



Liberal Government Declares War on Seals

(Ottawa, Canada – 3 February 2003) – The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans today announced a new plan that will allow the slaughter of more than a million harp seals over the next three years.

“The plan is ludicrous,” stated Andrew Plumbly, Director of Global Action Network. “To buy a few votes on Canada’s East Coast, the Canadian government is putting every Canadian industry at risk of international boycotts.” Recent polling shows that close to 80% of Europeans and Americans are opposed to the seal hunt. 36% of Europeans are willing to boycott Canadian products, and 65% of Americans are willing to boycott Canadian tourism as a result.

Federal Fisheries Minister, Robert Thibault, stated that the new quota was designed to reduce the seal population, but failed to explain his department’s motivation in doing so.

In recent years, the DFO has played a central role in misinforming the public that seals are inhibiting the recovery of commercial cod stocks. However, Thibault, when questioned at the press conference, was forced to admit that there is no existing scientific evidence to support this idea.

The quota, the highest ever set, will allow sealers to kill 350,000 seals for two of the next three years, and 275,000 for the remaining year. These figures do not take into account the hundreds of thousands of seals that are wounded and never recovered each year in the course of the hunt.

“Raising the quota to this unprecedented level will guarantee even more cruelty,” said Catherine Ferland-Blanchet of GAN. “Already, studies suggest that up to 42% are being skinned alive.”

Strong reactions from the international community are expected in the coming months, as the hunt draws closer. “We will not sit by and watch our seals exterminated,” concluded Plumbly. “Canada is an export nation. We rely on our international reputation to market our products and tourism. There will be very real consequences to the international condemnation this action has brought on our country.”

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