

RE: BILL C-205

Signs in the subway and elsewhere state, “see something, say something.” Bill C-205 is designed to prevent Canadians from seeing animal cruelty and thus exposing it. Every day, it seems, we learn about the amazing intelligence of a different animal species -- whales, apes, pigs, elephants, rats, dolphins, crows, and now octopi. Websites abound with examples of how animals interact and help each other. Anyone who has a pet knows how sensitive and intelligent they are. Yet, the agricultural industry continues to mistreat farm animals and is now attempting to co-opt governments to prevent activists, investigative reporters, whistleblowers, and concerned citizens from exposing the appalling conditions to which farm animals are exposed.

It is difficult to imagine a worse trip than the one that some cattle take to the slaughterhouse. Canada has some of the worst transport laws in the western world. Animals can be transported for up to 36 hours without food, water, or rest. By the time the cows reach their destination, many are too sick or injured to walk. A Reporter recently revealed how chickens in the Niagara region were thrown alive into a macerator and ground to bits; and an undercover journalist videoed a Kitchener hog farm that repeatedly slammed undersized piglets into the ground until they were dead. Other secretly-recorded examples of horrific treatment of animals on farms, in transport trucks, and in slaughterhouses would not have come to light without the work of reporters, animal rights people, and concerned Canadians. Bill C-205 wants to arrest and/or fine these “whistleblowers.” Remember the Ontario woman who was arrested for giving water to pigs being transported to the slaughterhouse -- that’s an ag-gag law in a nutshell. Such draconian laws might make even Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela think twice about protesting.

What is the animal industry afraid of? Greater transparency is good for animals, food safety, and public confidence. If you think that surely the agricultural industry wouldn’t endanger its own animals, then remember how several Ontario farms recently treated their migrant farm labourers. Forced to live in cramped bunkhouses and share meal spaces and washrooms, more than 600 migrant labourers contracted Covid-19. The premier had to plead with farmers to have their workers tested. Labour advocates and health-care experts criticized the farm owners for prioritizing profits over their workers’ health and well-being.

How did this industry gain so much power as to strip citizens of their right to investigate, protest, and “bear witness?” This bill should raise the ire of anyone with a heart, a pet, or a vote in the next election. Is the government of Canada willing to give the agricultural industry the powers outlined in C-205!

Let’s get on the right side of history.