

SÉNAT

Leader de l'opposition

L'honorable Céline Hervieux-Payette, c.p.
(Bedford, Québec)



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(Bedford, Quebec)

Ottawa, Wednesday, October 3, 2007

The President of the Republic
Palais de l'Elysée
55, rue du faubourg Saint-Honoré
75008 Paris
France

Mr. President,

In a letter dated April 25 last to the officers of the Société Protectrice des Animaux (SPA) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Mr. Alain Auvé, Technical Advisor to Ms. Nelly Olin, then Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development, confirmed that the President of France at that time, Mr. Jacques Chirac, intended to prohibit trade in France in products derived from seals hunted in Canada.

President Chirac wrote to me on May 10 last to confirm that he intended to do so in order to "*preserve the species in a context in which there have been changes in habitat as a result of climate warming.*"

However, it would appear that, despite constant amendments to Canada's legislation and regulations on marine mammals and slaughtering techniques, despite successive reports by the Eminent Panel on Seal Management and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, despite the precautions taken by our scientists and the enhanced compliance of our hunting methods, and despite the transparency that Canada has sought in allowing foreign observers to enter Canada during the hunting season, non-governmental organizations are manipulating information, images and the emotions of citizens and parliamentarians of all countries, particularly in Europe.

First of all, allow me to say that Canada, a signatory to the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity, poses no threat to seal populations. The number of Harp seals, the species most extensively hunted, has even tripled in 30 years to some 5.5 million head today. The European Commission moreover recognized our prudent management on January 26 last by refusing to act on the European Parliament's written declaration calling for a European boycott on Canadian seal products.

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Allow me to add that I have commissioned a study by the research service of the Parliament of Canada on the impact of climate change on Canada's seal populations. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Arctic is highly vulnerable to climate change and will undergo major physical, ecological and economic transformations. However, *climate change will have numerous positive and negative effects on the ecology of seals, and the net effect on each species will be the result of a complex weighting of various effects.*¹

Without downplaying the extent of the impact of climate disturbances on the seal population, to state that the species is in danger is an intellectual shortcut that no scientist today is taking. Not to mention the fact that all seal species, whose feeding, migratory and reproductive behaviour differs from one species to the next, will not be affected in the same way.

Mr. President, I know you are sensitive to the rational, science-based approach. In that respect, I hail the position you expressed in your letter to Brigitte Bardot on April 18 last, in which you said you wanted to ensure "*that species management is henceforth conducted on a scientific basis*", adding that "*the status of the conservation of species is all that counts.*"

Canada bases its seal hunting quotas on government and independent scientific studies, which are available on the Web site of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and may be consulted by the general public at:

www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/seal-phoque/report-rapport_e.htm

In addition, I can only be thankful that you informed Ms. Bardot that you wanted to "*put a stop to the misconception [...] that hunters and fishermen do not protect nature.*" Indeed, who would believe that the Acadians, Quebeckers and Inuit who live year-round in contact with the natural environment, on which their culture, community and prosperity depend, are not knowledgeable and protective of the ecosystem?

However, Mr. President, I am satisfied that this rational approach is not embraced by those who discredit Canada's image and that the media no longer rely on environmentalists, but rather on "animalists", that is to say animal fundamentalists.

In conclusion, I would also like to express my concerns.

¹ Kelly, Brendan P., "Climate Change and Ice Breeding Pinnipeds," in Walther, G.-R, Conradin A. Burga, and Peter J. Edwards (eds.), "*Fingerprints*" of Climate Change: Adapted Behaviour and Shifting Species Ranges, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York, 2001, pp. 43-55. Tynan and DeMaster (1997).

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First, I believe that the animalist organizations manipulate emotions for profit. The constant use of the image of the whitecoat or "baby seal", the hunting of which has been prohibited since 1987, is one of their main weapons in maintaining artificial pity and compassion. When John Hoyt became President of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), one of the most influential animalist organizations, in 1970, it had 30,000 members and an annual budget of approximately US \$500,000. The average annual revenue of the HSUS increased by US \$22 million starting in 1994. In 2003, the figure rose to US \$123 million. When the HSUS merged with the Fund for Animals in 2004, the group announced that it had raised US \$95 million for its operating budget alone.²

Second, I believe that the objective of these so-called animal defence groups is not animal protection, but ultimately to impose their moral vision of society, which is inevitably based on vegetarianism. All the Web sites of these organizations promote vegetarianism, starting with that of Ms. Bardot, which features a vegetarian cooking column. Ms. Bardot has also announced her latest crusade: the prohibition of horse meat. I would add that these organizations have moved from the field of "animal protection" to that of "animal rights".

The approach of the Humane Society of the United States and its allies is thus to propose another moral vision of humanity the sectarian and religious nature of which should be questioned: "*To point to economic advantage is insufficient as a moral justification [...]*," wrote the Reverend Andrew Linzey on the subject of the seal hunt, in a document entitled "Public Morality and the Canadian Seal Hunt" published by the HSUS in 2005. Reverend Linzey, who also holds a doctorate and is a member of the Faculty of Theology at the Oxford University, added: "*There is no adequate moral justification for the seal hunt.*"

In this new moral order, animals have rights and, surprisingly, no duties because, as Reverend Linzey notes: "*Animals are morally innocent.*" In the animalists' vision, the purity of animals contrasts with that of Man, the author of original sin, corruptor of the Garden of Eden. It is therefore not morally acceptable that Man should take life in cold blood in order to support himself. "*Language about seals as a 'resource' is sub-ethical,*" Reverend Linzey states, adding, "*The instrumentalization of animals still prevails in today's world.*"

The logic in thinking that animals are equal to human beings and therefore cannot be "instrumentalized", that is to say consumed, leads directly to this dual concept defended by the animalists of "animal-human" and "animal-non-human". One therefore understands Ingrid Newkirk, founding president of People for the Ethical Treatment of

² According to the Center for Consumer Freedom,
www.activistcash.com/organization_overview.cfm?oid=136

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Animals (PETA), when she says: "*Six million Jews were killed in concentration camps, but six billion chickens are killed in slaughterhouses every year.*"³ Now that Ms. Bardot has referred to the seal hunt as "*animal genocide*", we will soon be seeing the creation of "crimes against animality".

Third, and last, these animalist groups are not known for their open-mindedness. The lawsuit that the HSUS threatened to file last spring against the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and director Raoul Jomphe for refusing to broadcast the documentary "Seals, the film", which presented them in an unfavourable light, speaks volumes. In addition, a more radical branch of "ecoterrorists" are operating in the United States and Europe, led by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and the Animal Rights Militia. France was moreover fell victim to their actions on August 31 last in the deliberate contamination of Novartis products.

To my knowledge, neither HSUS nor Ms. Bardot, nor any animal rights group has condemned these acts. What is worse, PETA previously reacted as follows to the violent acts committed by the Animal Liberation Front: "*We cannot condemn the Animal Liberation Front... they act courageously, risking their freedom and their careers to stop the terror inflicted every day on animals in the labs. ALF's activities comprise an important part of today's animal protection movement.*"⁴

Consequently, Mr. President, as you can see, defending the seal hunt is not simply a matter of defending a hunt, a culture, a way and place of life or a means of subsistence for modest populations. It also means defending the truth against manipulation and disinformation, defending the spirit of democracy and freedom from the imposition of a moral order, and defending the language of science against extremism and anthropomorphism.

On this subject, it is rumoured that you recently met with Brigitte Bardot. Following that meeting, you purportedly made a commitment to ban seal products in France by the end of the year. Allow me to doubt this information, given that Ms. Bardot, who occasionally comes back to restore her notoriety on Canada's ice floes, is so contrary to the archetypal scientist, to the rational discourse of which you are so much in favour. In her Ottawa press conference last year, for example, Ms. Bardot addressed journalists before an enormous poster showing a walrus – not a seal – with a club in its mouth, lying and wallowing in its blood at the foot of a young child. It would be difficult to be more cartoonish, anthropomorphic or grotesque. I am therefore sure you will agree with me that Ms. Bardot's scientific competence in these matters is probably equal to that of Sir

³ From "Animal Rights: Quotations from Movement Leaders," Fur Council of Canada, www.furcouncil.com.

⁴ *Ibid.*

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Paul McCartney or Pamela Anderson, who also recently spoke out on this issue. I recall what you wrote to Ms. Bardot on April 18 last, in reference to the Observatoire de la faune sauvage: "*If there is any difference of opinion with other institutions, it is up to the experts to reach an agreement.*"

Mr. President, the seal hunt is a sustainable activity, carried on in a sensible manner for the animal species in question, under the control of our government and scientists, by Canadians who work hard in difficult conditions, but in a manner respectful of their environment.

That is the message that I would like to send to France through you and that I have undertaken to transmit both in and outside Canada.

Mr. President, I am,

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette, P.C.
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate