

Who is really 'cashing in on seals'?

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I write concerning "Seal hunt is simply unsustainable," a letter to the editor from Rebecca Aldworth, the executive director of Humane Society International/Canada, April 28.

Aldworth says "federal politicians have cashed in on sealers for decades, using emotive debate..."

The only ones who have "cashed in on sealers for decades, using emotive debate" are the organizations dedicated to destroying markets for seal products and thus putting sealers out of work — and Ms. Aldworth has worked for such organizations for well over a decade.

The organizations are the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and the HSUS offshoot, Humane Society International/Canada. The IFAW, to give but one example, was able to give its founder Brian Davies \$2.5 million (payable over seven years) when he retired. How's that for "cashing in"?

As for "emotive debate," the reason why those organizations chose to focus on the seal, which is not an endangered species — instead of the 223 species that the federal Species At Risk Act lists as endangered — is because the seal pup is cute and cuddly and thus able to win widespread publicity and stir an emotional (and "cash") response.

Why aren't Ms. Aldworth and the organizations she has worked for trying, for example, to save the Atlantic walrus, which was once common on Canada's East Coast, but which the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans says now exists only in the Arctic?

Answer: the Atlantic walrus is, unhappily, far from cute and cuddly — some might even call it ugly; its emotive appeal would be nil and "cashing in" would be impossible.

Joan Forsey

Toronto