

The Humane Society Institute for Science and Policy
Animal Studies Repository

2-1979

HSUS Opposes Cruel Clubbing of Harp Seal Pups

Follow this and additional works at: http://animalstudiesrepository.org/cu_reps



Part of the [Animal Studies Commons](#), [Other Anthropology Commons](#), and the [Other Business Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

"HSUS Opposes Cruel Clubbing of Harp Seal Pups" (1979). *CUP*. 1.
http://animalstudiesrepository.org/cu_reps/1

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Humane Society Institute for Science and Policy. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the Animal Studies Repository. For more information, please contact eyahner@humanesociety.org.

HSUS OPPOSES CRUEL CLUBBING OF HARP SEAL PUPS



—HSUS

HSUS Director of Wildlife Protection Sue Pressman holds one of the baby Harp seals during her 1978 investigation of the Newfoundland hunt. One hundred and eighty thousand “whitecoats” like this one were brutally bludgeoned to death on the Newfoundland ice floes with oversized baseball bats in '78.

World opinion, including that of many Canadians, has long been against the annual so-called “seal harvest” on the ice floes off the coast of Newfoundland. Yet the Canadian bureaucrats refuse to budge.

As spring approaches, protests are being raised throughout the world to end this barbaric practice. At the same time the Canadian government is attempting to convince the world that the clubbing is both “humane” and necessary.

THE U.S. MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT

It is unlawful to import into the United States any marine mammal if such mammal was —

- (1) pregnant at the time of taking;
- (2) nursing at the time of taking, or less than eight months old, whichever occurs later;
- (3) taken from a species or population stock which the Secretary has, by regulation published in the Federal Register, designated as a depleted species or stock or which has been listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969; or
- (4) taken in a manner deemed inhumane by the Secretary.

A Quote and A Coat

Clubbing seals is no different than picking oranges in Florida. The words and the idea belong to Brian Peckford, Newfoundland's Minister of Mines and Energy. He uttered them during a recent Canadian sponsored publicity tour of the U.S. to justify the annual seal harvest.

Couple the analogy above with the following story of Larry Dworkin, one of the public relations experts on the U.S. Tour. Mr. Dworkin's sealskin coat was seized by U.S. authorities as he was about to enter a pro-sealing news conference. Dworkin was not aware that it is illegal to import seal "parts" under the provisions of the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act. "I want my coat back," said Dworkin. "I was bloody proud to wear it."

These two incidents provide a subtle commentary on the Canadian government's view of living, sensitive creatures.

For years, humanitarians have been accused by the clubbers of caring about the pups because they are "cute". The clubbers say there would be no controversy if the baby animals were less attractive. This clearly illustrates the ignorance of the seal killers.



Eyewitness View

Sue Pressman attended last year's Canadian seal slaughter. She is one of only a few people who have witnessed the three major seal kills (Pribilof Islands, South Africa, Canada). "It was literally a blood-bath," she said. "One seal hunter bashed a pup three times on the head with a club. Blood poured from the pup's nose. Flipping the seal on its back, the hunter slit its belly from head to tail, skinning its carcass, and then peeling off the pelt and blubber from the body."

All around this gruesome scene other baby seals slipped frantically about, in a pathetic and hopeless effort to escape their fate."

Canadian officials claim the seals are dead or unconscious from the first moment they are clubbed. Thus, they claim the killing is "humane". Pressman, who has spent her entire adult life with all sorts of animals says "it isn't." She contends that the thick layer of blubber carried by these pups often protects them from the power of the first blow thus requiring more blows with the baseball bat type device. "We long ago stopped killing our food animals by this method," she said. "The pain and suffering is more than obvious."

Responding to the question of why HSUS opposes the clubbing when it is supported by some Canadian animal welfare groups, HSUS president John A. Hoyt said: "There are those, even sister humane organizations, who give sanction to the clubbing of seals. They do so, often on grounds that such activity provides necessary and beneficial products as well as a livelihood for numerous individuals."

There comes a point when a people, or an organization of people, must stand up and be counted for what to them seems right and against that which they believe to be wrong. For this reason the HSUS is unalterably opposed to the continued clubbing of seals for what we regard an unjustified purposes or for purposes made wrong because of the cost in terms of suffering and abuse. It is a matter of sensitivity and concern, a matter of caring enough to believe enough to be what one believes."



The Public Must Know!

In order to counteract the Canadian government's promotion of the clubbing, The HSUS has launched its own program. This publication is 1979's first effort.

We are following up this publication with a mailing of background information and fact sheets to newspapers, and radio and TV stations all across the country. Sue Pressman's eyewitness story is going to reach the American public!

It is our intention to contradict the Canadian claims in every forum possible. Pressman's one-to-one contact with the press will help gain a more rational view of the subject than the Canadian PR agency tour of the U.S.

In the past, The HSUS has been instrumental in the passage of The Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (see box, pg. 1), and the halting of the importation of sealskins from South Africa. It was HSUS testimony before an administrative law judge that helped stop the planned waiver of the moratorium to allow the import of South African sealskins in 1977.

More Than A Numbers Game

The Canadians have long insisted that the annual seal hunt is "good resource management." They deny that the numbers of seals are diminishing. They believe it is necessary to "cull" the harp seal population every year.

The HSUS and other animal welfare groups have called for the cancellation of the 1979 hunt so that a reliable census can be taken. The Canadians insist that this year's "pup production" will be between 345,000 and 358,000. They plan to kill

180,000 baby whitecoats---the same number slaughtered last year.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources has taken a position based on aerial surveys of the seal herds. They believe the number of births will be around 250,000---nearly 100,000 below the Canadian estimate of births.

Some scientists believe this vast difference in expected births is evidence enough to halt the killings! These same scientists believe

the Harp herds may be in danger of eventual extinction because of the high mortality rate due to weather conditions, habitat contamination, predators, and hunters! A study done by Dr. D. M. Lavinge of the University of Guelph, Canada found "the status of the Harp seal in the western Atlantic may be severely threatened in the future if the seals continue to be managed on the basis of the more optimistic population assessments."

The Economics of the Hunt

The Canadian bureaucrats contend that the annual seal slaughter is a major source of income for Newfoundland. "The value of primary sealing as well as secondary operations to the Atlantic regional economy in 1978 has been placed at about 6½ million dollars from all sources. Of this, a substantial portion can be attributed to meat and oil. More than 4,000 obtained seasonal employment . . ." This statement comes from one of the publicity handouts used by the Canadians during their January '79 publicity tour of the U.S.

The point of the matter is that half the clubbers make \$100 a year or less from the hunt. The most any of the hunters and processors make is approximately \$1,700. These figures were derived from official Canadian government publications. So, what we're dealing with is a minor amount of money for a few people rather than an essential part of their income.

The real winners in terms of money are the European fur dealers. In a real sense they're the ones making the killing.

The claims about the need for the oil and meat by-products are also questioned by The HSUS. In 1978 approximately 180,000 baby seals were slaughtered. Of that number, about 20,000 carcasses were used for food by sealers and their families. Sue Pressman has reported seeing hundreds, if not thousands, of carcasses stripped of their fur, left on the ice.

If the oil and meat were really important to the hunt, then it would seem reasonable that the hunters would kill mostly adult seals. They obviously have a great deal more meat on them than the baby whitecoats. *The fact is the only really important product of the hunt is the pelt.* It is the baby seal's protective white coat that the fur dealers lust for---not the oil or meat by-products!



This photo, taken in 1976, is one of the few photos of the actual clubbing available. Even though the Canadians insist the hunt is "humane," they prohibit photographers on the ice to prevent the public from seeing the truth.

The Canadian government admits to spending nearly \$1 million to supervise the hunt, make aerial surveys and the like. Nowhere in their official figures do they mention what the cost of sailing a large icebreaker into the region costs.

In 1978, Canada sailed the world's largest icebreaker, the Louis St. Lawrence, into the area to break channels for the sealers. In addition, the government prints and distributes pamphlets defending the hunt. These kinds of expenditures don't find their way onto the balance sheets for the hunt. The profits for the Newfoundland region keep getting smaller and smaller when you start to subtract the non-budget items!

The simple fact is that sealing goes on because it has been a tradition in the area. In the 1940s there may have been as many as 10 million Harp seals in the area. Today,

the herds number about 1½ million by all estimates. If economics is the primary reason for the hunt, then one wonders what plans the Canadian government is making for the hunters when the day arrives when the Harp seals are gone!

Help The HSUS

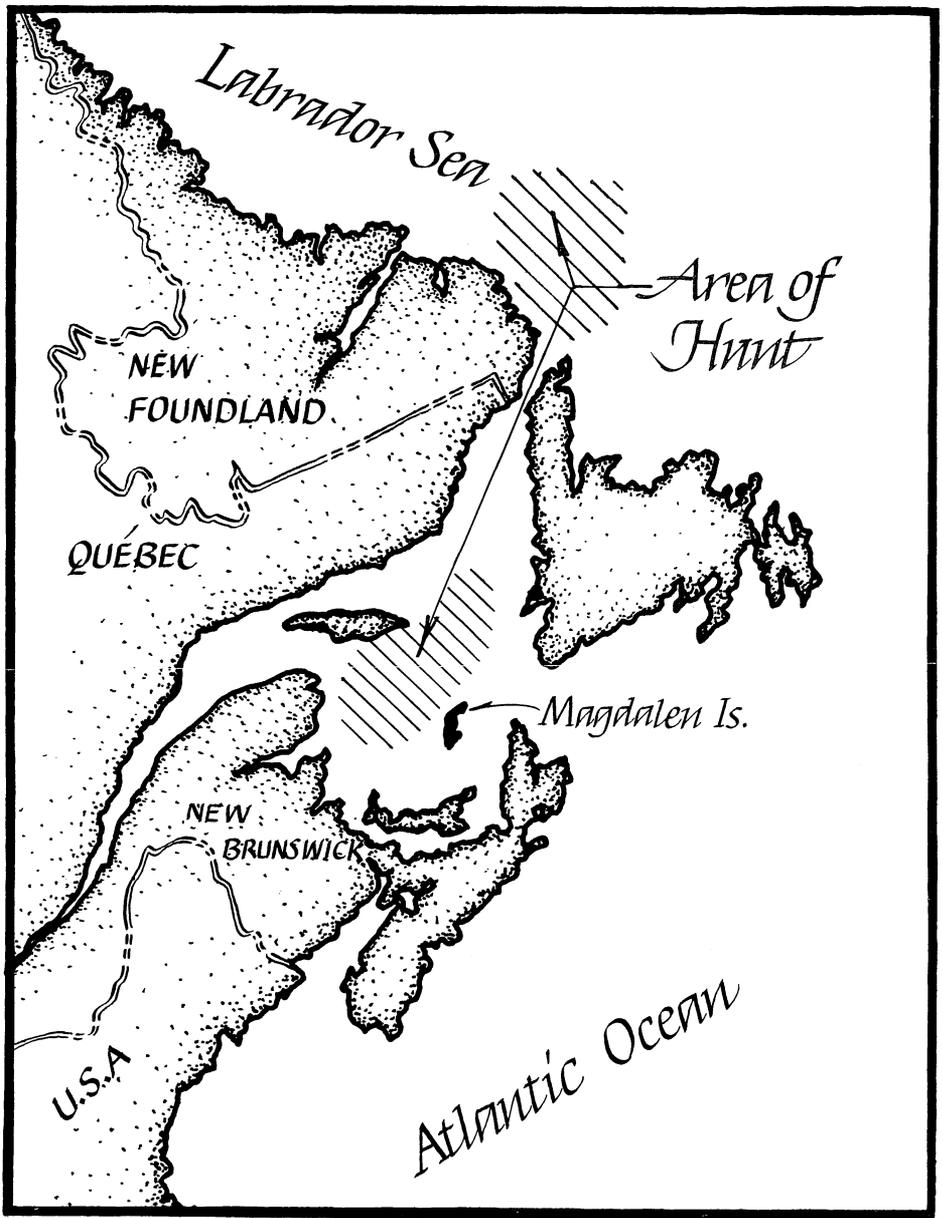
You can help The HSUS continue to oppose the cruel clubbing of baby seals as well as our other anti-cruelty activities by sending a contribution to The HSUS. Your gift will greatly assist us in furthering our determination to create a society in which all animals are protected from cruelty and abuse.

False Claim

In one of the many Canadian promotion handouts, it has been suggested that The HSUS approves of the "clubbing" of seals as the most "humane method" possible. The Canadians derived this idea from HSUS reports to the U.S. Government regarding the adult seal kills on the Pribilof Islands in Alaska. A hunt which in no way is comparable to that in Canada.

In an official release dated January 19, 1979, Brian Peckford, Newfoundland's Minister of Mines and Energy said, "It was found after extensive research that the most humane way to kill seals is by using the club, quickly followed by exsanguination . . . Observers from your own Department of Agriculture, The American Academy of Sciences, The Humane Society of the United States, The Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries conducted the tests."

The HSUS has never said it thinks that clubbing is humane! The late Frank McMahon, long-time investigator for The HSUS responded to this false claim in 1971. He said, "I have been on the islands investigating all aspects of the seal hunt for the last four years . . . Studies have indeed been conducted over a period of years but not with the emphasis on discovering a new or humane method of slaughter. The studies have been conducted with the ultimate attempt on the part of the U.S. government to justify the present method of clubbing seals to death . . . In conclusion, I would like to state that The Humane Society of the United States is totally opposed to the clubbing of these seals whose deaths result in only a very expensive luxury product."



The shaded areas are where the annual Harp seal clubbing takes place. Pressman observed the hunt in the lower area off the Magdalen Islands.

What You Can Do

If you agree with The HSUS position that killing animals for unnecessary products is morally and ethically wrong, then we ask your cooperation in our efforts to end this cruelty.

Write to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Office of the Prime Minister, Ottawa, Canada, KIA 0A2. Tell the Prime Minister you abhor the clubbing. Ask him to respect the majority opinion of his own citizens as well as that of the rest of the world by stopping the slaughter now!

Because the Norwegians also participate in the hunt and process many of the pelts into fur trimmings you should also write the Norwegian ambassador: Knut Hedemann, Norwegian Embassy, 3401 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

Since West Germany is the world's largest importer of baby sealskins, you should write to Mr. Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor, Federal Republic of Germany, 5300 Bonn 12, Germany, and ask that the importation of all harp seal products be banned.



Contributors of \$10 or more to The HSUS campaign to stop the senseless seal clubbing will receive this button.



Copyright, 1978, The Humane Society of the United States

2179

The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037
(202) 452-1100