CHAPTER X

AMERICAN MEAT

Hot, fevered, frightened, trampled, bruised and torn; Frozen to death before the ax descends;
We kill these weary creatures, sore and worn, And eat them—with our friends.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Cattle Train."

Concern for the suffering of animals shipped over great distances prompted the
1877 founding of the American Humane Association (AHA) to coordinate national
action. For the next four decades, animal advocates struggled to promote enforcement of
the Twenty-Eight Hour Law. By the early twentieth century, the act of slaughter itself
assumed greater priority, and American animal protectionists pressed forward with both
issues. Unfortunately, campaigns to ameliorate the conditions of transportation and
slaughter proved largely ineffectual, as humane advocates faced off against some of the
most powerful forces in the American economy—ranchers, railroad magnates, and meat
barons.

The Transportation of Live Animals

For many years, advocates placed their hopes for the relief of animal suffering in
improved cattle cars. Yet the hope of material enhancements that might provide animals
with food and water inside the cars had not been fulfilled. Water troughs especially
proved a failure, and no viable drink-giving apparatus ever surfaced. The anticipated
result of refrigeration— the slaughter of animals close to the locations where they were
raised and the elimination of their suffering in transit—did not entirely displace live
shipment either. At century’s end, it remained an important part of the industry.¹

Worst of all, the Twenty-Eight Hour Law had been a dead letter since its passage
in 1873. In the early years, the Department of Agriculture had neither the means nor the
authority to take charge of the law’s administration. The situation improved after the
Bureau of Animal Industry [BAI], the veterinary division of the Department of
Agriculture, formed in 1883, with Daniel E. Salmon at its head. However, Salmon’s
agency would remain understaffed for many years, and its focus was on the etiology and
prevention of animal disease, not on standards of animal welfare.²

Although government authorities sometimes admonished the railroad companies
about infractions, the law caused them little trouble. No organization was more active
than the Women’s Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
(WPSPCA) in attempts to spur prosecutions. While others applauded her pioneering
work with the animal shelter, Caroline Earle White considered her organization’s efforts
to ameliorate the suffering of animals during transportation her “crowning achievement.”

From her lobbying in 1873, to the WPSPCA’s testing of the Twenty-Eight Hour Law

¹ Caroline Earle White, “Cattle Transportation,” IOZ 6 (Feb. 1897), 20-21; Roswell McCrea, The
Humane Movement: A Descriptive Survey (New York: Columbia University Press. 1910), 43-47; William
1924), 107-13; Richard Edelmann, and John R. Mohler and Adolph Eichhorn, Textbook of Meat Hygiene
(Phila.: Lea and Febiger, 1933), 25-28; and Animal Welfare Institute [AWI], Animals and Their Legal

² Congressional committees, representatives of the BAI and a Columbia University scholar joined
humanitarians in judging the law a dead letter. See “Amendment to the Twenty-Eight Hour Law,” 59th
Congress, Report No. 2661 (Mar. 27, 1906), 4; B. P. Wende, “The Enforcement of the 28-Hour Law,”
Industry of the United States Department of Agriculture (Washington, DC: 1924), 26-27; and Shultz,
Humane Movement, 111.
through planned investigations along the major routes in the 1880s, to the introduction of
minimum speed legislation in 1910, White was involved in all phases of the campaign.3

White was quick to react to signals that government agencies wanted to pursue
vigorous enforcement, as in July 1895 when Secretary of Agriculture J. Sterling Morton
issued a general bulletin insisting on compliance. Shortly thereafter, the Department of
Agriculture began to place special agents in the field to gather evidence of transgressions
for eventual prosecution by the Department of Justice.4 In late 1895, WPSPCA agents
investigated a complaint about a carload of horses that arrived in terrible condition after
two days without food or water. The United States Attorney, acting on the agents' evidence, secured a conviction of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad.5

White also responded with energy to the 1897 call by BAI director Daniel Salmon
for cooperation between the government and humane societies to enforce the Twenty-
Eight Hour Law. Among other actions, the WPSPCA joined with its counterpart in
Buffalo for a surveillance of railway companies that improved compliance for a time.
During the period 1897-1900, WPSPCA Agent Thomas Carlisle accumulated enough
evidence of violations by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company that the
United States Attorney for Pennsylvania felt comfortable in prosecuting five separate

Inquirer, 8 Sept. 1916, 5.

Cruelty to Animals Archive, Philadelphia, PA [PSPCA-PA], SBK 1880-1902; American Humane
Association [AHA], Ann. R. 1897, 16-17; "Cattle in Transportation," ODA 52 (Jan. 1920), 125; and

5 "The Woman's Branch of the SPCA vs. the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad," JOZ 6 (Jan.
1897), 3-4; "Cattle Transportation," JOZ 6 (Mar. 1897), 30; and "Editorial," JOZ 7 (Aug. 1898), 93.
cases. The suits targeted the company as the last road to handle the animals in the course of their journey from the West. In 1901, the government fined the Reading $500 for repeated violations of the law. Subsequently, the WPSPCA sent agent Carlisle on an extended tour of the Southwest. The joint collaboration gave Salmon sufficient evidence for 1,200 prosecutions, and generated considerable anger on the part of cattle shippers and owners. By 1903, the WPSPCA had been responsible for more successful convictions (seven) than any society, despite the frequent reluctance of the United States Attorney to pursue cases.6

Railroads and shippers responded to Salmon's call by launching an effort to extend the 28-hour limit to forty. Their campaign began in 1897 with a senate bill to amend the original legislation of 1873. After years of ignoring and violating the Twenty-Eight Hour Law, they now determined to revise it, relieving themselves of both the stigma and the risk of unlawful practices. Humane advocates played an important role in defeating the bill, and a subsequent attempt in 1899 failed as well.7

The stock raisers argued that the requirement that animals be unloaded resulted in greater suffering overall. In their view, cattle accustomed to infrequent watering on the

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6 AHA, Ann. R. 1898, 32-33; Editorial, JOZ 7 (Aug. 1898), 93; AHA, Ann. R. 1899, 30-32; "Kindness to Animals," JOZ 9 (1899), 8, 27; AHA, Ann. R. 1900, 67-68; "Fine Imposed in Cattle Case," Phila. Ledger, 21 May 1901, 9; "Fine Imposed in Cattle Case," JOZ 10 (June 1901), 65; Margaret Halvey, "History of the Cattle Transportation Act," JOZ 12 (Mar. 1903), 37; and Caroline Earle White, "A Good Move," JOZ 14 (Oct. 1905), 115. Caroline Earle White described her agents' diligence and impact in AHA, Ann. R. 1903, 38. While Salmon apparently appreciated cooperation, his agency was not prepared to implement the AHA's proposed system of stationing government agents "at all shipping points . . . to telegraph to the next shipping and feeding point all shipments and arrivals by car number." Such coordination was also beyond the means of the humane societies, although they thought it critical for the identification of systematic violations of the law. See AHA, Ann. R. 1900, 36-43.

range did not require forced watering once or twice in 24 hours. They also believed that cattle fared badly in repeatedly having to move in and out of the cars. They complained about the condition of rest areas maintained by the railroads. Such claims did not impress animal advocates like the AHA's James Brown, who reminded the livestock men that properly equipped stable cars would make unloading and reloading unnecessary."

The interests of stock raisers and railroads diverged at many points, and the railroad operators frequently enjoyed the upper hand. Compelled by the original legislation to establish appropriate facilities to load, unload, water, feed, and rest animals, the railroads frequently took advantage by demanding excessive remuneration. Because the law gave the roads a lien on the livestock to secure their fees, they had stock raisers and shippers at their mercy. They did not embrace the use of palace stock cars equipped with hay racks and water troughs, because these cars usually had to be hauled back empty, unsuited as they were for other freight. Inanimate goods that brought higher profits always took precedence over less lucrative cattle shipments. At least one livestock agent told the WSPCA that his road observed the law but was always losing business to other lines that did not. Finally, many carriers simply found it easier to pay the fines for violation of the law than to conduct their operations according to its strictures.9

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In 1900, J. W. Springer, president of the National Live Stock Association (NLSA), presented the growers' case for extension of the 28-hour limit to an AHA audience. Springer reminded them that twenty-five years earlier the growers had paid by the carload, not by a 100 lbs. standard, and that this led to cramming of animals into the freight cars. Now, he asserted, the cars were much better from the standpoint of comfort and feeding. Water, he admitted, remained a problem; there was no way to provide clean water either on board or in the substandard pens and facilities along the roads. Springer did not convince the AHA delegates, who voted to oppose any modification to the Twenty-Eight Hour Law.\textsuperscript{10}

Through 1905, AHA delegates occasionally met with stock raisers to discuss their differences, which proved insurmountable. The growers insisted on repealing or amending the law. The AHA committee members favored stricter enforcement of the Twenty-Eight Hour Law, and additional pressure on the railroads to improve their time schedule on live animal shipments. In addition, they argued that the time specified for rest--five hours--be expanded to between twelve and eighteen hours on every shipment. Growers and shippers, the AHA contended, would benefit from the increased survival and profit rates that would ensue under a humane system.\textsuperscript{11}

The attempt by non-profit organizations to regulate interstate transportation of livestock was confounded by the difficulty of pinning responsibility for improper loading and shipping on a guilty party. Humanitarians found that shippers, railroads, growers,

\textsuperscript{10} AHA, Ann. R. 1900, 49-56, 70-72.

\textsuperscript{11} AHA, Ann. R. 1905, 11-16.
and their employees often stood in the way of proper enforcement by failing to cooperate with humane agents in efforts to establish the facts about any given shipment. In 1903, AHA President James Brown noted that to ensure enforcement “it was necessary to know just when and where the live stock was at the end of the 28 hours, and whether, in the meantime, the conditions of the law had been complied with. In order to obtain this information it must have either been obtained from the transportation company or from those attending the live stock,” neither of whom were “friendly to the enforcement of the law.” Moreover, experience had shown that United States Marshals, who could enforce the laws, were “largely under the influence of live stock and transportation companies,” and not inclined to take action.\(^{12}\)

The AHA continued to employ at least one agent, Levi Doty, sending him out for three trips in 1901. He subsequently reported that watering of cattle was virtually nonexistent, even in the cars outfitted with troughs. According to Doty, stockmen believed it cost more to feed and care for animals than to absorb the loss of those who died from neglect or cruelty.\(^{13}\)

By now, it was clear that the NLSA was determined to secure an extension amendment. In fact, by 1900, the introduction of bills to extend the Twenty-Eight Hour Law had become an annual affair for the railroad companies and the stock raisers.

Things reached a boiling point in 1902, when, White and others charged Representative James R. Mann (R-IL) of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce

\(^{12}\) AHA, Ann. R. 1903, 9; and AHA, Ann. R. 1904, 7.

\(^{13}\) AHA, Ann. R. 1901, 35-41, 45-46.
with deceiving his colleagues by stating that humane societies favored the legislation. Animal protectionists were able to fight off passage of the bill in the Senate after it passed in the House of Representatives.\(^{14}\)

In 1905, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson issued another order for the vigorous enforcement of the Twenty-Eight Hour Law, and before long inspectors found 2,000 violations. At the same time, however, the BAI endorsed the view of cattlemen that, in the case of range cattle, strict compliance with the law resulted in greater hardships for the animals and additional losses for their owners. The agency’s position was that a 36-hour limit, not to include the considerable time spent in loading and unloading, was acceptable, provided that a reasonable rate of speed was maintained.\(^{15}\)

In opposition, William Stillman maintained that when the 28-hour rule legislation passed in 1873 it provided an exception for instances when animals were carried “in cars, boats, or other vessels, in which they can and do have proper food, water, space, and opportunity to rest.” At that time, Stillman noted, no cattle cars that met these criteria were in use. Now, the stockmen were claiming that the widespread use of suitable cars


made the rest stops unnecessary, but Stillman pointed out that their use was far from universal, especially in the west.16

In 1906, in another attempt to lengthen to 36 hours the permissible period that animals could be shipped without food, rest, or water, livestock interests again sought support from the United States Congress. This time, the stockmen framed their arguments artfully, designating their proposal “A bill to prevent cruelty to animals while in transit by railroad or other means of transportation.” Among other tactics, the industry retained Mortimer Levering, a one-time president of the Lafayette Humane Society, to advance its position.17 While acknowledging that enforcement had been quite rare during the past 35 years, Levering asserted that the Twenty-Eight Hour Law was obsolete. He conceded the value of the law four decades earlier, when primitive conditions, rude handlers, wild cattle, arbitrary freight rates, and heavy overloading were the rule. Now, however, railroad conditions were improved, live freight rates were lower, the animals were gently handled, and incentives for overloading were removed. Rest and refreshment could now be provided to animals as they rode, and did not require unloading. Moving to the attack, Levering asserted that the law led to hardships for the cattle. The layover stations where rest and care could be provided were in poor condition. The enforcement of a strict hour limit sometimes necessitated the unloading of animals within a few miles


of points of departure and destination. The process of unloading made some cruelty and suffering inevitable.18

Quite apart from the claims Levering made about the welfare of animals, his testimony acknowledged one other rationale behind the attempt to expand the time limit. The requirement to provide rest and care made shipment of live cargo peculiarly unsuited and highly inconvenient to the timetables and efficiencies of a rational enterprise like the railroad. The railroads were in the habit of holding up livestock shipments on the sidings whenever dead freight paying better rates could be expedited.19

Animal protectionists, quick to point out that the competition for profitable traffic lay at the heart of the proposed amendment, fought hard but in vain. The AHA could not afford to pay even one lobbyist in Washington, and humane advocates proved no match for wealthy and well-connected adversaries. The Secretary of Agriculture and many of the BAI’s inspectors took the railroads’ side as well. In the aftermath, William Stillman wrote to President Roosevelt to ask for an investigative committee, contrasting the lack of attention paid to transportation with the action taken after the scandal concerning meat production outraged public opinion. Referring to the Federal Food and Drugs Act, Stillman asked, “What avail will be the regulation of sanitary conditions in packing

18 Levering, Twenty-Eight Hour Law, 5-11. Humane advocates conceded that enforcement of the Twenty-Eight Hour Law might sometimes result in greater hardship and severe treatment for livestock, but held fast against extension of permissible time limits. Instead, they proposed that “livestock shipment should be given right of way over dead freight under all circumstances, and that the speed of the livestock trains should be practically doubled.” “Amendment to the Twenty-Eight Hour Law,” 59th Congress, Report No. 2661 (Mar. 27, 1906), 2-3.

houses if stock is delivered in a fevered and poisonous condition because of excessive hardship and privation during transportation?  

The passage of the 1906 amendment, while greeted with ambivalence by humanitarians, was nevertheless accompanied by vigorous attempts on the part of the BAI to ensure compliance. A few years later, Stillman reported that the 1906 law had been violated 1,200 times between August 1906 and January 1908, resulting in 250 prosecutions. In 1911, the issue reached the Supreme Court, which ruled that railroads must unload cattle according to the law. By June 1918, there were 2,831 cases pending in United States courts, but, in a number of opinions, judges subordinated animal welfare concerns to the importance of protecting owners' and shippers' interests.

Humanitarians and government bureaucrats alike recognized that a minimum speed provision would ensure that cattle would be carried promptly through to market and not held up for better paying freight. In January 1910, responding to the pleas of the AHA, the ASPCA, and other organizations, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) and Representative Irving Wanger (R-PA) introduced legislation in their respective bodies

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that would have required trains carrying animals to maintain an average minimum speed of sixteen miles per hour. In 1913, the AHA was still trying to get this legislation passed. In the meantime, the cattle industry moved to promote retrogressive legislation at the state level as well. In 1913 and 1914, both the Ohio and New York legislatures considered extension bills. Ultimately, determined humane opposition prevented their passage.  

Fifty years of activism on the question of animal suffering in transit brought mixed results. For at least a decade after its passage in 1873, there was very little effort to enforce the Twenty-Eight Hour Law. Not even the financial losses resulting from shrinkage, condemned meat, and animal death were sufficient to override what Roswell McCrea termed the “seeming economy in overcrowding and in a minimum of care.” The deaths of animals in transit were part of the costs of doing business.  

After the BAI formed, the law began to receive greater attention. However, the agency’s purpose was the control and suppression of diseases that threatened the livestock industry. During the 1880s, humane advocates secured court opinions that guaranteed the constitutionality of the law, even as they pushed for humane cattle-cars and enhanced facilities. In the mid-1890s, the BAI began to participate in enforcement actions, even collaborating with the most diligent humane societies. In time, the regulated interests responded with a sustained and successful campaign to extend the

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23 McCrea, Humane Movement, 43.
permissible time animals could remain in transit without rest. The 1906 revision gave
cattle owners an even broader discretion over the amount of time animals spent in
confinement during transportation.24

By World War I, the BAI had integrated enforcement action with a program to
encourage railway companies to construct properly situated stockyards with suitably
equipped cattle pens. BAI officials believed that this had made a substantial difference in
reducing the suffering and death of animals in transit. In 1922, while continuing to
castigate railway firms, shippers, and meatpackers for their negligence, William Stillman
credited the BAI for its efforts. In the fifteen years since passage of the 1906 legislation,
he noted, the BAI had prosecuted over 11,500 cases and collected penalties exceeding
$700,000.25

The widespread adoption of the motor vehicle made the debate on extension and
enforcement irrelevant, because the Twenty-Eight Hour Law did not apply to animals
transported interstate by trucks. The movement of livestock by railroad steadily
diminished in the decades following World War I, and proposals to expand the law’s
ambit to include the transportation of livestock in trucks went nowhere. For the better
part of the twentieth century, animals in transit to slaughter enjoyed no protection at all.

“The Great Cruelty”

In the early 1900s, humanitarians began to divide their attention between the
transportation and handling of livestock and the act of slaughter. The latter issue had

24 Ibid., 43.

received attention from early campaigners, but, in the era of industrialized meat
production, it took on new urgency because of the unprecedented scale upon which the
killing of animals took place. Disturbed as they were by trends in industrial meatpacking,
however, humanitarians were ultimately ineffectual in their efforts to promote slaughter
reform.

Their inefficacy was understandable given the extraordinary transformation of the
forces they had to confront. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the
transportation, handling, and slaughter of animals were consolidated as part of a modern
and highly rationalized industry. Packinghouse industrialists maximized and accelerated
meat production through the introduction of factory-style techniques, converting animal
bodies into myriad products and secondary by-products. At the same time, the increasing
distance of humans from the sites of production and slaughter removed the plight of
animals from public view.

Even before the advent of the industrialized slaughtering facility, humanitarians
sought to influence practices within small-scale and local slaughtering establishments,
helping to spark both public and scientific debates over the deathblow. In November
1866, Henry Bergh asked several New York scientists whether anesthetic agents could be
employed without corrupting an animal’s flesh. Professor John C. Draper responded that
the ASPCA’s objects “would be much more nearly attained by devising swifter modes of
death.” A. C. Castle, a medical doctor, also recommended a speedy death as the best
reform. Castle took offense at slaughtering methods that involved hoisting cattle slowly
into mid-air by the hind legs, leaving them to hang there, and ultimately striking them
several times with an axe to produce death. Drawing on hospital experience with human
victims of spinal cord injury, Castle argued for a procedure that quickly severed the spinal cord close to the occipital bone.\textsuperscript{26}

The pain suffered by animals killed for food concerned English and European humanitarians as well, and a range of proposed solutions emerged from British and continental physiological laboratories. Electricity as a killing method had a number of enthusiasts in the years following Benjamin Franklin's much-publicized experiments upon animals and birds. In the 1860s, an Italian physiologist proposed a method that forced air into the eyes of animals, creating pressure on the brain that killed them in a few seconds with little apparent pain. During the same period, French scientists experimented unsuccessfully with surgical section of the spine as a swift and painless means of slaughter. In 1876, a \textit{New York World} editorial commended a procedure involving the swift puncture of the \textit{medula oblongata} to bring all vital functions to an instantaneous halt.\textsuperscript{27}

The "nape stab" or "pithing" method was popular in Cincinnati, where, in 1886, a butcher explained how he walked down a line of penned bullocks, stabbing each in the neck in order to sever the spinal cord. Popular for a time (this was the method used at Communipaw when Bergh first went there), the nape stab ultimately lost its appeal. For one thing, the procedure demanded levels of knowledge and dexterity that most


slaughterers lacked. Over time, humane advocates and others also learned that the partial severing of the spinal column near the upper vertebrae left the animal paralyzed but conscious. The animal would feel the subsequent cut of the throat for bleeding, and die a slow and painful death.  

In the Brighton slaughterhouse district at Boston, the standard practice through the 1880s involved shooting animals and then cutting their throats. Slaughterers drove animals into a series of stalls, the foremost of which was reserved for killing. After the steer dropped insensible, the spring-loaded floor was triggered, placing the animal at the feet of employees who cut his throat and dragged the body away. A sliding door released the next animal into the killing compartment and the process continued. The MSPCA endorsed this method and distributed rifles to butchers.

Animal protectionists in Philadelphia also tried to instigate reforms. In the mid-1870s, many of the city’s slaughterhouses relied on the nape stab, positioning a man on a plank that ran over the top of the cattle pens. The slaughterer drove an iron spear down into the space between the base of the animal’s skull and spinal column. Then he or another man would hit the animal in the head with an ax to finish the task. Humane advocates wanted to place a man armed with a poleax on a beam overhead. The hope was that one blow would be enough to kill or at least deprive an animal of sensation.

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This expectation was disappointed, unfortunately, for the slaughterer often failed to deliver the killing blow the first time around, and more attempts were usually required. If an injured animal moved away, the man sometimes moved on to strike another one instead of finishing the kill.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{Shehitah} represented a much greater challenge. Although_humanitarians were virtually unanimous in their abhorrence of Jewish slaughter, they concluded that interference with Jewish practice would antagonize Jews and make them defensive with no good result. On whether slitting the throat rendered an animal insensible, there was uncertainty and disagreement. Most agreed, however, that the practice of hoisting an animal of 1,600 pounds or more into the air with a chain and windlass, leaving the creature to dangle by one leg in mid-air for a few excruciating moments while the \textit{shochet} prepared, was "highly objectionable." Reflecting upon its early efforts, Mary Lovell recalled that the WPSPCA had given special attention to the practice of "throwing the animal by putting a rope or chain around its legs and pulling till it falls to the ground, then twisting its head around and cutting its throat." WPSPCA agents were successful in promoting the substitution of a rope for the lacerating chain, and in having it placed around two legs instead of one.\textsuperscript{31}

One approach to humane slaughter reform that garnered considerable support in Europe and England originated in 1871, when a Frenchman named Bruneau introduced


his eponymous mask. Bruneau's mask was made of leather or copper, with a round metal socket through which a sliding bolt could travel. Slaughterers tied the mask to an animal's head to cover the eyes. The hole came directly over the weak spot in the center of the forehead. With one heavy blow of the mallet the slaughterer could drive the bolt straight through the hole into the animal's brain. Bruneau's invention never caught on in the United States. The PSPCA carried out some experiments in Philadelphia during the mid-1880s, but agents found it difficult to secure the masks on the animals. Moreover, White and other observers thought the killing itself a painful and lengthy process.\(^2\)

At about the same time that Bruneau's invention surfaced, the English sanitarian Dr. Benjamin W. Richardson initiated discussion of options for humane slaughter, including the administration of narcotic vapors through funnel masks to render the animals insensible, and death by electrocution. Richardson favored the use of gases, because electricity appeared to inflict a "violent shock" upon the animals. Some years later, he declared his belief that carbonic oxide gas could be used to put sheep, swine, calves, and poultry to sleep before slaughter, without rendering the flesh unfit for consumption. Richardson argued that this method would overcome Jewish objections to

the retention of blood, for the animals bled just as freely as they did when no narcotics were employed. 33

Bergh remained hopeful about the application of electricity to the problem. By 1883, however, general enthusiasm about electrocution of animals for use as food had waned in light of Richardson's experiments. "The blood could not be extracted," a reporter noted. For the same reason, "animals killed by a lightning flash, even though not charred or otherwise structurally injured, cannot be used for food, but ordinarily have to be buried." 34

In 1885, the PSPCA appointed a committee to recommend improvements in slaughtering methods used in Philadelphia. The committee solicited the opinion of local scientists and authorities elsewhere. Dr. Charles Myers, a veterinarian, thought the Bruneau mask the best method, so long as the animal's throat was cut quickly after the blow was struck. Another veterinarian, Dr. William Zuill of the University of Pennsylvania, recommended strict supervision of slaughterhouse work and the closing of slaughterhouse doors. In a presentation to colleagues at the College of Physicians, Dr.


After some years of frustration, the WPSPCA launched an attempt to stop the routine abuse of animals at Philadelphia's principal abattoir. As White described the situation, “twelve to fifteen cattle are put together in a pen, and the killer, with a heavy sledge, stands upon a beam above. He singles out a victim and, attracting his attention by a noise, aims a blow at the animal as he looks up. Very often this is misdirected, for with a dozen excited steers in one pen, wildly pushing each other, it is most difficult to direct a blow with accuracy.” Under these circumstances, the slaughterer frequently dealt a glancing blow, possibly in the eye or some other part of the head. This set the animal, maddened by pain, “dashing around the pen, filling the other cattle with alarm and terror. But no time can be lost in putting him out of misery and the killer singles out another victim.” White's husband Richard, the WPSPCA's counsel, initiated a prosecution of one company, setting forth as evidence an instance in which the slaughterer had struck one steer eleven times before killing him, but White suspended the prosecution in exchange for the construction of new arrangements for slaughter, which involved the use
of a separate compartment into which only one animal at a time would be drawn. In this situation the animal could not easily avoid a second blow if it were necessary.\textsuperscript{36}

By the 1890s, experimentation and debate led inexorably to the use of firearms, for shooting through the brain remained the surest means to render an animal unconscious. The pioneering steps, taken in England and Germany, centered on humane stunners. A stunning pistol had emerged as early as the 1870s in Switzerland, and, by 1902, when a German donor offered a money prize for the best humane killer, all of the winning entries were modified pistols. Most fired a blank cartridge that drove a punch into an animal’s brain; the punch returned automatically to the barrel. After a campaign designed to overcome concerns about safety and efficiency, bolt shooters of various kinds were adopted for use at virtually all German facilities.\textsuperscript{37}

In North America, however, the volume of animals slaughtered and the convenience of the sledgehammer seemed to preclude the introduction of similar devices. Caroline Earle White brought back one model—the Greener Cattle Killer, a pistol that projected a firing pin—after a trip to England. However, until 1911, she could not persuade even one slaughtering establishment to explore its use. Among other objections, she told one AHA convention, butchers were afraid that the gun might


explore and injure them. Others cited the difficulty in getting wild range cattle to permit the accompanying mask to be placed on their heads.\textsuperscript{38}

With the advent of large-scale production and centralization, responsibility for the conversion of animals into meat passed from smaller abattoirs to immense slaughtering and packing plants. In 1903, disturbed by firsthand observations of industrial slaughter in Chicago, Albert Leffingwell urged his AHA colleagues to make it a reform priority. "An animal makes the long journey up the inclined plane," Leffingwell reported, "it reaches the butcher; its throat is cut; and then--I am afraid before it loses consciousness--it is allowed to drop into a steaming vat, and you see the creature struggling in boiling water. It may be but a moment or two alive; all struggles are not the result of consciousness; but all the same, it is a most horrible sight."\textsuperscript{39}

In 1904, the AHA committee gave its report, emphasizing the lack of skilled "knockers" in slaughtering plants. These men frequently failed to kill the animals on the first blows, and panic ensued as they attempted to strike the cattle again. The runway and chute system did not always separate the animals, so they sometimes saw others being killed. The noise, odor, and residuum of killing pervaded the workplace, contributing further to the animals' distress.\textsuperscript{40}

In the large-scale setting, where workers killed between fifty and one hundred animals per hour, kosher slaughter became especially objectionable. By custom, no

\textsuperscript{38} White, "Our Vandalism," 35; Caroline Earle White, "Humane Slaughtering," JOZ 20 (June 1911), 206; and AHA, Ann. R. 1903, 55-61.

\textsuperscript{39} AHA, Ann. R. 1903, 60-61; and AHA, Ann. R. 1907, 32-33.

\textsuperscript{40} AHA, Ann. R. 1904, 26-29.
stunning blows were struck; instead, animals were hoisted up and tossed onto the killing floor, where they lay in three or four inches of congealed blood for a few minutes until the shochet dispatched them. AHA investigators urged the packinghouses to employ additional laborers in order to execute shehitah by the slower European system, using slings and casting animals to the floor.41

In 1908, Henry Bergh, Jr. undertook a subsequent inquiry for the AHA and the ASPCA, which put up $500 for a humane slaughtering device. By this time a British investigation had concluded that the poleax in the hands of a skilled man was still the best method of stunning. The Bergh committee noted that, while experiments with humane cattle killers were underway, the English were slow to adopt these devices, lagging behind European nations.42

Among those devices the ASPCA tested was a pistol developed by Hiram Percy Maxim, whose father invented the automatic recoil machine gun.43 Bergh, Jr. entered the competition himself, with a pneumatic device in which trigger pressure hurled a javelin. His invention promised "rapidity of fire . . . accuracy in striking at the desired point; economy of operation . . . and efficiency in producing instant insensibility." However, both the Bergh and Maxim devices failed under test conditions. The $500 prize went to

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the Behr Waffenwerke, manufacturers of the Behr Colt Shooting Pistol, used in 700 German slaughterhouses.\textsuperscript{44}

Over time, the MSPCA’s Francis Rowley emerged as the prime mover in efforts to promote humane standards of slaughter. Initially, however, advocates like Rowley were less concerned with the great packinghouses then coming under the regime of federal inspection. Instead, they focused on the still numerous smaller slaughtering operations where methods and conditions remained comparable to those Henry Bergh had confronted a half century earlier.\textsuperscript{45}

In 1911, Rowley toured European abattoirs for a first-hand look. In Paris, he visited a number of establishments built at least fifty years before. In these, the use of a leather mask to prevent animals from seeing the signs of imminent destruction was common. Noticeably absent from the premises he visited (in both France and England) were the overhead trolley and the practice of hauling cattle up by the hind leg. Instead, animals were laid on their sides on a low rack where their throats were cut. For a time the French had experimented with electrocution, but they discarded this method


apparently because (as Benjamin Ward Richardson's investigations had suggested) it
impeded the process of bleeding animals out.⁴⁶

Rowley took encouragement from his observation of an experiment, sponsored by
the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and the British
Admiralty, at a naval station. Here, researchers compared the "humane killer," a pistol
that fired a blank cartridge that propelled a bolt of steel into an animal's brain, with the
traditional system of the poleax. It was evident that the use of the bolt pistol could do
much to lessen the probability of suffering that usually resulted when inexperienced men
employed the poleax. Nevertheless, Rowley noted, expert butchers involved in the
experiment regarded the new instrument with great suspicion.⁴⁷

During his trip abroad, Rowley also conferred with Christopher Cash, an English
advocate, who had financed a model abattoir in an effort to hasten the achievement of
humane standards. Like other humanitarians, Rowley thought that Germany was in the
lead. There, many municipalities owned and managed public abattoirs with humane
measures and high sanitary standards. On the eve of World War I, Germany had 900
municipal slaughterhouses, to which all of the animals destined for the food supply in any
community were brought for inspection and slaughter.⁴⁸

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⁴⁶ "To Use Electricity in French Abattoirs," Phila. Inquirer, 19 Jan 1908, PSPCA-PA, SBK 1904-
Feb. 1909; Francis H. Rowley, "The Abattoirs of Paris," ODA 44 (Aug. 1911), 40; and White, "Our
Vandalism," 35.

⁴⁷ Francis H. Rowley, "Experiments in Slaughtering," ODA 44 (Sept. 1911), 56; and idem, "The
Abattoirs of London," ODA 44 (Oct. 1911), 71. The English did not use the mask.

⁴⁸ On the German slaughterhouse reform movement, see Christopher Cash and Hugo Heiss, Our
Slaughterhouse System and The German Abattoir (London: 1904); Oscar Schwarz, Public Abattoirs and
Castle Markets (London: Ice and Cold Storage Publishing Co., n. d.); and Francis H. Rowley, "Reform in
Slaughtering," ODA 46 (Apr. 1914), 168. At war's end, Rowley pointed to German superiority in humane
Before going abroad, Rowley had launched the first serious effort at legislation to control the moment of slaughter. However, corporate and religious antagonism to humane innovation quickly confounded the MSPCA’s humane slaughter initiative. Packinghouse interests continually rejected methods that threatened to slow the pace or efficiency of transportation and slaughter, and defenders of shehitah adamantly advanced their claim to religious freedom.49

While quick to assure all parties of his lack of prejudice against the Jewish faith, Rowley was a vocal and persistent critic of shehitah. For Rowley, the bottom line was stunning at the time of slaughter and before any use of the knife. "It can be scientifically proved," he told an AHA convention audience, "that by the Jewish rite no more blood is actually drawn from the carcass of the animal than when stunning has immediately preceded the bleeding." To his mind, this removed any reason for adhering to ancient custom.50

Jewish authorities did not relinquish their objections, however. In 1912, packers, rabbinical authorities, shippers, and butchers scuttled Rowley’s humane slaughter initiative in the Massachusetts Assembly. Such confrontations did not prevent animal protectionists and Jewish religious authorities from civil discussion of their differences. In 1913, and again in 1922, rabbis and scholars appeared at the AHA’s convention to


50 AHA, Ann. R. 1912, 30-31. In Boston and Los Angeles, the humane societies were able to persuade slaughterers to deliver a deathblow just after the shochet had slit an animal’s throat. See "Kosher Killing," ODA 45 (Aug. 1912), 41; and N. W. Zimmer to William O. Stillman, 28 May 1912, in JOZ 21 (Aug. 1912), 363.
discuss shehitah, but neither side to the debate conceded any real ground in this or subsequent exchanges. 51

In 1920, the MSPCA attempted to reform slaughtering practices in Massachusetts again, introducing a bill that required the stunning before slaughter of all animals used for food except for fish and fowl. The bill also prohibited the hoisting or hauling up of animals without stunning. This time, the legislation included a specific exemption for Jewish ritual slaughter of animals destined for the kosher market, and rabbinical authorities promised not to attack the bill. Massachusetts's packers, on the other hand, vehemently opposed the legislation, claiming that it would so slow down the slaughtering process as to make it unprofitable. The bill did not go through. 52

Through the 1920s, humane societies continued to sponsor competitions that aimed at the development of a merciful instrument for slaughter. In 1922, the ASPCA offered a $10,000 prize for a humane slaughtering device, and, in late 1923, officials announced the winner of the competition, which drew 600 entries. Unfortunately, complications in moving from prototype to production, in gaining patent rights, and in selling the slaughtering firms of Chicago on the device, all served to diminish the ASPCA's enthusiasm. 53


52 "Our New Bill for Humane Slaughtering," ODA 52 (Mar. 1920), 152; and "Our Humane Slaughter Bill," ODA 52 (May 1920), 184.

53 ASPCA Board Minutes, 8 Nov. 1923 and 6 Dec. 1923, and 6 Nov. 1924 and 4 Dec. 1924, MB 6, ASPCA-NY; and "The Great Cruelty," ODA 56 (Oct. 1923), 67.
Packers found fault with all of the proposed innovations animal protectionists offered. The large slaughtering concerns rejected the captive bolt system as impractical for range cattle. Captive bolt pistols, they argued, necessitated considerable time and effort in restraining the animals, a difficult challenge in the case of part-wild cattle that made up the majority of animals slaughtered in the United States. In the case of calves, sheep, and hogs, industry representatives asserted, the advantages of stunning before "sticking" were negligible. Most cattle, and virtually all sheep and swine, were hit with a sledgehammer, raised by the shackle and hoist method, and left to hang as their throats were cut and they bled to death.54

For some years, humane advocates had looked to electrocution as a possible solution. They tempered their enthusiasm after a series of experiments conducted in an Omaha slaughterhouse in 1923 resulted in gross suffering.55 However, interest in electricity as a means for stunning food animals before slaughter revived after a series of experiments in Germany during 1927. German engineers had appropriated the concept from a French physician who had been experimenting with it to render patients unconscious before surgery. In January 1929, Francis Rowley and Sydney Coleman met with representatives of The Institute of American Meat Packers (precursor to the American Meat Institute) to observe the new method in a test conducted at the Armour

54 AHA, Ann. R. 1922, 30-31; "A Remarkable Admission." ODA 56 (Mar. 1924), 147; and Edelmann et al, Textbook of Meat Hygiene, 39. Some large packers remained dismissive of the captive bolt pistol when humane slaughter surfaced as a subject of federal legislation in the 1950s.

Company in Chicago, where consulting engineer James Andrew had developed a device on the model of the German apparatus.56

Andrew’s device employed a low voltage, direct current, interrupted between 8,000 and 10,000 times per minute. The circuit was completed by applying the current through a sponge attached to the animal’s forehead. Once the current was turned on, the animal dropped to the floor with eyes closed and was removed for bleeding. Death from loss of blood occurred without any of the twenty cattle employed regaining consciousness. Observers saw no indication of animals suffering.57

The device seemed to render animals unconscious long enough to complete the bleeding process. More importantly, they appeared to be insensible to pain during the bleeding, a concern that had haunted the subject since the disturbing experiments at Omaha. As Rowley recounted, “It had been held for years that a voltage sufficient to destroy consciousness would make impossible the proper flow of blood, and that, the blood not properly drained from the body, the flesh would not keep. On the other hand, a low voltage that would permit the proper bleeding would simply paralyze the motor muscles but leave the victim entirely unconscious.”58


The Institute representatives expressed satisfaction at the new device and asked animal protectionists to trust the industry’s sincerity about the development of new methods. From this point onward, Rowley, one of its harshest critics during the period 1910-1920, adopted a highly conciliatory posture toward the meat industry. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the MSPCA president counseled patience and promised colleagues that resolution of the humane slaughter problem was near.⁵⁹

In the years that followed, the packers found numerous reasons for not moving forward with electrocution, citing, among other things, challenges in perfecting Andrew’s device and the difficulties in applying the method to swine and poultry. Rowley presumably spoke for packers when he suggested that a significant expenditure of time and money would be necessary to “change over the whole plan of the killing pens with the complicated machinery employed and to do this without too seriously interrupting the entire organization” of the industry.⁶⁰

Rowley’s counsel of forbearance did not seem to pay off for animals or animal protectionists, for another twenty five years passed between the time of the Armour experiments and the 1956-1958 campaign for a federal humane slaughter requirement. As it turned out, industrial packinghouse interests lost their enthusiasm for electrocution after additional studies found that electrical currents caused the retention of blood in various parts of the muscle tissue (from the bursting of blood vessels or tiny hemorrhages), giving the meat an undesirable appearance. In the case of swine,


moreover, the tiny blood markings on the meat generated confusion for postmortem
inspection by the Federal Meat Inspection Service, since they were indistinguishable
from those present in several hog diseases.\footnote{Unpublished Proceedings, Conference on Proposed Humane Slaughtering Legislation:
Implications for Shechita and Jewish Community Relations, Oct. 20-21, 1957, 13-14, in Box 3099601,
Humane Society of the United States Historical Files, Humane Society of the United States, Gaithersburg,
MD [HSUS Archives].}

In 1958, looking back after the successful passage of the Humane Slaughter Act,
Fred Myers of The Humane Society of the United States expressed his conviction that
"the humane slaughter victory could have been won a quarter of a century ago." Myers
deplored the decision made in 1929 to cooperate with packers, who, he and other
advocates believed, had lulled the movement into complacency by promising to reform
themselves. Slaughtering was one of the nation’s most highly rationalized industries--
one that had expanded the number of animals killed for food to unprecedented levels.
Moreover, meatpackers had invested millions of dollars of technology for the dismemberment and processing of every animal part--"everything but
the squeal," as some famously boasted. Yet, at the heart of this modern industrial
enterprise, the sledgehammer and other primitive elements reigned supreme well into the
post-World War II period. A federal prohibition on the "knocker" had done what many
decades of negotiation with the industry had not been able to accomplish.\footnote{Fred Myers, "Lessons Taught by Humane Slaughter Victory," HSUS News (Sept. 1958), 8; and
Public Health, Ethical Vegetarianism, and the Mistreatment of Animals

For many years, animal advocates had employed the argument that suffering rendered the flesh of animals unfit for consumption. It was an important part of the case for improved treatment.\(^{63}\) In 1906, the public health concerns that humane advocates had been trying to advance for many decades found pervasive expression when a young socialist author trained his pen on the great meat factories of Chicago. Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* alarmed consumers, panicked meatpacking executives, and dominated the national media for months. The ensuing scandal provided the impetus for passage of the Meat Inspection Act.\(^{64}\)

Sinclair’s book exposed the demoralizing, inhumane, and unsanitary conditions of Chicago’s Packingtown. He dedicated *The Jungle* “to the workingmen of America,” hoping that it would aid the labor movement in its struggles. Sinclair’s work was not directed at making converts to vegetarianism, and the mistreatment of animals rarely surfaced during the controversy sparked by *The Jungle*.\(^{65}\) Nevertheless, the novel struck an unprecedented blow against the meat industry, which found itself on the defensive as

\(^{63}\) “Danger of Eating the Meats of Animals That Have Suffered Before Dying,” ODA 38 (Oct. 1905), 64; and “Cattle Transportation Again,” IOZ 6 (Mar. 1897), 30.


\(^{65}\) For an exception, see “Stock Yard Cruelty,” The Public 10 (30 Nov. 1907), 818-19.
journalists, the public, and the executive and legislative branches of the government clamored for regulation.

The reforms that Sinclair's muckraking provoked—including pre-slaughter inspection paid for by the government—were not platforms that appealed to animal protectionists. Their claim that the welfare and handling of animals en route to slaughter had just as much impact on the quality of meat was not taken as seriously as the charges public health advocates made about unsanitary conditions. Even so, in the years following the passage of pure food legislation, humanitarians persevered in their attacks on the diseased character of meat coming from a system whose many cruelties they hoped to reform. In 1910, medical doctor Albert Leffingwell published a post-Jungle indictment, *American Meat*, in which he sought to prove that there was a high rate of disease in American cattle, and that the consumption of animal flesh was the obvious cause of certain illnesses in humans. Leffingwell charged that government inspection notwithstanding, vast quantities of diseased meat continued to pass into the food supply. Leffingwell compared the Meat Trust to the Slave Power of a half century earlier, noting its success in preventing “the total condemnation of diseased animals for food purposes” and in persuading Congress “to place the cost of inspecting meat, not upon the producers, but upon the people.”

Only rarely did animal protectionists condemn the poor wages, long hours, and hazards that plagued the laborers who worked in meatpacking. They did not fail to

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underscore the debasement and degradation that the nation's appetite imposed upon slaughterhouse workers, however. "And what about our brother man," Mary Lovell asked. "What humaneness is there in providing a brutalizing, degrading, disgusting occupation which, because of the pressure of necessity, some of our brother men must undertake?"68

Like Lovell, some of the era's animal advocates elected to pursue a diet that necessitated neither the degradation of their fellow men nor the deaths of their fellow creatures. In fact, the period 1890-1910 proved to be one of the strongest moments for a progressive ethical vegetarianism in the United States. While few of the animal protection movement's leaders were vegetarians, the vegetarian ideal nevertheless exerted an important influence upon them. Humane advocates and ethical vegetarians frequently advanced similar criticisms of meat and the meat industry. Ethical vegetarianism flourished on the edges of mainstream animal protection, and, if they did not espouse it, major figures usually acknowledged it with respect.69

Vegetarianism was an important theme of utopic literature during this era and was sometimes linked with radical political thought in the United States as in Great Britain. Edward Bellamy's Equality (1897) presented the boldest affirmation of vegetarianism and wilderness conservation in radical literature of the period, and vegetarianism was common among Bellamyites, especially those whose interests extended to theosophy. In Herland (1915), Charlotte Perkins Gilman also wrote in favor of animal rights and


69 See "Transportation of Cattle," New York Tribune, Undated Article, ASPCA-NY, SBK 8: 272; and Henry Bergh to B. W. Hathaway, Aug. 20, 1868, ASPCA-NY, LBK 1: 8-9; and George T. Angell, "Important to All Our Readers," ODA 38 (Nov. 1905), 80.
vegetarianism, which were intimately connected to the maternalist, pacifist, ecologically sensitive utopia she conceived.\textsuperscript{70}

Among active American humanitarians, the self-identified vegetarian socialists included Sarah Cleghorn, Ernest Howard Crosby, John Howard Moore, Alice Park, and the husband and wife team of Henry Bailey Stevens and Agnes Ryan. Crosby, Moore, and Park were all members of Henry Salt's Humanitarian League. Crosby (1856-1907), a social critic, philosophical anarchist, and popularizer of Tolstoy's work, co-authored (with Elisée Reclus) a League pamphlet decrying the cruelty of meat.\textsuperscript{71} Chicago socialist Charles H. Kerr, publisher of Moore's \textit{Universal Kinship}, was a vegetarian, and Moore's works received notice in the socialist press.

Franklin Rosemont suggests that the rise of Marxism as the dominant mode of socialism in the United States relegated sympathy for animals to the margins as a concern of the American left. In \textit{The Communist Manifesto} (1848), Marx and Engels disparaged animal protection as a petty-bourgeois concern, setting a precedent for similarly


dismissive attitudes on the part of other leftists. In England, however, the issue did flourish for a time within the Fabian Socialist circle that included Edward Carpenter, Henry Salt, George Bernard Shaw, and others who supported the Humanitarian League. Concern for animals also surfaced as a leftist cause, however faintly and briefly, in the era of Debsian socialism in the United States. To a limited extent, Salt’s correspondents in the United States, including Crosby, Moore, and Park, advanced the issue in socialist circles.

In 1911, the Millenium Guild, America’s first authentic animal rights group, incorporating vegetarianism as a core principle, formed in Boston. Its founder, M.R.L. “Emmarel” Freshel (1867-1948), embraced vegetarianism and animal protection after encounters with representatives of eastern religious traditions at the World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893 and her reading of Ralph Waldo Trine’s Every Living Creature.

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74 “People Say That It is Cruel to Eat Meat,” Boston American, 23 May 1911, Vivisection SBK 3, Frederic Schiller Lee Papers, Archives and Special Collections, A.C. Long Health Sciences Library, Columbia University, New York, NY [Lee Papers], and “New Women’s Organization Puts a Ban on Wearing Furs, Feathers, Quills, Leather, Ivory, Tortoise Shell, Kid, Marabou, or Other Things from ‘Vanity’s Charmel House,’” New Orleans Statesman, 6 July 1913, Vivisection SBK 5, Lee Papers; Maud Russell Lorraine Sharpe [Freshel], The Golden Rule Cookbook (Cambridge: University Press, 1907); and Ralph Waldo Trine, Every Living Creature (New York: Dodge Publishing Co., 1899).
The propaganda of the Millenium Guild reflected the commitment of Freshel and her colleagues to feminism, pacifism, vegetarianism, and universal justice. “All sentient creatures have a right to life, and, except in cases of self-defense, to protection in that life by human beings,” its credo read. “Consistent humaneness cannot be practiced by persons who feed upon the products of the slaughter house, who kill other creatures for food, or whose habits necessitate the doing of this degrading work by others. . . . Universal peace is a possibility only when man evolves a true sense of the right of all races, human and sub-human.”

Under Freshel’s leadership, the Millenium Guild promoted vegetarianism and other positions consistent with a belief that all forms of animal exploitation were immoral. The Guild also pioneered in the promotion of alternatives to fur coats and the distribution of anti-veal cards in restaurants. Freshel strongly questioned the approach taken by mainstream societies in promoting humane slaughter of animals for food and fur production. Her husband Curtis, an entrepreneur, founded the Millenium Food Company, an enterprise that produced non-animal meat substitutes.

Of the nation’s most prominent animal protectionists, Caroline Earle White and Mary Lovell were vegetarians, the latter crediting Henry Salt’s Animals’ Rights for her

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75 Several of Freshel’s speeches appeared in Animal Protection Congress, 104-10, 149-54. She published a longer piece on alternative fur and other cruelty-free fabrics, “Interesting Information,” in Starry Cross 30 (Feb. 1921), 27-29. On the Millenium Food Company, see “Millenium Extract,” JOZ 21 (June 1912), 340; and “A Substitute for Meat,” ODA 45 (Dec. 1912), 104. The Guild survived into the early 1980s. Freshel’s husband Curtis continued the work until the mid-1960s, passing the organization over to radio personality Pegeen Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald, in her turn, gave strong support to Henry Spira and other animal advocates of the 1970s as they launched their own challenges to animal exploitation and suffering. After Fitzgerald’s death, the Guild’s assets were directed toward a cat shelter in Connecticut.
Positive references to vegetarianism were common in humanitarian journals, and a significant few regularly expressed their view that the most effective way to overcome the cruelties of cattle transportation and the slaughterhouse would be to eat no flesh at all. "If consistency is an important constituent of the humane movement, as it undoubtedly is of all other reforms," Lovell asked, "is not each one engaged in it bound to face the question, whether or not he can continue honestly to oppose any sort of cruelty if he continues to be one of the units in the mass for which this monstrous and hideous form of it goes on?" There were also a handful of humane advocates who were vegetarians in principle if not always in practice, like Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Minnie Maddern Fiske. "I believe a hundred years from now, the whole world will be vegetarian," Wilcox wrote one correspondent.

Henry Clubb and other members of the Bible-Christian Church also sustained humanitarian vegetarianism, continuing to nurture the vegetarian movement in the United States through publications and organizational activities. So did John Harvey Kellogg, whose humanitarian leanings have been neglected by scholars determined to tie him to hygienic vegetarianism. Even members of the social register brought the cause into the

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limelight, as when Mrs. John T. Sherman, wife of the vice president, joined together with
the wife of Great Britain's ambassador to promote vegetarianism in fashionable summer
resorts.78

Fresnel spoke for at least a few other humanitarians when she criticized the
campaigns for humane slaughter. "The killing of animals cannot be done humanely, it
will never be attempted humanely by a race which asks that it be done at all," she told
one reporter. Beyond that, she suggested, "it isn't abstinence from meat that counts with
us, so much as the possession of a love for living things; when that is great enough we
can refrain from eating flesh from humanitarian reasons."79

In defense of his efforts to galvanize support for slaughterhouse reform, Francis
Rowley turned the tables on advocates of vegetarianism. The claims of vegetarians did
nothing to alter the fact that the cruelties attending meat production required the attention
and action of every concerned party. "No one can escape his responsibility in this matter
by saying 'Since I eat no meat, my hands are free from blood,'" Rowley asserted. "Just
so long as these lowlier children of life are being slaughtered for food, you and I and
every other man and woman, whether vegetarian or not, are under the sacredest
obligation to do our part toward lessening by every possible means the unnecessary
sufferings involved." Notwithstanding Rowley's perspective, another supporter of the
competitions for humane slaughtering devices, Jefferson Seligman, conceded the limits of

78 John Harvey Kellogg, Shall We Slay to Eat? (Battle Creek: Good Health Publishing Co., 1899),
passim; Mary F. Lovell, "Some Interesting Experiments," JOZ 16 (June 1907), 70-71; and "Society's Ban

the approach. "The thing to be advocated," Seligman observed, "is for people to eat less meat."  

Conclusion

In the years following the disputes sparked by The Jungle, Upton Sinclair famously observed that he had "aimed at the public's heart, and by accident hit it in the stomach." Animal advocates were even less successful. Their image of an America that showed proper regard for the animals it consumed proved as ephemeral as Sinclair's vision of one that delivered justice to workers. The transportation, handling, and pre-slaughter treatment of livestock would not improve in the wake of the scandals surrounding the meat trade, and legislation to promote humane slaughter was still a half century away. The work of the BAI, from its formation in 1883, centered not on a concept of animal welfare grounded in consideration for the basic psychological and biological well-being of animals raised for food but on the maximization of meat product through the application of laboratory research to the suppression of disease and illness. The passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906, creating a regulatory bureaucracy to police the food supply, showed that it was the quality of the meat that mattered, not the treatment of workers or animals.  


81 Roger Horowitz's implication that America pitied the pig more than the worker is a fanciful one, not borne out by the facts of the meat industry scandals or by any subsequent developments. See Roger Horowitz, Negro and White, Unite and Fight!: A Social History of Packinghouse Unionism 1930-1990 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 12.
Ultimately, refrigeration technology and improved systems for holding and transporting cattle did more than compliance with the Twenty-Eight Hour Law to reduce animal suffering. Despite their elaborate efforts to compel enforcement of the law, humane advocates found it hard to curb the abuse and suffering of animals in transit. Live animal transportation began to rely increasingly upon motor vehicles and the nation's highways, where the law did not apply.

The centralizing trends in slaughter and meat production also transformed the problem that humanitarians faced. Instead of the random and diverse practices of localized slaughtering industries, the movement had to confront the technocratic imperatives of a vast and modern industry bent on rapid and efficient production. Inevitably, too, the expanding volume of meat consumption in an increasingly affluent society exerted a critical impact. As Henry Bergh, Jr., framed the problem, "animals are received like so many logs of wood meant for kindling, the object being to see how many animals in the aggregate can be reduced to the various marketable products within the shortest space of time, and at the least expense." If humaneness meant slowing down the process of slaughter, it was not likely to be a priority for the large slaughtering establishments of the Midwest.82

Nor did humanitarians push their critique of commercialized exploitation of animals too far. Most animal protectionists did not present, nor were they motivated by, a radical social analysis. At no time did humane advocates ally themselves or express solidarity with exploited workers in the slaughter and packing industries, except in

pointing to the dehumanizing effects of killing floor work on the laborer. In general, they were more interested in reaching accommodation with the industry over killing methods than they were with forging links with the people “back of the yards.”

Animal advocates’ vision of a humane industrial order that treated animals kindly, whether in transportation or slaughter, never became reality. That vision was incompatible with the unrelenting momentum toward rationalization and mechanization of the slaughter and butchering of animals. It did not help the case that the suffering of animals was physically removed, centralized in factory-like environments into which only a few laborers would ever enter. This physical distance, and the removal of the slaughter of animals from the conscious observation and experience of most people, precluded the kind of moral outrage that attended other, more visible, cruelties. Even as they made such a vast enterprise of slaughter possible, the new developments rendered the killing of animals for food socially invisible.83

The campaign against the cruel transportation and slaughter of food animals required confrontation of three of the nation’s greatest industries—the beef trust, the ranchers, and the railroads. Ultimately, however, Rowley and other campaigners understood that their principal obstacle was public indifference. “After the last word is said about the ranchman and the railroad, about the callous driver, the butcher whose

83 See Siegfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command (New York: 1948); and Daniel Pick, War Machine: The Rationalization of Slaughter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). As Rowley commented, “there was nothing rarer than a prosecution for cruelty in killing. “The lame, or galled, or worn-out horse is in evidence to all, in city or country, who have eyes to see . . . the homeless cat, the starved dog without a master—these are daily coming to our attention—and we prosecute for the cruelty and build our shelters and refuges.” Rowley noted, “but the cattle, the swine that die each day, the lambs that are led to the slaughter—these we see not.” “Cruelty in Killing,” ODA 44 (June 1911), 8; and Francis H. Rowley, “An Indictment of the American Slaughterhouse,” ODA 44 (Mar. 1912), 157
hands must drip with blood, the packer who grows rich out of his traffic,” Rowley observed, “we come face to face with ourselves.” 84