

NEW ANIMAL LAWS THREATEN CANADIANS

By
Robert D. Sopuck

Bill C-15B, the new animal cruelty law, passed in the House of Commons and is nothing but bad news for all Canadians. Let me explain. Sorry for the “legalistic” details but, as courts and judges take more and more control of our lives, this is necessary.

No one condones inhumane treatment of animals but Bill C-15B moves the laws governing the treatment of animals from the “Property” section of the law into a subsection of the Criminal Code. This moves them closer to being granted rights, in line with the radical animal rights agenda.

Bill C-15B defines an animal as “any animal that has the capacity to feel pain.” This will open bio-medical research, farming, and angling to frivolous legal challenges, especially since scientists cannot agree on which animals feel pain.

Bill C-15B removes the important legal defences for those who work with animals. In other words, a worm squirming on a fishhook is part of a legal angling activity but, that activity could be challenged in court under C-15B. Animal activists have openly stated that legal test cases will be launched if the bill passes.

Bill C-15B allows “authorised organisations” such as humane societies, to challenge legitimate animal uses, and keep some of the proceeds from any fines. The charge would only proceed to our overburdened court system with the approval of an attorney general, but the person charged would incur the expense of defending themselves. In the meantime, the person against whom the frivolous charge was laid will no doubt see their name appear as having been charged with an offence under the “Sexual Offences, Public Morals and Disorderly Conduct” statute, where Bill C-15B resides.

Animal activists want the elimination of all animal use by people, and the extension of human rights to animals. “The life of an ant and that of my child should have equal consideration” and “A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy” are two of the more outrageous statements made by leaders of the animal rights organisations.

A favoured tactic of animal activists goes like this: “If you can’t win in the court of public opinion, get the laws changed so that you just might win in a court of law.” A sympathetic judge, a test case, and voila, no more fishing or certain vital medical research or – well, you fill in the blank.

The strategy of the animal activists was revealed by Clayton Ruby, a Toronto animal

rights lawyer, who said in the March 18, 2000 edition of the Montreal Gazette:

“...that over the next 10 years, the changes will be subtle, masquerading as animal protection and continuing to develop as a moralistic adjunct to human rights until some of them at least get their own entrenched in law. We’ll see the development of animal rights in a very hesitant way, through incremental changes in case law and judges attitudes...” The article goes on to say “We need legislative protections and legislative change but you take what you can get. We’re just at the beginning of the movement...”

Animal rights groups actively campaign in close constituencies to elect “their” candidates. In a fund raising letter the Animal Alliance of Canada is taking credit for the election of Anne McLellan, the then Justice Minister who developed C-15B. The letter says:

“Because of a commitment made by the Minister of Justice, Anne McLellan in the House of Commons to pass Bill C-15B Environment Voters (note: their political arm) campaigned for her re-election. Ms. McLellan was in a losing campaign. Environment Voters stepped in and championed her election. We ran the better campaign....Ms. McLellan won by 700 votes.. Good to her word, Ms. McLellan introduced the breakthrough animal protection legislation.”

Now you might say, “So what, “I don’t fish, hunt, farm, or have pets. C-15B doesn’t make any difference to me.” Ahhh, but you’d be dead wrong (pun intended) on that one since animal use in medical research is a major animal activist target. The group, Canadians for Medical Progress, is very alarmed about C-15B. Their by-line simply reads, “Research saves lives;” including your life and those of your loved ones. Pierre Berton, one of Canada’s most beloved authors, is their Senior Patron. C-15B is now in the Senate where its final fate will be decided and Berton wrote to all Senators to:

“...express our serious concern about the implications and lack of protection in the Animal Cruelty section of Bill C-15B for the research and scientific community.”

Berton goes on to say, “...the animal rights movement regards this bill as a perfect match for their short- and long-term goals. They consider this to be vanguard legislation that will propel their multi-faceted agenda forward,...” See above.

Regarding the political tactics of the Animal Alliance and the subsequent promotion of C-15B by Anne McLellan, Berton was at his scathing best when he said, “If indeed this is so, the potential for life-saving medical research may be severely compromised, and I find that just scandalous.”

The Federal Justice department says that C-15B is just some much-needed updating of an old act and will have little impact. Firstly, if that is so, why do it? Secondly, I recall other federal assurances like “We’ll scrap the GST” or how about “The gun registry will cost no more than \$ 85 million (almost \$700 million and counting).” And so on.

Bill C-15B faced some heroic opposition, not the least of which came from the Liberal Rural Caucus chaired by Ontario MP Murray Calder and the Canadian Alliance, plus a coalition of farmers, hunters, and medical researchers. But they could not prevail. The only hope is that the Senate lives up to its mandate as the chamber of “sober second thought” and amends this bill. Otherwise, all Canadians will feel the pain.

Robert D. Sopuck is a Vice-President with the Delta Waterfowl Foundation (www.deltawaterfowl.org), a member of the Wildlife Information Network of Manitoba.