

European hypocrisy over seals exposed ;Europe has world's largest seal hunt

Written by Gerry Byrne, M.P., Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte

Sunday, 10 October 2010 19:36 - Last Updated Sunday, 10 October 2010 19:47

In terms of their overall impact on the seal hunt, global animal rights activists can take credit for one thing, and one thing only - the largest seal hunt in the world is now based off of European shores and conducted by Europeans.

That is a detail I doubt any such group would like their financial contributors or their political palsies to hear.

It's also a tidbit that the people of Europe and their anti-sealing political class really would rather not talk about either.

Unlike the Canadian seal harvest in the waters of the northwest Atlantic, arriving at precise figures for the size of the annual northeast Atlantic seal cull is difficult because the European hunt is largely unregulated. By contrast, Canada has the most regulated, monitored and enforced seal harvest in the world. We can tell the world how many have been harvested and where they were taken at any given time at the press of a button.

TAGS: seals, seal hunt, seal cull, European seal hunt, European hypocrisy, animal rights, sustainable, fisheries, fishing, sustainability

As unfathomable as it may seem, we know that continental Europe had a much, much larger seal hunt than Canada did in 2010. Greenland, a protectorate of Denmark and the epicenter of European animal rights activity, kills about 70,000 harp seals a year for both commercial and domestic use.

Denmark's own annual hunt, therefore, is the equivalent of all of Canada's total 2010 seal harvest. Adding to that, Norway continues on with an annual seal hunt but the numbers killed are difficult to extract because they keep the information confidential and do not allow observers to monitor and report their findings.

Still, Norway remains the global centre of all seal skin processing. Domestic harvesting there contributes anywhere from 10,000 to 25,000 animals to the global supply of harp seals. Iceland is in much the same situation where an 'underground' commercial hunt has existed for years along with the practice of an extensive harp seal cull to protect salmon populations. Finland, Ireland, Scotland and yes, even jolly old England also support similar annual seal culls.

Just quietly, very quietly.

Ironically, the largest international seal cull occurs right next door to Belgium, the heart of the European parliament, by Germany and Sweden.

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In a continental version of 'shoot, shovel and shut up,' estimates put Sweden's seal cull at or near 50,000 a year. Unlike Canada's harvest, however, Sweden's hunt is conducted solely for the purpose of a cull. The animals are killed and disposed of with no higher end-use in mind.

The IFAW, PETA and the American Humane Society all implicitly support the European cull of tens of thousands of seals annually while condemning the Canadian harvest.

To do otherwise would put them offside with the European politicians and their shallow-minded, financial seal campaign contributors.

If this has you shaking your head, remember that the European parliament never did vote to ban seal hunting - they voted instead to ban the commercial trade of seal products.

This little 'loophole' was very deliberate. It allows the unrestricted European practice of a continent-wide seal cull to legally go on under the radar.

As such, the only ones negatively affected by the Europe's high moral platitudes about the fate of those cute cuddly babies are those who use this natural resource as a source for food, medicine, clothing and consumer products.

Better to simply dump the lifeless carcass in the ocean, say the Europeans.

And that's what they do.

The wording of their trade embargo not only allows the Europeans to continue dumping seal carcasses, it enshrines the practice to be lawful. Convenient.

The question is, if the European parliament wants to avoid talking about this and the IFAW and their crowd refuse to talk about it, why isn't Canada over in Europe and around the world bringing it to everybody's attention?

Gerry Byrne

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This article originally appeared in the Western Star as a Letter to the Editor- Oct 4th,2010.

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