

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS: SENATE RESOLUTION 269 – URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TO END THE COMMERCIAL SEAL HUNT THAT OPENED ON NOVEMBER 15, 2003 Mr. LEVIN (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. REED, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. DODD, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. JEFFORDS, and Mr. KENNEDY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations: **S. RES. 269**

Whereas on November 15, 2003, the Government of Canada opened a commercial hunt on seals in the waters off the east coast of Canada;

Whereas an international outcry regarding the plight of the seals hunted in Canada resulted in the 1983 ban by the European Union of whitecoat and blueback seal skins, and the subsequent collapse of the commercial seal hunt in Canada;

Whereas the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) bars the import into the United States of any seal products;

Whereas in February 2003, the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada authorized the highest quota for harp seals in Canadian history, allowing nearly 1,000,000 seals to be killed over a 3-year period;

Whereas harp seal pups can be legally hunted in Canada as soon as they have begun to molt their white coats at approximately 12 days of age;

Whereas 97 percent of the seals culled in the 2003 slaughter were pups between just 12 days and 12 weeks of age, most of which had not yet eaten their first solid meal or learned to swim;

Whereas a 2001 report by an independent team of veterinarians invited to observe the hunt by the International Fund for Animal Welfare concluded that the seal hunt failed to comply with basic animal welfare regulations in Canada and that governmental regulations regarding humane killing were not being respected or enforced;

Whereas the 2001 veterinary report concluded that as many as 42 percent of the seals studied were likely skinned while alive and conscious;

Whereas the commercial slaughter of seals in the Northwest Atlantic is inherently cruel, whether the killing is conducted by clubbing or by shooting;

Whereas many seals are shot in the course of the hunt, but escape beneath the ice where they die slowly and are never recovered, and these seals are not counted in official kill Whereas the commercial hunt for harp and hooded seals is not conducted by indigenous peoples of Canada, but is a commercial slaughter carried out by nonnative people from the East Coast of Canada for seal fur, oil, and penises (used as aphrodisiacs in some Asian markets);

Whereas the fishing and sealing industries in Canada continue to justify the expanded seal hunt on the grounds that the seals in the Northwest Atlantic are preventing the recovery of cod stocks, despite the lack of any credible scientific evidence to support this claim;

Whereas 2 Canadian Government marine scientists reported in 1994 that the true cause of cod depletion in the North Atlantic was over-fishing, and the consensus among the international scientific community is that seals are not responsible for the collapse of cod stocks;

Whereas harp and hooded seals are a vital part of the complex ecosystem of the Northwest Atlantic, and because the seals consume predators of commercial cod stocks, removing the seals might actually inhibit recovery of cod stocks;

Whereas certain ministries of the Government of Canada have stated clearly that there is no evidence that killing seals will help groundfish stocks to recover; and

Whereas the persistence of this cruel and needless commercial hunt is inconsistent with the well-earned international reputation of Canada: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate urges the Government of Canada to end the commercial hunt on seals that opened in the waters off the east coast of Canada on November 15, 2003.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, today I am joined by a number of my colleagues in submitting a resolution in the hope that the Canadian government will cease its support of the slaughter of seals. The images from this senseless slaughter are difficult to view but even harder to accept: skinning of live animals, some no older than 12 days, and the dragging of live seals across the ice using steel hooks.

On November 15, 2003, the Government of Canada opened a commercial hunt on seals in the waters off the east coast of Canada. This hunt is supported by millions of dollars of subsidies to the sealing industry every year from the Canadian Government. These subsidies facilitate the slaughter of innocent animals and artificially extend the life of an industry that has ceased to exist in most developed countries. These subsidies can not be justified and should be ended.

Few would argue that this industry still serves a legitimate purpose. Two years ago, an economic analysis of the Canadian sealing industry concluded that it provided the equivalent of only 100 to 150 full-time jobs each year. In addition, the analysis found that these jobs cost Canadian taxpayers nearly \$30,000 each. The report concluded that when the cost of government subsidies provided to the industry was weighed against the landed value of the seals each year, the net value of the sealing industry was close to zero.

There is little about the Canadian sealing industry that is self-sustaining. The operating budget of the Canadian Sealers Association continues to be paid by the Canadian government; their rent each month is paid by the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador; seal processing companies continue to receive subsidies through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; Human Resources Development Canada, and other federal funding programs for staffing and capital costs. The sealing industry, through the Sealing Industry Development Council and other bodies, receives assistance for product research and development, and for product marketing initiatives, both overseas and domestically. All the costs of the seal hunt for ice breaking services and for search and rescue, provided by the Canadian Coast Guard, are underwritten by Canadian taxpayers.

Many believe that subsidizing an industry that only operates for a few weeks a year and employs only a few hundred people on a seasonal, part-time basis is simply a bad investment on the part of the Canadian government. The HSUS has already called upon the Canadian government to end these archaic subsidies and instead work to diversify the economy in the Atlantic region by facilitating long-term jobs and livelihoods.

The clubbing of baby seals can't be defended or justified, and Canada should end it just as we ended the Alaska baby seal massacre 20 years ago. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.