



Ag-gag Bill C-156:
The consequence of denial

Description

An attack on free expression making it impossible to report animal cruelty

By **Georges R. Dupras**

I can't help but wonder who came up with the idea of **Bill C-156 in Ontario**. This bill would make it impossible for anyone in the general public, or even the fourth estate, to trespass, document, or report on animal cruelty.

I would think that this flagrant attack on free speech and expression is the result of a case where a woman, described as a terrorist by the animal industry, was arrested for giving water to a pig on its way to slaughter. Charges were laid but the consequences were not what the industry had hoped for. It appears that when the general public was made aware that pigs can travel 36 hours without rest or water, the average Canadian sided with the woman.

Many of these testimonies are from whistleblowers, who have first-hand knowledge of what happens behind closed doors, while others are from undercover agents.

There are numerous examples of abuse within the animal industries documented by various organizations across North America. When these incidences are made public the industry reacts by either insisting that these are isolated cases or through denial. Hardly a month goes by when stories, film clips and horrifying pictures from across North America aren't brought to our attention. These abuses are not confined to the agricultural field but also the entertainment industry and others. Many of these testimonies are from whistleblowers, who have first-hand knowledge of what happens behind closed doors, while others are from undercover agents.

Denial

Rather than address the reality, the animal industries continue to operate behind closed doors while hiring public



relations firms to re-package the industries' faltering image. Among other cosmetic changes, they no longer use the term "slaughterhouses" but promote the expression "protein producers". They also refer to anyone critical of their methods as "terrorists" though I would have thought that label might better fit those responsible for the 9-11 attack, the Oklahoma bombing, Lockerby air disaster and Embassy bombings. Admittedly, some of the more vocal among the Animal Rights Groups refer to meat processors as killers... but isn't that exactly what they do behind those closed doors?

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The animal industries insist compliance with industry standards throughout every step of the slaughter procedure, and in one case on June 08, 2020, during testimony at the Senate Committee on Bill C-156, one of the industry speakers implied that a veterinarian is present at all times, up to and including the kill box. This statement is denied by at least two veterinarians, one a retired veterinarian and Canadian Food Inspection Agent.

In addition, and aiding the agricultural industry, both Federal Parties in Canada condone the existence of covert caucuses within their ranks. The Liberals have the [Rural Caucus](#), while the Conservatives have the [Outdoor Caucus](#), both including MPs and un-elected Senators dedicated to blocking any significant change in animal protection laws.

Animal advocates should be grateful to the Ford Government of Ontario for giving them an international platform – one that will surely go viral. Thank you for the free publicity that activists could never otherwise afford to promote their views when Bill C-156 is ultimately challenged at the Supreme Court.

Inspectors

As for the inspectors, it has been argued that these facilities are overseen by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), to guarantee compliance with all industry regulations.

Isn't that precisely what Provincial authorities told us about retirement homes and the Coronavirus? Were we not told that these facilities were overseen by responsible officials and inspectors? Has our experience with COVID-19 not shown us that residences for the aged were the worst hit by the Coronavirus and that neglect occurred for days before anyone knew about it?

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Where were the inspectors? Where were these responsible officials? And let's not forget, these residencies were not closed facilities as our slaughterhouses, etc., nor was this the first pandemic. In 2004, when the SARS pandemic introduced itself to us, we were assured that measures would follow to enable us to better prevent and react to future such events. That was 16 years ago and, months ago, when the Coronavirus was identified, where were these preventative measures?

I'm not blaming the few inspectors that exist, as there are far too few of them, and they ultimately end-up reporting infractions to industry bosses.



Can the public be blamed?

The Coronavirus may have originated in Wuhan, China, but it did its worst in old age residences in this country which are open facilities. Can we be blamed for our lack of faith in a self-regulated system, governed behind closed doors, without “independent” oversight? That is exactly what is happening daily in slaughter facilities across this country.

Free speech and expression

What is at risk here is our basic right to freedom of speech and expression. Is it not the right of every Canadian to know where their food is coming from, whether it is genetically modified and how it is processed etc.?

“I may disagree with what you are saying but I’ll fight to the death your right to say it.” This saying obviously does not apply to Canada.

Sign the petition

To find out more about Bill C-156 and to sign the petition go to stopbill156.com

Feature image: Electric shock scars on an abused pig in slaughter truck, Burlington, Ontario – stopbill156.com

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Georges R. Dupras has advocated for animals for over fifty years. A member of the International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA), a Director of the Animal Alliance of Canada (AAC), Quebec Representative of Zoocheck Canada and past Board member of the Canadian SPCA, he worked on the original Save the Seal campaign in 1966 that culminated in the founding of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in 1969. Georges Dupras has published two books, *Values in Conflict* and the eBook *Ethics, a Human Condition*, and currently lives in Montreal, Canada.



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2. animal industry
3. Bill C-156
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