



For immediate release

"Thibault's Choice"

Anti-Sealing activists give Fisheries Minister an ultimatum!

(Halifax - 19 November, 2002) Members of Global Action Network protested today outside of the Clearwater Corporation's lobster distribution plant in Bedford, Nova Scotia.

Protesters were there to send a message to Canada's Fisheries Minister, Robert Thibault. "We are putting Minister Thibault on notice that his concessions to the internationally condemned sealing industry may jeopardize Canada's most valuable fishery – lobsters," stated Andrew Plumbly, Director of GAN.

The Canadian seal hunt sparked an international outcry this year, with the highest kill level witnessed in 35 years. More than 307,000 seals were reported killed in 2002 – at least 32,000 more than allowed by the quota.

In 2001, an international veterinary report revealed that up to 42% of seals are likely skinned alive at the hunt. "Minister Thibault has given us the largest and cruelest seal hunt that we have seen in 35 years," claimed Jennifer Surette, a local Halifax activist. "If he thinks that the international community will just accept this, he is mistaken."

Protesters targeted Clearwater, a vertically integrated shellfish company that controls one fifth of the Canadian lobster industry, because of its reliance on international markets. "Clearwater is absolutely vulnerable to public opinion on this issue. Two of their top three markets are the United States and Europe, places where opposition to the seal hunt is so strong that they have banned the import of seal products," concluded Plumbly.

In previous years, Americans and Europeans have boycotted Canadian fish and tourism because of the seal hunt. "If Minister Thibault continues down this path, he may be ensuring that lobsters will be the next target," Plumbly stated.

Estimates of the commercial seal hunt put its average annual value at approximately 6 million dollars. Canada's lobster industry is worth at least 100 times that amount, bringing in an estimated \$639 million in 2001. Clearwater has lobster distribution centres in London, Brussels, and Louisville, Kentucky.

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