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Editorial: When Cultures clash

by Eugene Lapointe

Economic Boycotts demonstrate only Intolerance and the Power of the Animal Cults – not Moral Superiority of one Society over another

Some animal rights zealots are duping leaders in both the restaurant business and in retail and wholesale food businesses to believe that if they follow their direction, they shall be safe from attacks against their economic interests at home. Canadian fishermen and those who distribute their products are being unjustly damaged by economic boycotts against them that are entirely unjustified. The following “power play” by the animal rights movement is an example that should be resisted and scorned by all those who champion the legal, sustainable and science justified use of our natural resources:

An American chef, Rocco DiSpirito, plies his trade in gourmet food items at a restaurant in New York. Some of his specialties include dishes made from calves, young lambs and force fed geese, creatures that animal rights zealots have formerly held up to public view as innocent and undeserving victims of the elite western preference for exotic food items.

Recently, Chef DiSpirito declared that he would not allow Canadian fish on his elite menu because Canadian fishermen continue to slaughter harp seals. This move on his part is not only foolish, but is no insurance that his culinary preferences are safe from similar criticism.

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Perhaps Chef DiSpirito thinks that if he cooperates with the HSUS in publicly refusing to include Canadian fish on his exotic menu, that the organization and others will never attack his use of foie gras, or veal, or lamb. Not true. His prostitution to the protest industry will be in vain, as will that of major supermarkets and restaurant chains whose CEOs have also stupidly capitulated to activist demands.

Wise up, folks. Your public will support you as long as you produce quality foods at fair market prices. There will be no market advantage to your capitulation in this manner, as fish prices in your business will only rise, if Canadian products are boycotted.

The boycott idea spawned by HSUS and others is nothing more than a power play to demonstrate to the general public that they can control those “others” (Canadians) who harvest a creature that needs to be managed, even though it has been highlighted by activists as attractive and undeserving of slaughter. The attack on Canadian fishermen and the national economy is unjustified; it is bad business conducted for reasons that have nothing to do with conservation, compassion, or fair and respectful treatment of societies by one another. HSUS specializes in pitting nations against one another, and in declaring its own values as morally superior to all others. This is bunk, and must be made known to as many people as possible. Societies that place their own foods in a rigid moral hierarchy in contrast to the foods of others are not contributing to the spiritual or economic health of this global community.

IWMC urges all those businesses that have fallen for this ploy to reconsider; it will not benefit them in the long run, and for now, it is resulting in both economic damage to their clients and in undeserved social harm to everyone. Good business is a reflection of wise and socially beneficial action among all participants. Forget the boycott. Feed the people with a diversity of food items and reap the rewards of better business relationships in the future. The food consumers in this world want safe, diverse menu items. Depriving them of wholesome Canadian fish because of a demand by a socially dysfunctional special interest group’s demands is not part of the food industry tradition. It is a destructive decision to bow to cult fundamentalism, and can only do harm to all who participate in it. □

When a Scientist speaks about Conservation Policy, Government should listen

Professor Doug Butterworth, of the University of Cape Town, South Africa, wrote a letter to the editor of The Cape Times in which he expresses his professional opinions on the conservation impacts of public environmental policies in South Africa and elsewhere.

First, Butterworth noted that national policies on environmental issues are significantly influenced by green NGOs, and that their influence is from a scientific perspective, completely unjustified. The anti-whaling, anti-wildlife-use NGOs involved in public policies have commonly misinformed the public in each country involved in international conservation issues. Incorrect public opinion has caused national officials to be swayed, and so public policy has become a reflection of public demand, rather than a model for action based on scientific judgments.

Butterworth, who is internationally renowned for his work on the statistics of whale population dynamics, played a crucial role in development of the Revised Management Procedure for cetaceans that was carried out by the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission. He is understandably upset that, for political reasons, the IWC has subsequently not implemented the RMP.

Professor Butterworth points out that there is no reason to fear that whaling nations shall cause the extinction of animals hunted for food. The targeted species are extremely abundant and will be harvested according to a strict and very safe formula. Further, he notes that the whale watch industry shall not be affected in any way by the fact of regulated commercial whaling for food. The two activities can be seen to exist in the same area without impacting each other. This is demonstrated in the north Atlantic, where Iceland and Norway both whale and have whale watch businesses.

In addition, he notes that all the unjustified attention focused on preventing the commercial harvest of abundant whales is likely to have a negative impact on recovery of other species. “While a paradigm that argues to reduce utilization to avoid extinction is universally acceptable, one that seeks to impose the cultural norms of some on others is a non-starter as a basis for international agreement.” This scientist recognizes, as do others, that societies are imposing their own cultural preferences on others for reasons unrelated to scientific concern: “And politicians in countries without whaling interests can score easy greenie points by criticizing others at no cost to themselves. Opposition to whaling today is no longer based on concerns about possible extinction, but rather on a view held by some that certain animals, including whales, should be exempt from consumption by humans.”

Well said, Professor! IWMC congratulates you for pointing out to your own country’s environment minister that South Africa’s future policies on the environment must be based in science and with respect for the cultural rights of others. Cultural imperialism is not a constructive goal for governments as they try to co-exist in a global society. South Africa should consider setting a good example for others, in order that it shall not itself be prevented from rational management of its own resources for non-scientific reasons. □

Addressing International Relations on National Scientific Research and Management Decisions

IWMC would like to address the manner in which nations discuss each other’s scientific research and specific matters such as the humane slaughter of large mammals. First, the majority of concerned people would agree that when an animal is killed or rendered entirely insensate in an instantaneous manner, that this would fit a definition of suitably appropriate humaneness. From the perspective of the hunter, such an accomplishment would also be the most efficient method, because it would mean no further energy expended on a chase, or in dealing with a struggling creature, and further, the dangers associated with handling and dispatching a wounded animal would be eliminated.

Some IWC members have wished to continue raising the question of the humaneness of the grenade harpoon method used to take minke and perhaps, other whales. Arni Mathiesen, Icelandic Minister of Fisheries, noted in an October 3 opinion piece printed in the Canberra Times, Section A page 11, that Australia, Netherlands and the United Kingdom put forward IWC resolution 2001-02, regarding the humane killing of whales.

Minister Mathiesen noted that “the resolution not only encourages governments to submit information regarding whaling but also comparative data from the killing of other large mammals.” As Australia has recognized the importance of comparative data for this purpose, it would seem a fair assumption that Australia would willingly submit data to the next IWC workshop on killing methods used on large mammals in Australia. Minister Mathiesen is suggesting that it is entirely appropriate that Australia should submit scientific data to the next IWC on the efficiency and humaneness of the methods used there to dispatch two nuisance species, kangaroos and feral camels, which it permits its nationals to kill in large numbers. In Iceland, the very abundant minke whale is traditionally killed not only for human consumption, but now also for scientific research. Eventually, Iceland proposes to control its numbers in the marine ecosystem around that fishing nation. Iceland has been very open in sharing its data on both whale abundance and the efficiency of whale killing methods.

Mathiesen is suggesting that Australian Minister Ian Campbell is employing a double standard when he rejects suggestions that data from its killing of ‘roos and camels be submitted to IWC, when he has joined others in calling for comparable data from the killing of other large terrestrial mammals in other countries. Why should Australia be exempt from similar scrutiny? Although Minister Campbell claims that minke are endangered, Australian scientists on the IWC Scientific Committee have confirmed that Iceland’s minke whales have been proven abundant.

IWMC firmly believes that all government sanctioned dispatch of mammals, whether for scientific research or for purposes of pest removal, should be subject to high standards of efficiency and humaneness, and that data regarding these matters should be collected and analyzed under a rigorous scientific protocol managed by each such nation. Nations should respect each others’ sovereign rights and genuine efforts to conduct research on the abundance of their species and to act upon the results of such research in ways that each nation shall deem appropriate. It is time that nations support each others’ scientific research in constructive ways, in order that all may learn about the effects of hunting and fishing, or the lack of same, on total ecosystems. The integrity of scientific research projects and the decisions made on the basis of such research are important to all of us on this planet. It is not constructive when nations reject each others’ research and resource management because of petty cultural prejudices. Not only humaneness of killing methods, but decisions based on species relationships and species abundance, are relevant to us all as we consider our impact on life systems around us. □

Canada's own Records indicate that current Gun Control Tactics are not effective Murder Management

www.edmontonsun.com/News/Canada/2005/10/07/1252148-sun.html

An October 7 article in the Edmonton Sun makes no case for current strategies of gun control in Canada. The reasons are unsurprisingly simple: Criminals will not register their guns,

while law abiding citizens do so to no avail, in the latest national effort to cut down on gun-related crimes, including murders.

The Canadian Juristat study reported that the murder rate in Canada increased by 12% in 2004, and that between 1997 and 2004, more than half of the murder guns recovered by police were unregistered. It appears that Canada's gun registry system, therefore, has failed. Neither the decades' old handgun registry nor the newer long gun registry has had a beneficial effect on the rates of murders committed with any type of weapon. Statistics that support this include that 65% of homicides committed with firearms involved handguns. Further, to no one's surprise, murders were not commonly committed by law-abiding citizens who just happened to have a gun handy. The report notes that "2/3 of the murderers and half of their adult victims – already had criminal histories." Obviously, these people must be singled out by government records and prevented from purchasing guns from licensed dealers.

Therefore, it is evident that the Canadian government's decision to mandate registry of all firearms has ineffectively targeted those who are not and have not been, criminals. This is a reminder of the American slogan; "If all guns are outlawed, than only outlaws will own guns".

When gun control was instituted in Australia, crimes against innocent citizens increased, because criminals knew they could pursue their criminal acts without risk of being shot by homeowners and shopkeepers.

In 2004 one third of all homicides in Canada were committed with knives, while guns killed only one quarter of all murder victims. Yet of course, knives, hammers and tire irons are not registered, for they are common tools used by everyone.

In 2004 there were 622 murders in Canada, a rise of 73 from the previous year. Of these, only 71 were the result of gang activity. Many guns used in homicides in Canada have been smuggled up from the states, suggesting that there is a genuine need for international cooperation in oversight of gun traffic that is illegally conducted.

Canada's handgun registry and long barreled gun registry are apparently ineffective in actually reducing firearm related homicides. Those intent on killing others find ways to do so, regardless of current gun registry attempts to cut down on murder rates.

IWMC urges all states to learn from this and other examples that broad based gun control by legislative mandates is ineffective. Rather, it is reasonable to demand that strict enforcement of laws against all violence be vigorously pursued, regardless of the implements used to maim and murder people. Those who commit such crimes must be dealt with appropriately and consistently, and should be on a national registry of those who must not be allowed to buy guns from dealers in the future. This appears to be a more constructive way of curing society's ills than the routine removal of guns, or the mandating of increased difficulties in gun ownership for citizens who have no criminal record. Such a policy would surely facilitate legal wildlife management through sport hunting or through the taking of abundant wildlife in commercial hunts, such as the harp seal fishery, where long guns are absolutely essential. Our best wishes to Canada and to all other modern nations whose leaders are striving to cut down on crimes of violence against their citizens. □

Makah Legal Battle may yet be won

According to an Associated Press report (byline Matthew Daly on Thursday, October 20) it appears that the Makah Indian Nation, a tribe in northwest Washington State, is making progress in its argument that its 1855 Treaty of Neah Bay between the Makah Nation and the US Government is a legally binding and meaningful document. Progress for the Makah came today as a majority of the Resources Committee in the House of Representatives issued a resolution supporting the tribe's efforts to overcome a lawsuit brought by animal rights activists against resumption of Makah whaling.

“The panel approved a non-binding resolution Wednesday urging the Bush administration to uphold whaling rights guaranteed to the tribe under an 1855 treaty with the federal government. The resolution, sponsored by the panel's chairman, Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., calls a waiver process required by the National Marine Fisheries Service "burdensome, costly and ... tantamount to a denial of the tribe's treaty rights." The resolution goes on to urge Congress to express "its disapproval of the abrogation of the tribe's treaty rights, and that the government of the United States should uphold the treaty rights of the Makah Tribe. The Republican-led panel approved the measure 21-6, with five Democrats joining 16 Republicans to vote in favor.”

Those on the Resources Committee who disagreed with the resolution are siding with activist groups that oppose whaling on cultural grounds, rather than on scientific evidence that the gray whale has recovered from the industrial whaling of the 19th century. The International Whaling Commission has given approval to the US to allow the Makah to take a quota of 20 gray whales over a five-year period. Only one animal of this quota was taken (in 1999) before the HSUS and others brought suit against the tribe on grounds that their harvest was a violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Incidentally, American Eskimos have a waiver from the MMPA to take the (still endangered) bowhead whale in a similar IWC indigenous whaling quota. It appears that some politicians think that Americans are more apt to approve of the Eskimo waiver because they are familiar with and sympathetic to Eskimo people, and that to deny Eskimos the waiver would have been politically risky. The lesser-known Makah tribe is being denied its legal right to whale for reasons of cultural continuity in a blatant denial of their identical legal standing with Eskimo whalers.

The House Resources Committee resolution urges the Congress to “stand behind the promises given to tribes over the years.” Activist lawsuits, in contrast, were brought in the 9th District Court of Appeals and that court held that the suits could be pursued, with Makah whaling halted pending final judgment.

In the United States, treaties have legal precedence over domestic law. Clearly, the activist lawsuits against the Makah tribe should not be honored in US courts. Rick Marks, lobbyist for the Makah, congratulated the Resources Committee for its position. Incidentally, this committee also “oversees Indian issues in the House” according to the AP writer, and Chairman Pombo noted, “Congress has an obligation to uphold the Makah treaty rights.” The AP writer notes that Indian tribes have contributed some \$221,000 to Pombo's PAC since 1999, a political situation

that is neither illegal nor unusual, but which was surely brought to his attention by activists who oppose resumption of any whaling. The AP writer notes, "Federal records do not list any contributions to Pombo or his leadership committee by the Makah."

IWMC congratulates Congressman Pombo on his role in convincing the House Resources Committee to take this stand. We believe that the Makah must be given the same level of consideration as has been afforded Eskimo whalers, for both legal reasons and for reasons of respect for their indigenous rights. No damage to gray whales shall result when Makah hunters take their full quota of these abundant animals. The cultural prejudices of animal activists must not be allowed to prevail in any way that ignores the legal mandates of treaty law in the United States. The denial of Makah treaty rights is a case of social injustice that must be corrected. □

Noteworthy

Infofish.org is pleased to announce TUNA 2006 Bangkok, the 9th INFOFISH World Tuna Trade Conference and Exhibition.

Date : 25 – 27 May 2006 / Venue : Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok

The INFOFISH Tuna Conferences, the largest tuna industry gathering in the world, attracts over 500 delegates from around 60 countries around the world. The event is organized by INFOFISH in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries, Thailand and Thai Food Processors' Association.

Further details of TUNA 2006 Bangkok will be available soon at: www.infofish.org □

Subscriptions / Submissions

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