

Statement on Seal Slaughter

year and various television organizations took pictures, which were shown across Canada. While not seen by me personally, they have been described by correspondents in various parts of this country as revolting, nauseating and shocking.

We want to do everything we can to remove the possibility of there being inhumanity in this slaughter. I have before me a Canadian Press article which says in part:

Fisheries Minister H. J. Robichaud cuddled a baby seal and watched one being slaughtered yesterday as the annual hunt opened—

It goes on to say:

One of the swilers—

A swiler is one of those engaged in this work.

—demonstrated the killing and skinning. The minister borrowed a gaff and poked the carcass.

"I don't think there's any doubt that the little thing was dead when it was skinned," he said—

T. I. Hughes of Toronto, general manager of the Ontario Humane Society, agreed that the swiler had probably done a good job of killing the pup. "He wouldn't want to do a bad job with the minister there."

Mr. Hughes suggested that some other weapon should be used. He took along a pistol and a .22 calibre rifle equipped with special plastic bullets, which indicates that he felt vast improvements ought to take place in the killing operation. The article then says:

At the same time, Dr. N. D. Scollard, director of Toronto's Riverdale Zoo, will examine hundreds of skulls scattered over the blood-splotched ice to determine how efficient the clubbing method is.

When we were in office we brought about legislation to assure in the slaughterhouses humane killing of cattle, hogs and sheep. It is not a responsibility resting solely on the minister; I am not placing it there. We as a nation must assure that cruelty shall be banned. The pictures shown over national television this year were not of the nature to lead people to believe that everything has been done that ought to be done.

The minister has indicated that not everything has been done that ought to be done because he said that further changes will be made after an examination of the recommendations that are before him. I hope that we in this nation will not allow anything to be done that will permit the continuation of a blot on our country. To prevent the situation depicted in other parts of the world requires the strictest and sternest action so that these poor little animals shall not for private gain or decoration be subject to unnecessary cruelty.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the right hon. gentleman a question? He has referred to pictures which were shown by the C.B.C. this year. Is he aware that those pictures were extracts of the film that was taken last year? I refer to the pictures shown on "This Hour Has Seven Days".

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am told the hon. gentleman was in the pictures.

Mr. Robichaud: No, not in those pictures.

Mr. Barry Mather (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I shall be very brief in speaking on this topic. In the first place I would say that we appreciate the information which the minister has given us on this matter. Second, I want to say that his leadership has apparently resulted in some action being taken to reduce the cruelty which has been for so long involved in the slaughter of seals. Third, I believe, and I think other hon. members agree, this is an indication of what aroused public opinion can do to bring pressure to bear on officials to take action along humane lines. We think something has been done to reduce the cruelty involved in the killing of seals but we also believe, as I think the humane societies do, that more has to be done. We shall be watching in the future to see what continued progress is made to reduce the cruelty in sealing.

Mr. A. B. Patterson (Fraser Valley): Mr. Speaker, we wish to express our appreciation for the fact that something definite is being done to meet this situation. I am sure that none of us appreciates the publicity that has been given during the past two or three years to the slaughter of baby seals. It has pointed up the fact that there are still those who for personal gain will bypass even the rudimentary principles of kindness to animals. I am sure we all recognize the fact that unless these people are willing to co-operate, some concrete action will have to be taken to insist that they recognize these fundamental principles.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Langlois (Mégantic): Just a few words, Mr. Speaker, to express to the minister our group's gratitude for his intention of handling, precisely, this problem which for many years already has caused great concern to the Canadian public because of the means used in seal hunting every season, or every year this operation is allowed.