



The Confederation of Hunting Associations of SA

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25 May 2019

The Honourable Chair and Members of the House of Commons.

Response to the debate TROPHY HUNTING, introduced by the Honourable Zak Goldsmith MP on 15 May 2019 in the Westminster Hall.

Dear Honourable Members

As a person whom has grown up a hunter, and now holds employment with a primary aim of defending The Freedom to Hunt, it is with a great sense of regret and sadness that I followed the Parliament Television debate in your House on 15 May dealing with Trophy Hunting. In the first instance, to realise just how distant from “the earth” so many folk have become with urbanization and technological development and how this skews their perspective of the real, natural world. But secondly, more than any other of the many onslaughts against hunting that are raining down of late, THIS discussion made me understand how I, and the many others who would promote and maintain hunting, have completely failed in ensuring our contribution to man and nature is understood and appreciated. It is not the anti-hunting activists who have brought us to this brink, but ourselves who have failed, up until now, to properly and concisely ensure that rational, educated and influential folk are fully informed, and understanding of (even if not personally pleased by) the activities of hunting. I sincerely hope you will allow me the opportunity through this letter, to attempt some degree of redress of our past failing.

At the outset I wish to emphasise that I saw great knowledge and passion in the arguments raised by the Honourable Goldsmith and the many that intervned in support were equally passionate, but it must be said, not always quite as knowledgeable. That said, there are still massive gaps which are clearly apparent in



the collective knowledge base of the House. These gaps are largely as a consequence of my (and other's like my) failure as described in the opening paragraph.

Hunting is, and, in this modern, urbanised and very artificial world, will remain a highly emotive and misunderstood practice. The emotive aspect thereof, from a western majority urban societal perspective, has done a complete 360 degree about-turn within a couple of centuries. Once the cause of great admiration and praise hardly a dozen generations back, it is now often vehemently chastised and degraded as an activity. There is no prospect of swaying many people's opinion. I trust you will, in reading this, at least be curious enough to hear an alternative argument. I assure you of no intent to make you "like" hunting, but only to demonstrate possible unforeseen consequences that could result had this alternative view not been contemplated.

In order to understand hunting in this era one needs to grasp the huge variety of hunting styles, cultures, purposes and drivers. This is extremely complex and I will only emphasise that there should not be a quick tendency to "label" hunting and thereafter box it into a "bad" box and an "acceptable" box. Commonly heard is acceptance for subsistence hunting, usually with the tag-line of "by indigenous/Inuit/First Nation people". Often too, it is said that its "okay if it's for meat", or sometimes when a particularly un-inspiring species is involved, because the animal causes damage or threatens livelihoods/lives. Conversely, the moment the animal in question is labelled "iconic, magnificent, endangered" or happens to be a species of particular beauty or splendour, the immediate response is antagonism. And if the hunter is a person of means, or travelled from a distant and wealthy country, or of late happens to be a lady, the vehemence escalates to such malevolent and unbridled hatred that there have even been cases of suicide and deep depression caused in such hunters. Surely before joining in such McCarthyism a reasonable person, especially those of high office, would want to delve deeper into actual facts?

Now to look more into the actual nett effect on wildlife numbers, particularly in Africa, some perspective. The sheer size of the continent is often so overlooked when contemplating the scenario, that one tends to only look at an "either-or" solution. Mr Goldsmith in particular emphasises that what he labels "wildlife tourism" far exceeds hunting in revenue generation. What he fails to add is that areas where such high-value non-consumptive tourism occur accounts for a tiny fraction of the vast expanse of necessary wildlife habitat required to maintain a healthy and secure wildlife



population and biodiverse ecology in Africa. The “tourist hot-spots” focus around exceptionally iconic and attractive natural wonders but hardly scratch the vast, featureless habitat zones that support the mass of wildlife and also, many poor, rural people. Places such as the Masai-Mara/Serengeti complex with its famous migration, the Chobe/Okavango complex in Botswana, the Victoria Falls region of Zimbabwe/Zambia or the Greater Kruger Park zone in South Africa, along with a myriad of national parks and the up-market, often private game reserves get the lion’s share of the high end tourist market. But much, much more wildlife land in Africa has no chance whatsoever of attracting that market regardless how much an idealist anti-hunter would wish to believe differently. And THIS is where a “win-win” situation exists should the pro/anti-hunting debate ever find a common cause and declare truce.

Natural systems have evolved to sustain life over eons, and the only disrupter of this has been human expansion post the Industrial Revolution with its consequent global expansion, colonialism, development and, of course, ignorant greed. Yes, the century of market hunting that saw the great herds on both the African and American plains decimated in the name of profit and progress are a blight on our humanity. But it would hardly be fair to judge the actions of 19th century pioneers by the standards of, and based on our knowledge and hindsight, now. but WITH that knowledge and hindsight, surely we know its preferable to harvest sustainably from those natural systems, rather than to continue to convert them into mono-crop/stock agricultural systems, thereby forever rendering them devoid of biodiversity, especially the mega-fauna species that exist on the African plains. It would be equally unfair to judge the modern-day hunter based on those exploits of a century past. I assure you that no subsection of people is more extinction averse or ecologically aware than hunters generally are. Yes, sadly many are not skilled at properly displaying or articulating this fact. Contrary to common belief, a photo beside a hunted animal is not evidence of disdain or a lack of care, but quite the opposite (I know full well of the exceptions to this, but they are rare notwithstanding animal-rightism’s campaign to make you think otherwise)

In your debate Holland was lauded as a “good example” to follow in terms of their policies towards the import of hunting trophies. Good gracious! How can an ecological dessert such as Holland be critical of the conservation models of pro-sustainable use countries in all seriousness? Yes, they can take the prize for production potential per



hunted animals is the prime source of protein for the poor, rural local communities and is most often taken to feeding schemes such as poor schools, orphanages and old age homes in these outlying areas. I could send you much evidence of this.

This wildlife based ranching model has been honed to the point that we are now world leaders in this regard. Rest assured, just as no species has ever been farmed into extinction, now that people with true farmer's blood in their veins have taken to ranching wildlife, NO wild species that is free to be utilised by these folk will EVER be ranched into extinction. In fact, if you take two exceptional antelope species being the Sable and the Roan, while their numbers have crashed in our Kruger Park system due to the animal-rightist based blackmail that has caused a massive elephant overpopulation decimating their critical habitat needs there, these two species have been so well produced by our ranching practices that now many of the private ranchers own more as a single owner than our government parks own in total! Had these two animals not been relatively popular trophy animals there is no doubt they would be heading towards critically endangered by now. This applies to a number of our other species too.

Personally, I reside on the western edge of the famous gold mining region known as the Witwatersrand, a ridge running about 100 mi, east/west with Johannesburg at the centre. Across the wetland at the bottom of my property is the start of one of the world's largest mining tailings dumps. A yellow, dusty, flat-topped mountain of residue. Around its base springs of acid-leached water burst from the ground, polluting the environment and feeding into a stream that has greatly devastated the biodiversity of a previously pristine local game reserve nearby. THIS is the legacy of the world's exploitation of our minerals in Africa. These FINITE resources. This particular area has largely been held by UK based corporations, particularly in the glory days when the rich pickings were to be had. I've yet to hear anyone from a rich western country stand up on a point of conservation principle, to argue for a boycott of these finite resources of Africa. Is it not somewhat hypocritical that now that these resources are at their end, and the legacy of harm they've done is all we have left of them, that our INFINITE resource of wild animals which we have wholly restored through our own innovation, creativity, investment and passion, would be boycotted by those same countries whose current wealth was built on the damage done here in the past. Of course, none now present in the Commons were personally to blame, and of course in hindsight no doubt things would have been done differently. But now, instead, you



choose to place an ill-considered boycott, the affects of which you really don't fully appreciate or understand, on a fledgling industry 8000 miles away, because of your own misguided sentimentalities.

Surely you would not wish to be inadvertent hypocrites simply because a number of NGOs who have made a commercial profession out of playing the sentiments of the wealthy western public by exploiting through false and highly emotional narrative a tale that says hunting is the path to extinction? The fact of the matter is that those species which we kill the most are by far the most numerous. If it's the death of animals that you find offensive, then the few thousand that WE have learned to manage and expand in number should hardly be your first port of call. Do not also fall foul of the emotive trick that some animals have more sentient value than others, and therefore our African wild animals are somehow sacrosanct. Again, this would be such hypocrisy in so many ways but I shall suggest just the slaughter of horses in the UK and Europe as one such example. One hot topic that would need a whole dissertation of its own is the matter of lions bred for hunting. Suffice to say thi is happening in South Africa, protected by a court order, which is based on private ownership issues. As it remains a matter that cannot be effectively ended, some responsible hunting associations such as ours have set about trying our best to influence the practice towards the highest possible standards and transparency so that no animal welfare issues and no dishonest marketing practices occur. It is complex and, even within the hunting fraternity, emotive and divisive. Certainly, there is no shortage of lions for the available habitat in the Southern African countries which practice hunting. All wild populations are at maximum carrying capacity here. The lions ranched for hunting form no risk whatsoever to the survival of wild lions, and notwithstanding much rhetoric by those against these ranched lions that they could never contribute to conservation, the fact is that there have been some successful test releases of ranched lion back into wild areas that indicate these animals could certainly be a source to restock any habitats suitable for lions. But as stated, this specific topic, much like your UK pheasant and partridge breeding, is a matter for a much more detailed discussion beyond what I hope to achieve with this letter.

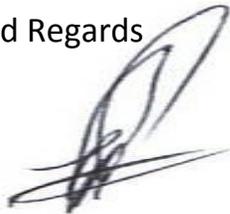
In closing I would urge you to look far beyond your personal likes and dislikes when being briefed on matters relating to hunting in general, and the importance within the sector of the international traveller who chooses to hunt so-called trophy animals. While it may not be to your taste, the positive effect it brings to the people and wildlife



of Africa is vitally important. Of course, there are bad apples, and bad practices, but that is more a subject of governance than of the activity itself. In those countries more prone to such problems you will also find many other aspects of their governance which need critical attention. The UK is well positioned to, and in fact does, make positive influences on such matters on a wide basis. This we truly appreciate. But to ban our sustainable, legitimate and well-regulated products, which we have the wherewithal to continue to produce infinitely, would NOT be an act of conservation by you. Indeed, it will probably contribute to the exact opposite effect and frankly should also be deemed an incredibly unfair trade embargo. Certainly, it insults the governance of our sovereign state, and is at best superior, if not arrogant.

I sincerely hope you found this thought provoking, and will consider it in your policy making. While democracy decrees the will of the people, as with your own deliberations over Brexit you will know that the real best solution often lies in far more complex intricacies than mere whims on a subject should determine. Our rural poor have little voice, but they do need the potential benefit of their resources. I would welcome further questions or comments and would happily host anyone who would ever wish to see the wonderful conservation and livelihood successes that are the South African hunting sector.

Kind Regards



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