

111TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1314

Urging the Government of Canada to end the commercial seal hunt.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 29, 2010

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Ms. BERKLEY, Ms. WOOLSEY, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. SPEIER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BERMAN, Mr. FARR, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. ANDREWS, Mr. POLIS of Colorado, Mr. STARK, and Mr. HARE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Urging the Government of Canada to end the commercial seal hunt.

Whereas the Government of Canada permits an annual commercial hunt for seals in the waters off the east coast of Canada;

Whereas Canada's commercial seal hunt is the largest of its kind in the world, with an average allowable catch of about 300,000 harp seals;

Whereas the Government of Canada banned the commercial hunting of newborn harp seals (whitecoats) and hooded seal pups (bluebacks) in 1987, but allows sealers to legally hunt harp seal pups as soon as they begin to molt their white coats, at approximately 12 days of age;

Whereas 97 percent or more of the seals killed are pups between just 12 days and 12 weeks of age;

Whereas seals are hunted for their pelts, oil, and meat;

Whereas commercial seal hunting differs from subsistence seal hunting;

Whereas several aboriginal and Inuit communities traditionally subsist on seal hunting and, for that reason, are exempt from restrictions applying to the commercial seal hunt;

Whereas in recent years, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada has authorized historically high quotas for harp seals;

Whereas the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada has decided to increase the quota for seals for the 2010 commercial seal hunt despite high pup mortality, low seal fur prices and reduced industry participation;

Whereas seals are either shot or struck on the head by a hakapik or club;

Whereas many seals are injured in the course of the hunt and escape beneath the ice where they die slowly and are never recovered;

Whereas such seals are not properly counted in official kill statistics, increasing the likelihood that the actual kill level is far higher than the level that is reported;

Whereas in 2007, an international panel of experts in veterinary medicine and zoology was invited by the Humane Society of the United States to observe the commercial seal hunt in Canada;

Whereas the report by the panel noted a widespread failure by sealers to comply with the Marine Mammal Regula-

tions that govern the commercial seal hunt and by authorities to effectively monitor the hunt and enforce such regulations;

Whereas also in 2007, the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare adopted the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) Scientific Opinion;

Whereas the report concluded that avoidable pain, distress, fear, and other forms of suffering occur during hunting and that seals may be skinned while still alive;

Whereas members of the fishing and sealing industries in Canada continue to justify the 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 the consensus in the international scientific community is that culling seals will not assist in the recovery of fish stocks and that seals are a vital part of the Northwest Atlantic marine ecosystem;

Whereas the few thousand fishermen who participate in the commercial seal hunt in Canada earn, on average, only a tiny fraction of their annual income from killing seals with the remainder coming from seafood;

Whereas a recent poll reveals that half of Newfoundland sealers holding an opinion support a Federal buyout of the commercial sealing industry which would compensate fishermen for their sealing licenses and invest in economic alternatives in the communities involved;

Whereas polling has consistently shown that the majority of people in Canada oppose the commercial seal hunt and support foreign nations' ending their trade in seal products;

Whereas 11 countries have prohibited trade in seal products in recent years, including the United States and the European Union;

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; 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

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) urges the Government of Canada to prohibit
3 its commercial hunting of seals, while allowing sub-
4 sistence hunting for aboriginal and Inuit commu-
5 nities; and

6 (2) strongly encourages other countries to ban
7 trade in seal products.

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