what some environmentalists say you could be doing instead of fishing?

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Let's Stand Up For Our Fathers

By Calvin Giles

It's that time of the year again when the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador are cast into the eyes of the world and depicted as barbarians and perpetrators of the world's greatest cruelty. Men like my father, and many of yours, who risked life and limb to provide for us, are portrayed on television as the most evil beings alive because of their involvement with the seal harvest. They are victims of a merciless and relentless advertising campaign by some of the most radical, misguided, environmentalist groups in the world. These groups are supported and funded by some of the wealthiest and most visible people on the planet while the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have only you and I to speak out for them.

Many of you would have come from towns similar to mine where we wrestled a living from a harsh and unforgiving environment. We watched our fathers and grandfathers go to sea, sometimes never to return. Families worked the ocean together. We took care of each other, our communities, and any stranger who needed help, as we saw on September 11, 2001.

Yet, instead of being admired for our dedication to each other and for our compassion for our fellow man we are vilified for the way in which we make our living. Our fathers have been attacked all too frequently and defended much too rarely. We need to appeal to the people of the world to see these men as they are, kind, loving, compassionate, family minded people, not the indiscriminate murderers that groups like Sea Shepherd would have you believe.

They make their living the same as farmers and ranchers but there are no heartwarming movies made «in Hollywood about the humble fishermen. They are ignored until groups like Sea Shepherd cast them as villains on the world's stage to help raise money to line the company coffers. Our fathers are the pawns in a chess game played by the world's elite. They become the pet projects of every rich celebrity who suddenly decides they have more money than they can spend and so head out in search of some way to give meaning to their shallow lives.

I recently visited Sea Shepherd's website, where they compared our fathers to the Nazis. Imagine that. The men who have risked their own lives so willingly to take care of you and I being compared with the greatest mass murderers in the history of mankind. Their leader, Paul Watson, said in an interview on February 11, 2005: "I would not have compromised with the Nazis over the fate of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and I do not believe in compromising with the thugs who kill these seals."

I am sure this fills you with the same anger and hurt that it does me. How long can we let this go on? How long do we sit back and bemoan the way in which our people are portrayed but do nothing about it? I am tired of my home being bullied by the most pow-



erful people in the world. We do not need to be victims! We can fight back!

There is a group called the World Conservation Trust that promotes a program of sustainable management and endorses the seal harvest. They are fighting for our way of life and we should offer our support. You can visit their website www.iwmc.org or email them at iwmc@iwmc.org Whatever you do, please do something. Speak to your friends. Email your local representatives. Email IWMC. Forward this email to anyone who might lend his or her support to our home. Anything. Our fathers stood up for us. Let's stand up for them. ■

Calvin Giles lives in Newfoundland.

Noteworthy

European Tuna Conference Brussels 2007 is now available on:

www.atuna.com/europeantunaconferencebrussels2007.htm

This special one-day event will take place on Monday April 23rd at the Sheraton Hotel & Towers Brussels City Center, just one day before the European Seafood Exhibition (ESE) which runs from Tuesday April 24th to 26th, also in Brussels.

Recommended Reading

Nyhamna Whaling Station

Norwegian author, Berit Drejer, recently published a thoroughly researched and illustrated book on the history and preservation of Nyhamna Whaling Station, active near Molde, West Norway, from 1924-1938. There are also two smaller books for teachers, showing a few different images, and a DVD on her research and preservation project. All orders must be addressed directly to the author at beritdrejer@hotmail.com

Managing our Wildlife Heritage

Author, Ron Thomson, believes that Kruger's current 14,000 strong elephant herd should be reduced to perhaps 3,000 animals – 4,000 at the most. He says that if this does not happen the national park will soon start to lose large numbers of plant and animal species. The park's plant and animal resources will then start an irreversible process of degradation that will result, over time, in the park becoming little more than a desert. His booklet on the subject can be obtained from magron@ripplesoft.ca.za J1