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For immediate release

Rough Seas Ahead for Clearwater! *Anti seal hunt activists threaten boycott of Canadian lobster*

(London - 17 December, 2002) A "seal" and a "lobster" joined members of **Global Action Network** and **Respect for Animals** today at a rally outside of the Clearwater lobster distribution center in London (9:30 am, New Covent Garden Market, Nine Elms Lane entrance).

The event was the fourth in a series of public actions targeting Clearwater (www.clrwater.ca), a large shellfish company that controls one fifth of the Canadian lobster industry. Previous events have occurred outside of Clearwater facilities in Nova Scotia, Kentucky and Brussels. Protesters hope to send a strong message to Robert Thibault, Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

"We have come all the way from Canada to put Minister Thibault on notice that his concessions to the internationally condemned sealing industry may jeopardize Canada's most valuable fishery - lobsters," stated Global Action Network's Andrew Plumbly.

The Canadian seal hunt sparked an international outcry this year, following a 2001 international veterinary report that revealed up to 42% of seals are likely skinned alive at the hunt. In 2002, the world witnessed the highest kill level since 1967, with a reported slaughter of more than 307,000 seals (32,000 more than allowed by the quota). "Minister Thibault has given us the largest and cruelest seal hunt that we have seen in 35 years," said Mark Glover of Respect for Animals. "The international animal protection community is prepared to take action."

Protesters targeted Clearwater because of its reliance on international markets, and its history of processing seal oil. "Clearwater is vulnerable to British opinion on this issue. Europe is one of their top three markets for lobster, and opposition to the seal hunt is so strong here that baby sealskin imports have been banned," alleged Plumbly.

In previous years, Europeans have boycotted Canadian fish products because of the seal hunt. "If Minister Thibault continues his campaign to exterminate seals, he will ensure that Canadian lobster is the next target," Glover concluded.

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.

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