Execution of an American Symbol

By the time you read this editorial, several hundred bison, more commonly known as the American buffalo, most probably will have migrated beyond the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park in search of winter forage. Except for the calves, it is anticipated that virtually every adult animal will be killed in what is becoming an annual rite of bison executions.

The pressure to destroy these magnificent animals, an important part of our national heritage, stems mainly from the cattle industry in Montana. While there is some concern that brucellosis can spread from bison to cattle, there is insufficient evidence to justify this wholesale destruction of bison. Nevertheless, many of these bison will be shot to supply trophy heads for walls.

In an effort to forestall this season’s killing of several hundred bison, other HSUS personnel and I met with Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr., on November 7, requesting that he declare a moratorium on this year’s (1990-91) bison slaughter in order to consider more thoughtfully and thoroughly alternative solutions for dealing with these annual migrations. Although the secretary was attentive to our views and concerns, even to the extent of agreeing to discuss our proposed moratorium with Montana governor Stan Stephens, it is now abundantly clear that this alternative was unacceptable. Indeed, it is more than likely that it was given little or no serious consideration.

The HSUS regards the annual killing of bison beyond the boundaries of Yellowstone Park to be one of the most obscene and disgraceful so-called management plans ever conceived. Under United States federal law, these animals are protected inside Yellowstone Park, but once they follow their natural migratory path out of park boundaries, they may be shot by sport hunters under Montana law. Although it appears that this season calves will be spared the killing and that cows will be shot by National Park Service rangers, the bulls will become standing targets for hunters chosen by random drawing.

No matter how necessary or justified some measure of control may be for coping with the bison problem, it is a travesty beyond belief that the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior would agree to permit so callous and outrageous an execution of animals they are charged to protect. Not only are these magnificent animals an important part of our national heritage, they also represent the symbol so proudly and prominently displayed by the Department of the Interior itself. From the lapel pin worn by the secretary himself to the centerpiece in the floor of the foyer of the department’s headquarters building in our nation’s capital, the bison stands as a symbol of the wildlife heritage of our nation. To cause this animal to become a victim of needless execution is as repugnant and repulsive as it is unbelievable.

In an effort to halt this annual ritual of killing, I urge you to register your outrage and disgust with both the secretary of the interior and the governor of Montana (see the “Call to Action” on the inside back cover). It is our intention to so thoroughly ignite the HSUS membership in opposing the Yellowstone slaughter that both the Department of the Interior and the state of Montana will abandon any desire or intention to perpetuate this unfair and unfathomable execution of not just an American symbol, but, more importantly, of magnificent creatures whose only sin is to have crossed some imaginary line from trust to betrayal.

(continued on inside back cover)
HSUS President John A. Hoyt sent the following telegram to Secretary Lujan following their November meeting on the fate of the Yellowstone Park bison. A similar telegram was sent to Stan Stephens, governor of Montana.

Manuel Lujan, Jr.
Secretary of the Interior

On November 7, 1990, we met to discuss the declaration of a moratorium to avert the killing of perhaps hundreds of Yellowstone National Park bison this fall and winter. I appreciate the time and consideration you provided us to discuss alternatives to the killing of the bison.

I am saddened and very disappointed to learn from your director of the National Park Service that a suitable, nonlethal alternative to the buffalo hunt—including a moratorium and the establishment of an expert panel—was not agreeable to the Montana state governor. We regret not being able to come to a mutually acceptable resolution to the situation.

It is my feeling that The HSUS has done everything administratively possible to seek responsible alternatives to avoid this needless slaughter of bison found outside Yellowstone National Park. Therefore, consistent with my comments to you during our meeting, The HSUS is compelled to bring this unnecessary and obscene situation to the attention of the American public.

I appreciate your consideration of our request for a moratorium and your attention to the controversy. I hope that you understand that, as an organization representing over 1,200,000 members and constituents who are devoted to the protection of animals, The HSUS must take steps to combat this action of the Department of the Interior.

Saving the Yellowstone Bison: A Call to Action

In an effort to end the annual execution of bison migrating out of Yellowstone National Park into the state of Montana, you are urged to write immediately to Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr., and Governor of Montana Stan Stephens (see “Execution of an American Symbol,” inside front cover).

The HSUS is pursuing every possible avenue, including legal action, to halt this horrendous slaughter. If our efforts to date have not been successful, your letters, telegrams, and phone calls will help immensely to undergird our other efforts. If our actions have resulted in stopping the killing this year, it is nonetheless imperative that you register your outrage regarding this annual ritual in an effort to end permanently this obscene and outrageous travesty.

Please write both the secretary of the interior and the governor of Montana: The Hon. Manuel Lujan, Jr., Secretary of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240; and The Hon. Stan Stephens, Governor of Montana, State Capitol, Helena, MT 59620.

If possible, please forward a copy of your communication to the HSUS Government Relations Department. Thank you for joining with us and others in this important endeavor.

AFRICA!

Join The Humane Society of the United States on a trip to this most intriguing continent, departing June 7. The tour features Kenya with some of Africa’s most beautiful terrain. The 15-day trip will include stops in Amboseli National Park, with its wonderful animals and stunning view of Mount Kilimanjaro; Samburu and its rare variety of wildlife—Grey’s zebra, long-necked gerenuk, reticulated giraffe, dik-dik, Masai Mara Game Reserve, teeming with wild animals; and Nairobi, with its shops and city life.

HSUS Senior Vice President Ms. Patricia Forkan and Dr. John Grandy, vice president for Wildlife & Habitat Protection, will be your hosts. The tour price is $3795, including airfare from New York, accommodations at hotels and lodges, full breakfast in Nairobi and all meals while on safari, transportation by private minibus to view animals, and gratuities for baggage handling and tips.

HSUS East Africa Safari
June 7, 1991

Send and Make Checks Payable To: Park East Tours, Inc.
1841 Broadway, Suite 900
New York, NY 10023

For further information call 212-765-4870 OR 800-223-6078.

Enclosed is my deposit check for $_______ ($400 per person). Balance due by April 7, 1991.

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