



03 November 2018

International Support for The Captive Breeding of Lions Industry in South Africa A Plea for Common Sense and a Proposal

Primarily addressed to Safari Club International (SCI) but applicable also and copied to: the Dallas Safari Club (DSC); the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF); the US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS); The International Wildlife Conservation Council (US Department of the Interior)(IWCC); the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU (FACE); and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC).

To Rick Parsons CEO-SCI

Dear Mr Parsons,

Your letter to the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa (PHASA), on the subject of the Captive Breeding of Lions Industry (CBL) in South Africa, dated 6th August 2018, has just been copied to me.

I wish to make comment on this correspondence, so I draw your attention to the fact that I was given the honour of being awarded the prestigious Safari Club International Conservation Trophy in 1992, in recognition of my contribution to hunting, to wildlife and to wildlife management, as outlined in my book THE WILDLIFE GAME (1992). So, I guess, SCI at one time, thought my opinions were worthy of note.

I hope, therefore, that you will now give my opinions on the subject of the Captive Breeding of Lions Industry in South Africa due recognition. Be assured: This email was compiled and despatched only after a great deal of emotional soul-searching!

At nearly 80 years of age, I am still 'at it' and three years ago I was responsible for creating an NGO called *The True Green Alliance* (TGA). The TGA is registered in South Africa as both a Non-Profit Organisation and a Public Benefit Organisation. In the face of a growing anti-hunting and anti-sustainable-use-of-wildlife opposition throughout the world, the TGA has tasked itself with combating this menace in every way possible.

Our vision statement is:

To create a southern African (ultimately global) society that is properly informed about the principles and practices of wildlife management; that understands the wisdom of, and necessity for, the practice of sustainable utilisation of living resources (both wild and domestic) for the benefit of mankind; that supports animal welfare; and that rejects animal rights - the doctrine of which seeks to abolish all animal uses by man.

The TGA's mission includes correcting published material that counteracts the objectives of our vision; and SCI's intervention against the CBL industry is perceived to be one such example. The TGA, therefore, wishes, here, to discuss this intervention with you.

I was truly astounded when PHASA was split asunder over the existence of the CBL Industry - largely because I knew so little about CBL. Nevertheless, the newly formed professional hunting group, *The Custodians for Professional Hunting and Conservation in South Africa* (CPHC-SA) - which I hereafter call 'the custodians' - insisted that the TGA should condemn CBL.

My response to the custodians was: *On what grounds should the TGA denounce CBL?* Various members of the residual PHASA - and other hunters in South Africa - on the other hand, recommended that the TGA should condone CBL. My response to these hunters was exactly the same: *On what grounds should the TGA condone CBL?* The TGA truly had so little knowledge about the CBL Industry at that time that we had no grounds *at all* upon which to judge it. All I was able find on this subject was a plethora of animal rights propaganda (which declared its intention to abolish ALL hunting) and media reports (which are the journalists' personal preference interpretations of animal rights propaganda). Neither was of any use to me.

Consequently, TGA Director Elma Britz and I, throughout the month of June 2018, undertook an objective and in-depth survey of the CBL Industry in South Africa. We did not inspect every facility - which would have taken the better part of three or four months - but we *were* introduced to a good cross-section of its every facet. And we had a whole month to discuss with the keynote leaders and hands-on practitioners, how the

industry operated. I am quite confident, therefore, that we developed, during that month, a fine understanding about what the CBL Industry was all about.

I have to add here that I have extensive knowledge (practical and academic) about Africa, its rural people, and its wildlife management practices: (1) Having spent some 30 years of my adult life in the service of Africa's national parks and wildlife management government departments (including being the Provincial Game Warden-in-charge of Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park; and Director of the Bophuthatswana National Park's Board in South Africa); (2) Having spent another c. 30 years as an investigative hunting and wildlife management journalist; (3) Having written 15 books on the subjects of wildlife management and big game hunting - including five wildlife management text books (two of which are still in use in South Africa's tertiary education institutions); (4) Having acquired a university qualification in Field Ecology (passed with distinction), and having been a Member of the British Institute of Biology and a Chartered Biologist for the European Union for some 20 years; and (5) Having acquired more **free-range** and **fair-chase** big game hunting experience than, perhaps, any man alive today (in which tally I include many stock-killing lion hunts; and the killing of six man-eating lions). It was against this back-ground that I objectively measured what Elma and I saw, learned and experienced during our CBL inspection.

My full report is attached to this email for your elucidation.

Elma and I went into this exercise with completely open minds. We were just as much prepared to condemn CBL as we were prepared to condone it - depending on what we discovered. And those were our choices. We did not go into this undertaking with any preferential considerations towards the hunting of captive-bred lions vis-a-vis the hunting of wild lions. In the end we found no reason for condemning the CBL Industry.

Did we find 'nothing wrong' with the industry? Not at all! We found a great deal which we believed could be improved upon but it was not our role to tell the lion farmers how they should conduct their business. We, as TGA officials, were/are not experienced lion farmers; and the lion farmers know best about all those things which they do with captive-bred lions. But everyone in the industry was conducive to listening to our constructive criticism. We spoke to them about many things: about what we considered to be good practice and what we considered to be bad practice; and about what we considered would be improvements. The industry leaders have taken all these considerations to heart; and they are conducting consequent reviews. And we remain in constructive dialogue.

Our final recommendation was that the South African government should nurture the CBL Industry and guide it through its final incubation. As happens with many such embryonic industries mistakes were made during the CBL's maturation - but they can

be, and are being, rectified. Nothing, however, happens overnight and, in this case - as with all others - it will take time to make things perfect. It is easy to destroy something that seems (at first glance) to be bad - and which you are persuaded to consider as *being very bad* - but it takes courage, effort and considerable intellect to develop 'something good' out of an imperfect salmagundi. Rather than simply condemning the CBL industry - because of adverse (and often untrue) publicity - the TGA elected to help make the CBL industry 'better'.

The TGA evaluated that the CBL industry has great potential for transformation in Africa - not so much in the field of hunting but with particular regard to the lion-bone-trade. And, at the TGA's instigation, the South African Predator Association (SAPA) has already set the wheels in motion to set up the first rural African-owned lion-breeding facility in the country's Limpopo Province; and the TGA is keeping tabs on its development.

Another conclusion we came to - with regard to the *hunting* of captive-bred lions - was that we believe SCI (AND the DSC; the WSF; the CIC; the US F&WS; IWCC; FACE; and others) should rethink whatever their opposition to CBL might be. I have explained myself, in this regard, in the attached report (SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH). However, there are many things that were said in your letter, and other things that I read about on the internet with regard to SCI's negative attitude towards CBL, that don't sit well with me. SCI, it seems, has complied meekly and obediently with the animal rightists' opposition to CBL, to the lion bone trade, and to the hunting of captive-bred lions, when we should ALL have been vigorously opposing the animal rights propaganda (and sorting out our differences behind closed doors). Instead we openly washed our dirty linen in full public view! And THAT disappoints me.

I have to add that much of the public opposition to CBL has come from the custodians who have (now) stated that they refuse to hunt captive-bred lions because, they say, it is *unethical*. And they have openly (and arrogantly in my opinion) claimed that they are the only professional hunters in South Africa who hunt 'ethically'. Indeed, I believe it was the custodians who persuaded SCI, DSC, the WSF, the CIC, the US F&WS - and others - to condemn the CBL Industry! And the custodians did an infinitely better job of smearing the CBL than did any of the animal rights groups!

NB: The TGA believes that 'ethics' is a very private issue. It is something that exists between a person and his own conscience. It concerns an individual's personal preferences. It is what a hunter does when he is hunting alone. 'Ethics' cannot be equated with a written list of the norms and standards that regulate the behaviour of people in a group. So, 'ethical hunting' is not really the right terminology to describe this elusive social

value. Nevertheless, I do get the Custodians point as, I am sure, most readers will do, too! They believe that no hunter worth his salt will shoot an animal - any animal - that has been 'specifically bred to be hunted'. And I have empathy with that attitude. None of the animals I have ever hunted were 'bred to be hunted'; and I, myself, would never hunt a captive-bred lion. But that dictum is only valid IF it is applied evenly across the board (which is not even vaguely happening)!

I was told emphatically (by a custodian who was trying to convince me with regard to his point of view) that captive-bred lion hunting cannot be carried out except under 'put-and-take' hunting conditions - and that it was with regard to THAT aspect of captive-bred lion hunting that the custodians particularly objected. When I later discussed this with another custodian, however, he said that that was not true. He told me the custodians were against ALL forms of captive-bred lion hunting. So it seems the custodian organisation has not yet reached consensus on this aspect of the issue.

The custodians state, simply, that it is 'unethical' to hunt captive-bred lions. But many of them are quite happy to hunt captive-bred, put-and-take, black and white rhinos which are, in my opinion, hunted under truly VERY "UN-free range" conditions. I have also been told, very confidentially but on good authority, that some custodians are secretly financing the hunting of a whole range of *put-and-take* game species that *have been specifically bred to be hunted*. Yet the purest of them continue to condemn *put-and-take* hunting under ANY guise.

I have sympathy for this custodian stance, however, because many of these animals are *hunted* in South Africa (AND in the United States; South America; the United Kingdom; Europe and Asia) under what can only be described as very *unsportsman-like* conditions. I, personally, would never partake in such hunting because it offends my own personal-preference hunting beliefs (i.e. my own personal hunting 'ethics'). However, word is repeatedly being fed back to me that many custodians are clandestinely financing anything and everything that is 'hunnable' in southern Africa - including all kinds of put-and-take hunting (even captive-bred lion hunting) - because, 'they HAVE to make a living somehow!' (NOTE: This information was not solicited by the TGA.)

Nevertheless, having adopted the 'holier-than-thou' high ground, I have asked the custodians if they would answer some very pointed questions from me. I did so because the general public in South Africa has been asking *me* questions about the custodians that I have been unable to answer (because my information is incomplete). To date my request has been ignored. So, at the risk of further custodian-rebukes, it seems I am going to have to (again) draw my own conclusions from the information that is being fed back to me from other quarters.

It would seem that the custodians imply that only when an animal is hunted under totally 'free-range' and totally 'fair-chase' conditions can its hunting be considered 'ethical'; and that 'put-and-take hunting', under any guise, is 'unethical'.

NB: I am told that: 'put-and-take hunting' occurs when an animal is captive-bred for hunting purposes inside a fenced enclosure; and when it is then released onto an extensive game ranch 'fenced camp' to be shot by a hunter.

In their various 'personal preference' arguments - on both sides of the fence - nobody makes much mention of the fact that the South African wildlife culture developed as a commercial enterprise; and that it's over 10 000 game ranches are ALL enclosed by 'adequately fenced enclosures'. Every single animal that is shot by a hunter on *any* of these game ranches is, therefore - technically - a put-and-take animal. Breeding stock (as well as huntable stock) are bought and sold on public auctions every month of the year; AND the progeny of the breeding stock are very carefully reared to adulthood purely for hunting purposes. In reality, therefore, ALL game animals on commercial game ranches in southern Africa are 'captive bred'; and they are all, after a fashion, 'put-and-take' quarry! According to their dictum, the custodians should, therefore, oppose all hunting on South African game ranches. But they don't. They dare not do that because, if they did, they would be out of a livelihood.

They also shoot game animals (including, apparently, exotics) that have been especially procured and introduced, a long time ago, onto game ranches for hunting purposes. Many species now occur on game ranches, therefore, that are way outside their natural ranges. Technically, that makes those animals no longer *endemic*! The nyala, which appears all over the country now - because it commands such a good price from international hunters - is a good example. Surely, if we are to be truly 'ethical' in our hunting pursuits, these *out-of-their-natural-range* animals should NOT ever be hunted. But they are!

Let's have a look at one extreme that has recently been brought to my attention. I am told that captive-bred sable antelope bulls are periodically immobilised as they start reaching maturity, and their horn-lengths are methodically recorded. And it is not only

with sable bulls that this procedure happens: it happens with buffalo, kudu, waterbuck, and nyala; and a whole range of other species, too.

Eventually, each of the bigger-horned animals are advertised (individually) and sold (individually - because of their exceptional horn lengths) on the international hunting market: and they are snapped up by overseas hunters. I have been told (by, among other people, a custodian) that when a hunter, who has pre-purchased one of these very big bulls, arrives in South Africa he has the option of accepting the ranch owner's assurance that the animal he sees in front of him is the particular one that he has purchased by prior agreement; or he can ask that the animal be darted again so that he can confirm the animal's giant trophy-size. Thereafter, the hunter 'hunts' the said animal when it has recovered from the drug.

When I heard this, I despaired for hunting and for hunters! Where, in all this procedure, does 'fair-chase' exist?

The custodians say this state of affairs is 'unethical'; and that it is 'unsporting' to shoot such an animal. The conditions surrounding the supply and the acquisition of such a trophy, they say, are not in terms of what they consider to be '*the essence of hunting*'. Hence they disapprove of put-and-take hunting. And, in my heart of hearts, I must agree with them.

Against this background, however, I have to point out that when I began my hunting career in Africa - during the 1950s - nobody had heard of a 'game fence'. At that time, ALL game, EVERYWHERE, lived under completely 'free-range' conditions and their hunting was ALL 'fair-chase'.

In the early 1960s, Thane Rhiney, Archie Mossman and Ray Dazman - all of whom were American Fulbright scholars - surrounded Doddieburn Ranch south of Bulawayo in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) with a game-proof fence; and thus began Africa's first successful game ranch.

At the time I was shocked. I couldn't bring myself to accept that anybody could WANT to hunt a wild animal inside a game fenced enclosure - no matter how big that enclosure might be. But times have changed. In South Africa, today, ALL the country's 10 000+ game ranches are ringed by game proof fences; and very few animals are now hunted outside the game ranches. Fully 'free-range' animals are *almost* now a thing of the past; and everybody shoots what are, essentially, 'captive-bred' and 'put-and-take' specimens. I am happy to say, however, that - due to the evasive action these animals have learned to take when approached by a hunter on foot - there is still a great deal of 'fair-chase' involved in their hunting.

And who am I to gainsay what every other hunter in South Africa now considers to be 'acceptable' and 'the norm'?

A great deal has changed since my own early hunting days. Game ranch management has evolved over time; and it is still changing. What used to be considered 'unethical' is now accepted as 'the norm'. Our hunting practices have had to move with the times, too. All this applies to developments in the CBL industry, too.

Legal practicalities have dictated that wildlife in South Africa can only be 'owned' by the land-owner if it is contained inside an 'adequately fenced enclosure'; and it can only be hunted within that 'adequately fenced enclosure', too. Practicalities have dictated that 'put-and-take' hunting should be acceptable to hunters; and that breeding game specifically for the hunting market should also be acceptable. And, within this general milieu I cannot, for the life of me understand why captive-bred lions - bred specifically for hunting - cannot be included in this mix?

As much as I hate the idea of anyone hunting a 'put-and-take' sable under the conditions I have outlined above, there is a very lucrative market for these special animals. And who gives me - or the SCI, or the DSC, or the WSF, or the CIC or anybody else - the right to deny South Africa's game ranchers the opportunity to sell their very expensive wildlife commodities into the hunting market?

South Africa and Namibia are the only two places on earth where black rhinos can be hunted in this day and age. I have no objection to black rhino bulls being hunted! The criteria for hunting a black rhino in South Africa, however, is that the selected animal must be known - it must be listed on South African data books and be identifiable by its DNA and its microchip number. Government must agree that that particular rhino can be hunted. The animal is advertised and sold to a hunter, and the hunter comes to South Africa to hunt that particular animal. Before it is shot, however - by government decree - the rhino MUST BE re-darted, its micro-chip number MUST BE re-checked and its DNA MUST BE re-confirmed. Only *then* may the animal be hunted. THIS is not my idea of hunting. But, I am told, all these pre-checks happen much as I have here described. And I am told all the custodians scramble for such opportunities to hunt a black rhino bull. AND they all still hunt white rhino bulls. BOTH rhino species, however, represent the most extreme examples of captive-bred and put-and-take hunting. So, when is captive-bred and put-and-take hunting acceptable and when is it not?

When I hear stories like this I truly despair for the future of 'fair-chase' hunting.

In America, year round, a whole host of indigenous-to-America, AND exotic wild animals, too, are captive-bred for hunting: White-tailed Deer; Axis Deer; Sika Deer; Blackbuck Antelope; Addax; Fallow Deer; Barbary Sheep; Elk; Gemsbuck; Bison; Big-horned Wild Sheep; and a whole lot more. In New Zealand Red Deer are specifically

bred, their trophy sizes measured annually, and for identity reasons they are visibly tagged, for hunting. And I have been told (by an Argentinian hunter) that, in Argentina, ONLY captive-bred cougars may be hunted - so as to save the country's wild cougars from extinction. So why is it that South Africa's captive-bred lions should not be hunted also?

All over the world Chinese pheasants, Bobwhite, Chukar and other red-legged partridges are captive-bred for hunting. The ultimate situation in this regard, is that 50 million Chinese captive-bred pheasants and 10 million captive-bred European red-legged partridges (both exotics in the U.K.) are released into the British countryside every year, for the U.K.'s 500 000 shotgun enthusiasts (including the British royal family) to hunt. Why must CBL in South Africa, therefore, be singled-out for a different treatment?

All over the world many species of fish - trout, black bass, tilapia and many other species - are bred in captivity by their millions, and released into rivers and dams for the world's angling fraternity to catch. And, ultimately, very large breeding stock fish (past their breeding prime) are released into rivers and dams from the hatcheries, too, and they are thus made available to anglers for a very high price.

This is all done for one thing: to provide the human hunting, shooting and fishing fraternity of the world with terrestrial quarry to hunt; with high-flying birds to shoot; and with edible fish to catch on a hook. Whether you agree with any of this or not, doesn't matter. It happens. And it happens all over the world all the time. So what makes the captive-bred lion industry in South Africa different?

There are 7000 to 8000 lions presently living in the CBL Industry in South Africa. They are all very carefully contained in secure enclosures. Their camps (or paddocks) are relatively large and comfortable - and improvements in their accommodations are being made all the time. So they are adequately housed. They are well fed and well looked after. Their general health needs are attended to by qualified veterinarians. They have the best DNA profiles when compared with any wild lion population in southern Africa - which means they are healthier and less susceptible to disease than wild lions. The industry is moving towards every single lion having its own profile recorded; ALL the breeding stock already have their own micro-chip numbers and their DNA is listed on official registers. No inbreeding is allowed. They live in a closed circuit environment. No wild lions are allowed to enter the captive-population - in case they introduce unwanted transmittable diseases or inject bad genes into the captive-mix. There is absolutely no interaction between the captive-bred lion population and any wild lion population.

So, whereas we can say that the captive lion breeding industry in South Africa does NOT (in the normal way of assessing such an outcome) 'enhance' the betterment of the continent's wild lions, we can also be emphatic and say that neither is it *in any way* 'detrimental'. It has neither a negative influence nor a positive one on any existing wild lion population in Africa. What it does have is the potential to provide healthy breeding stock for any country in Africa which wants to start a new wild lion population from scratch. South Africa's captive bred lions have proved that they can be released directly into the wild; that they learn very quickly how to kill for themselves; and that they not only survive, they breed successfully without any further intervention by man. So THAT is a positive factor in this whole scenario. And there are no factors that influence wild lion populations negatively.

NB: But 'people' do affect wild lion populations negatively. The human population explosion in Africa, for example (see below), is an enormous reality that none of us can or should ignore.

Rather than trying to compare the South African captive-bred lion population with wild lion populations, society will get closer to the truth if it visualises the captive-bred lion population as though it were a herd of domestic cattle that are reared for the abattoir; and for human consumption. The classical lion farmer is far more closely related to a cattle farmer than he is to a game warden in Kruger National Park.

If every lion in the South African captive-bred lion population were to be euthanized tomorrow, therefore, that eventuality would make not one iota of difference to the existence, to the well-being or to the demise of wild lions anywhere on the continent. So why do we bother to make such comparisons?

In my report, I have compared the hunting of captive-bred lions in South Africa - by way of the walk and stalk method - and the hunting of wild lions over a bait, from a hide, in Tanzania. And I truly fail to see why the hunting of captive-bred lions on foot in South Africa can be construed as being 'ethically inferior' to hunting a wild lion from a hide, on a bait, in Tanzania. Indeed, I personally believe the opposite applies. Furthermore, I have had a report from a hunter who said that he refused to kill the lion he had paid for in Tanzania because he felt the killing of a lion on a bait, from a hide, was 'not sporting'.

Since my report - SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH - was made public, many people have explained to me what they describe as being 'the real truth' behind why the custodians split with PHASA.

A short period before the split - I have been told - members of PHASA (who were later to become custodians) complained about what they called "cheap-skate" lion hunting in South Africa. Their complaint (apparently) was that on a comparatively inexpensive 5-to-7 day safari, an overseas hunter could hunt a captive-bred lion in South Africa for

US\$ 20 000. No mention was ever made - in those early days - about “ethics”, or lack thereof, in the hunting of captive-bred lions. So, I must presume that ‘ethics’ was then ‘not an issue’. What is more than likely is that nobody, at that time, had realised that the labelling of captive-bred lion hunting as ‘unethical’ could be used as an excuse (or a fabricated reason) for demanding that CBL be closed down!

NB: I even have a written report from a professional hunter - a past PHASA president (now a custodian) - who participated in an early captive-bred lion hunt, and pronounced himself favourably impressed. He has since changed his tune!

A wild lion can be hunted in Tanzania ONLY on a minimum 21 day safari, for the total cost of ‘about’ US\$ 100 000. The *daily* fee, for the safari alone, is between US\$ 2 000 and US\$ 3 000. On top of that, is the cost of the lion’s license or permit and several other fees including obligatory and stipulated tips to staff. Another major inclusion is the full salary cost of an *additional* Tanzania-resident professional hunter who HAS to be present on every Tanzanian safari lion hunt. The South African outfit that is selling the hunt also provides its own professional hunter. So every Tanzanian lion hunt carries the cost of *two* professional hunters. Thus do the costs of a wild lion hunt in Tanzania build up.

During that same year (when the controversy began), CBL sold 800 South African captive-bred lion hunts into the international hunting market; and that made the high-cost East African lion hunts very difficult to sell. This was not, apparently, JUST because of the comparative costs involved, but also because the client-hunters found it easier to escape from their work programmes (back home in America) for one week - compared to the minimum three weeks they were required to spend in Tanzania.

Despite the greater cost of the Tanzanian wild lion hunt (US\$100 000) - I am told - the percentage profit the South African PH’s receive from a Tanzania wild lion hunt is considerably greater than the percentage profit they receive from the much cheaper US\$ 20 000 cost of a captive-bred lion hunt in South Africa.

I was told that THAT was the REAL reason why the Custodians tried to close down the South African captive-bred lion hunting industry. Whether this is true or not will probably never be admitted, but one cannot deny that this conjecture is very plausible. If the Custodians could have closed down the CBL lion hunting industry in South Africa, they would have created a financially beneficial *Open Sesame* for themselves in Tanzania - as long as wild lions continue to be hunted there!

One also has to take into account, the effect that the banning of captive-bred lion hunting has had on the wildlife industry as a whole, in South Africa. Most clients who took a lion, extended their lion hunting safari onto several of the other game ranches

that offered plains-game hunting, too, and - on average - they also hunted up-to-ten 'plains game' animals after they had killed their lion. So the year that 800 captive-bred lions were shot, the hunters also injected the cost of 8000 other expensive trophy animals into the South African wildlife economy. So, when the US Fish and Wildlife Service denied the importation to America of captive-bred lion trophies from South Africa; that reality lost the South African wildlife industry several million dollars in extra revenue, annually. That loss has been felt by the game ranch owners; the professional hunters that they employ; and all the lowly ranch-hands that work on the game ranch properties. The ripple effect, therefore, has been huge.

As a consequence of the lion trophy import ban, several lion farmers moved back into conventional agricultural businesses because they can no longer afford the cost of feeding large numbers of their lions - without reciprocal benefits being derived from hunting their lions. The lion hunting ban has, therefore, adversely affected the production of large numbers of plains-game animals, too. So, the negative impact has been felt right throughout South Africa's wildlife industry.

I have to note that a large proportion of the custodians are previous PHASA presidents. They are, therefore, old friends of senior officials in SCI, DSC, the WSF and the CIC. So, I have to wonder if THAT is not the reason why SCI, et al, sided so readily with the Custodians over the CBL controversy? The question is: Did any of the seniors in these organisations determine what appears to be 'the real truth' behind the CBL controversy?

Now I want to comment on some impressions you have inferred in your letter:

(1). In paragraph 2 of your letter you state: "At the last two of your Annual General Meetings, held in November 2016, and November 2017, SCI has spoken out strongly and clearly against the practice of pursuing captive bred lions. We have repeatedly pointed out that the practice is detrimental to the public perception of big game hunting in South Africa, the African continent and of big game trophy hunting in general."

Comment: On what grounds did SCI make those remarks? Has any member of SCI ever taken the trouble to investigate CBL in South Africa? Or did you take your cue solely from utterances made by the custodians?

The hunting of captive-bred lions is, most decidedly, put-and-take hunting. So, if your opposition to hunting captive-bred lions is based on your opposition to the concept of put-and-take hunting (generally), then I accept that your opposition to captive-bred lion hunting is based on a valid and acceptable argument. But it then becomes acceptable ONLY if you are prepared to equally condemn the put-and-take hunting that takes place

in America of captive-bred white-tailed deer, elk (in Colorado), bison (on the prairies) and a whole host of exotic animals and exotic birds (Chinese pheasants and chukar partridges) all over the United States. You must also be prepared to condemn the captive-breeding of millions of fish in the United States, that are released into wild streams and dams (even in your national parks and wildlife reservations) for angling purposes. You must also be prepared to condemn the captive-breeding of pheasants and partridges for wing-shooting purposes all over the United States.

With all due respect, “the public perception of big game hunting in South Africa, on the African continent and about big game trophy hunting, in general” - of which you make mention - is generated largely by the manner in which our hunting institutions (including SCI) project themselves in the public domain. When we roll over and bury our heads in the sand - when the going gets tough - we project ourselves as being people who don't have the strength of our own convictions. We ALL know that the seemingly all-powerful international animal rightist NGOs wish to abolish ALL hunting - not just trophy hunting - so we must not cherry-pick ONLY what we consider to be winnable public arguments; and we must not avoid the 'difficult' problems - like CBL - because we don't believe they are winnable. They *are* winnable - but only if we stick together and fight as a united front. And CBL is 'acceptable' - even if it is a put-and-take hunting pursuit - because put-and-take hunting - generally - is NOT condemned by us all for the same reasons.

NB: I must add that, during a recent colloquium in the South African parliament, the organisation 'BRAND SOUTH AFRICA' assured South Africans that CBL had done nothing to destroy the image of South Africa overseas. So let's put THAT myth behind us!

In this regard I have to make mention of the fact that some custodians recently collaborated with a very active animal rights organisation in South Africa called “The Conservation Action Trust” (CAT for short) in the making of the animal rights propaganda film “Blood Lions”. The film purported to reflect the present status of the CBL industry, but it contained footage of CBL activities taken in the early years of this century - activities that have since been outlawed. Thus do the animal rightists deceitfully present their cause to the general public; but ‘we’ mustn't allow ourselves to be so easily fooled.

I was foolish enough to state (but later could not prove) in my communications with the custodians that I had heard (at a PHASA AGM) that two custodians (and I named them) - to demonstrate their virulent opposition to CBL - had not only collaborated in the making of the ‘Blood Lions’ animal rights propaganda film (which was, inter alia, anti-hunting) they had also contributed to the cost of the film's production. I was wrong in making the latter statement (because I couldn't prove it). I apologised, under threat of

prosecution, and was duly (and justifiably) hauled over the coals (by the custodians). I took my punishment and carried on with my life.

At about this time - when discussing the custodians' interaction with animal rights groups in South Africa - I was informed by the custodians' president (Stewart Dorrington) that the custodians had been given indications by leading lights in CAT that they were considering condoning 'trophy' hunting - but not other forms of hunting - and he considered that THAT was a step in the right direction. I gained the impression from him that as long as 'trophy hunting' could be condoned by these nefarious people, all other forms of hunting could be 'thrown under the bus'. Mr Dorrington has now explained in writing (in the last issue of the African Outfitter magazine) that the custodians are going to pursue their collaboration with the animal NGOs in order to seek common ground. I don't think he realises that for an animal rights organisation to condone hunting will be an act of financial suicide.

(2). In paragraph 3 of your letter you state: "Despite our long-standing relationship and despite our efforts to support PHASA's public relations efforts to cast African big game hunting in a positive light, our words against captive bred lions were first dismissed, then ignored altogether".

Comment: I repeat what I said in my first comment: On what grounds did SCI make those remarks? Has any member of SCI ever taken the trouble to investigate CBL in South Africa? Or did you take your cue from utterances by the custodians?

(3). In paragraph 4 of your letter you state: "In the months since your new constitution and direction has come into effect...." etc.

Comment: PHASA has certainly seen the negative reaction of its peers - the custodians - who saw fit to break from PHASA and form their own group. PHASA knows who they are and how they think - and PHASA quite rightly saw fit to ignore them. As I understand the figures: custodians number about 100. PHASA over 1000. So who is favouring 'the few'? South Africans, generally, favour PHASA because PHASA members clearly look after South Africa's interests FIRST. And as for the hunting associations in East Africa and elsewhere - where did *those* foreign professional hunting associations get their information from? The custodians? You refer to 'ethics' in this paragraph, too, but you don't define what you mean. You ridicule the fact that our courts declared CBL to be a legal activity. Doesn't THAT mean anything to SCI? All the anti-lion-hunting opposition - until the Custodians made their move - all came from the animal rightists. And

nobody saw fit to fight them? Instead, everybody lay down and rolled over - except the custodians who joined them.

Finally you make the statement and ask the question: *It (CBL) is legal, but is it right?* The answer to that question depends on your knowledge about CBL and your perspectives. Is SCI's knowledge about CBL secure enough to answer that question in good faith?

(4). In paragraph 5 of your letter. "In the months since your new constitution..."

Comment: There is a lot more at stake here than just trophy records and appearances on SCI shows. And what other organisations have done to mimic SCI's opposition to the CBL issue in South Africa, is not the main point. Unfortunately, SCI holds the hunting world over a barrel - because professional hunters need clients to take on trophy hunts - but I don't think it very honourable that SCI should insinuate threats like: "Do as we tell you to do and we will restore all your past benefits."

General.

After reading many advertisements for captive-bred wild animal hunting in America (and in many other parts of the world) - many of them alien species - I have to ask why has SCI been so adamantly disposed towards closing down - particularly - the CBL Industry in South Africa? It is important that the TGA be given a clear explanation why this should be so, because our very existence is focussed on helping South Africa's wildlife industry through such conflict situations; and keeping the public properly informed.

Appeasement of the animal rightist NGOs, however, will, in the end, get the custodians nowhere because the animal rightists' real objective is to stop ALL hunting *everywhere*. The animal rightists will give the custodians whatever sops they need to give them, to keep them happy - but they will *never* give up their goal of destroying all hunting totally. The custodians, therefore, are feeding a crocodile in the hope that they (the custodians) will be the last people who will get eaten!

Conclusion

I have one advantage over SCI. I have actually conducted a survey of the Captive Breeding of Lions Industry in South Africa - covering one whole month. And I am confident and comfortable with the opinions that I hold in this regard. It must be very difficult to hold a whole country to ransom - which is the reality of SCI's stance on this matter - about a subject that you know nothing about; or about which you have learned

only a smattering from animal rights propaganda and the opinions of people with vested interests in obtaining a negative result.

My recommendation to SCI, therefore, is this: Review the TGA's report (attached)- confidently - in the sure knowledge that the TGA's *bona fides* are in perfect harmony with your own hunting desiderata. Alternatively - if the TGA's *bona fides* are not enough for you - please arrange for the South Africa Predator Association (SAPA) to enable you to enjoy the privilege of the same kind of CBL inspection that the TGA carried out, so that you can draw your own conclusions.

This controversy has torn the South African hunting industry apart; and it has badly affected the economics of the country's entire wildlife industry. So, the TGA views this matter as being IMPORTANT - VERY IMPORTANT. Don't listen to other people's opinions - including ours if that be your inclination. If necessary, find out in your own way, what this business is all about. But, please, beware of the personal preference-opinions of people who have vested interests in negative outcomes.

The TGA, incidentally, has no affiliation with or vested interest in, any of the role players in his controversy!

If SCI wants to regain my respect; to earn the TGA's respect; and to restore the respect of many wavering South Africans - THIS is what you are going to have to do. You are going to have to become, yourselves, properly informed about CBL - because only THEN will you be able to talk about this industry with any kind of respectable authority; with your own tongue; and with no 'forked tongue'.

Please also be advised that the custodians' support from ordinary South Africans is not as glowing as the custodians make it out to be. It is my opinion that most South Africans favour PHASA; and as the South African general public learns more about the custodian's apparent motivations for splitting with PHASA, the less has become the public's empathy with them.

Over the next 80 years the human population of Africa (south of the Sahara Desert) is expected to increase six-fold (to four billion people). By the year 2100, therefore, human beings will have occupied every bit of currently unoccupied land in Africa outside the national parks (and they may even have annexed the national parks by then, too). So, evolutionary change in Africa is inevitable - in all sorts of spheres - whether we like it or not; and it would behove us all to take this reality into serious account.

The hunting of wild lions - as a viable industry - therefore, by the time 2100 comes along will, without doubt, have become ancient history. We have, however, 80+ years to play with the reality of improving captive-bred lion hunting and to mould a method of hunting them into something that is 'more ethically acceptable' to everybody. Captive-bred lion

hunting works - the way it has been conceived and developed in the CBL's infancy - but it could be made to work 'better' if we ALL apply ourselves resolutely to bring this about. But to make this possible, everybody will have to engage honestly with CBL.

Let's not avoid this issue. Let's embrace it!

It is crazy to ban the hunting of captive-bred lions on what appears to be the selfish personal-preference whims that condemn the industry now. It will need organisations with foresight and integrity to guide this new evolution - like SCI, DSC, WSF, CIC, IWCC, and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. It will also need individuals with great practical experience to put their shoulders to the wheel, too - like the PH's of PHASA. I believe an acceptable result *can* be achieved. It *can* be done and it *should* be done! Furthermore, I believe the effort to achieve such a desirable outcome should be supported by all of us, working in unison, together! And, if we are prepared to do this in an honest and open fashion, I am quite sure that SAPA will become our willing and enthusiastic partner.

Ron Thomson CEO - TRUE GREEN ALLIANCE

Cell: 072 587 1111

E-mail: magron@ripplesoft.co.za

TGA website: www.mahohboh.org

TGA Facebook: www.Facebook.com/TheTrueGreenAlliance

TGA Twitter: @TGA Mahohboh

