



Debates of the Senate

2nd SESSION. 40th PARLIAMENT.
VOLUME 146, NUMBER 89

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, December 14, 2009

Protection of Animals and the Ecosystem

Motion Adopted

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette, pursuant to notice of December 1, 2009, moved

That,

Whereas the Senate of Canada recognizes that contemporary principles of animal welfare, sustainable development, ecosystem-based management and precautionary principles must be applied, and the contribution of Aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge to these principles must be recognized;

Whereas the Senate of Canada recognizes the moral obligation to treat all species without cruelty and with respect;

Whereas the Senate of Canada recognizes that the contributions to ecosystem diversity and function made by the sustainable use of natural resources by humankind, without prejudice against species that might be regarded as competitors in drawing on these resources;

That the Senate of Canada affirms that a balanced ecosystem is the result of constant interactions between predators and prey throughout the food web, that humans are an integral part of the ecosystem and, therefore, that their position as predators cannot be separated from nature;

That the Senate of Canada affirms that humankind can legitimately raise, harvest and use animals that are either wild or farmed and this for purposes that are either economic, personal or scientific; and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons requesting that House to unite with the Senate for the above purpose.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, I am caught up in the enthusiasm for uniting everyone and giving the gift of hope to our citizens on the east or Atlantic coast, whether on the Magdalen Islands or Newfoundland, and to our friends in Nunavut and all those involved in the seal hunt.

I would also like to thank Daniel Shewchuk, Nunavut Minister of the Environment, Quebec Minister Claude Béchar and Mr. Tom Henderson, former fisheries minister with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, who all supported me in preparing this motion. The Canadian family is united behind this motion.

A CBC television program that aired yesterday showed the plight of our fellow citizens for whom the seal hunt is a way of life. They are worried about what the future has in store for them. Whether they are hunters or those who make a living from seal products, no one should feel abandoned.

The purpose of this motion is simply to tell them that we are here for them and that we will continue to fight against groups like PETA, the Humane Society and actors who have not worked in a long time, such as Brigitte Bardot, Pamela Anderson or Paul McCartney, who have no real knowledge of this sector and just blindly lend their name to the vegetarian cause.

This motion will show every group across the land that we are committed to animal welfare while recognizing that humans are an integral part of the ecosystem. A balanced ecosystem, as I wrote in the motion, is the result of constant interactions between predators and prey throughout the food web. Humans are an integral part of the ecosystem and, therefore, their position as predators cannot be separated from nature.

I think that today we agree with our colleague, Senator Grafstein, who is encouraging Europe and the Western world to join Mr. Sarkozy and do business with the Middle East. Nevertheless, we still have work to do to persuade our European Parliament counterparts that our seal hunters can legitimately and ethically raise, harvest and use any animal, whether wild or domestic, for personal, economic and scientific purposes. We must make it clear that we will continue fighting to have the embargo on exporting seal products to Europe lifted.

Honourable senators, I urge you to support this motion.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I support Senator Hervieux-Payette's initiative and the substance of the motion, but I would like some clarification on one point.

Could the senator explain in detail the meaning of the part of the motion that reads, "Whereas the Senate of Canada recognizes that contemporary principles of animal welfare. . . must be recognized?"

Senator Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, this provision was included in response to professional standards developed by the veterinarians, anthropologists and other experts who have worked with me toward the goal of having all countries ratify the Universal Declaration on the Ethical Harvest of Seals. We have professionals who set very high standards that the provinces have committed to complying with. So when we talk about modern principles of animal welfare, we mean that the hunt must be conducted ethically in accordance with recommendations from experts in the field.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Duffy: Honourable senators, we all know that the seal hunt is of vital economic importance to the some of the furthest regions of our country. Could the honourable senator share with us her thoughts on how much money these anti-sealing organizations have milked out of different groups around the world in support of this phony cause?

Senator Hervieux-Payette: They have not sent their audited financial statement to me, but according to some professors who are following this and recently published some reports on it, it is a minimum of \$2 million a

year, not including the supporters who work for free for this cause.

We are talking about an ideology, not just about feeding people with the animal meat or using the skin or other by-products. We are talking about people who deny that in the order of things human beings are authorized to use what the land provides, which in this case is essential revenue for our people living in the North and also on the coast.

As we know, whether we are talking about the Atlantic Coast or the Magdalen Islands, the season starts with the seal hunt. The revenue from the seal hunt enables the people to proceed with fishing for either lobsters or fish. Without the income at the beginning of the year, they would be unable to proceed with the rest.

Their annual incomes are very small. We are not talking about billions of dollars. The revenue from the seal hunt in 2007 was about \$15.4 million, but this is essential revenue for the livelihood of these people.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to.)