(No. 11) -- A Century of "Progress" in Combating Animal Abuse

Humane Information Services, Inc.

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A CENTURY OF "PROGRESS" IN COMBATTING ANIMAL ABUSE

The humane movement in the United States is approximately a hundred years old. During those years, hundreds of millions of dollars have been received by humane societies as donations, gifts and payments for services. There now are at least four societies with annual incomes of over one million dollars. The number of societies has grown until it now approaches a hundred thousand. The vast majority operate very well on these millions of dollars, and financial endowments running probably well over a hundred million are not uncommon. However, we make it impossible to estimate the number of separate individuals who are members of these societies, although undoubtedly it runs into hundreds of thousands.

That record of growth and financial affluence does not always come with either a real accomplishment or a fulfillment of the purpose for which the movement was organized. Although these societies are devoted to the prevention of cruelty to animals, their activities and methods of operation which have proved to be most effective, the conditions of legal liability and the liability for the maintenance of good public relations, and in general the different ways in which local humane societies can deal most effectively with these problems of individual cruelty to and neglect of animals. If any society believes it now is doing very effective work in this field, or has any suggestions to offer, we welcome your suggestions and comments. However, we believe that any analysis of this humane movement progress, however, we believe that it is necessary to make this statement about the progress of this humane movement. We suggest that this statement indicates the way in which the humane movement has been neglected in the United States, and has not kept pace with the needs or the growth of the humane movement.

Proposed Model State Law

A committee of the United States Animal Welfare Association has spent months writing a proposed model state law designed to plug the loopholes in the Federal Public Law 89-734, the existing animal cruelty law. This law is designed to serve a purpose in relation to the federal law in somewhat the same way that state humane slaughter laws are designed to reinforce the federal humane slaughter act.

This objective is worthy, and the subcommittee did a good job of writing a comprehensive list of provisions which would have been very objectionable, and in making the proposed state law much more useful than the federal law. Full information will be included in a future report.

Just One of Many Individual Cruelty Cases

How would you like to drink milk from this cow? The cow's calf is said to have been drown in the mire. The small farmer who "cared for" these animals also had a job and didn't have time to keep the barn clean, the judge ordered him to spend his nights in jail for two weeks, but levied no fine. If it had been a child who was abused, one can imagine the sentence! Such cases illustrate the need for much more attention to individual cruelty cases by local humane societies.

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HUMANITY SERVICES INC.

Humane Information Services

REPORT TO HUMANITARIANS

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PROGRESS ON EUTHANASIA

During the past three months Humane Information Services has devoted a major part of its activity to a study of methods of euthanasia. This is a continuing project that will require several years for completion.

It is increasingly evident that tremendous numbers of dogs and cats are being destroyed in animal shelters and pounds in ways which are not only inhumane, but sometimes downright cruel. We are more than ever convinced that this long-neglected emergency of humane welfare constitutes the most important single project that could be undertaken in behalf of the animals.

Observation of Methods Now Used

The second step in a thorough approach to this problem is to make an inventory of where all of the devices and methods now in use can be found. For example, several years ago the electroshock euthanasia, a British invention, was hailed by the Humane Society of the United States as a very promising solution of the problem of euthanizing adult dogs. A number were purchased for use in this country, but most of these are no longer in use. Difficulties encountered included frequent breakdowns, the difficulty of obtaining parts, and the tendency of the dogs to dislodge the electrodes placed on their ears. But the latter trouble is said to have been resolved.

Many investigations of different segments of the problem have been made. These specific studies are helpful, but do not furnish answers to the over-all problem of what methods of euthanasia are most humane and efficient for different species and environments. Some of these answers have been suggested by symposia of veterinarians and humanitarians. These symposia can be no better than the available basic information upon which they are based, which is deficient in both coverage and average quality. The most authoritative of these symposia, at least of those reported in the United States, is the report prepared by the ad hoc Panel on Euthanasia created by the Council on Research of the American Veterinary Medical Association, made possible by a grant from the Mary Mitchell Rumane Fund of Massachusetts. Copies of the report were sent to all humane organizations, and it has been noted that its findings seem to be ignored by some societies. For example, the report states: "It is not sufficient to conclude that a method is too severe just because it is or is not a violent method. This means that this method would carry the 'possibility that animals may suffer excruciating pain for a short time before death occurs. That this method is used and defended without important qualifications by some leading societies. This Panel of the AVMA recommends that further research be conducted to find answers to many questions and unsolved problems."

Recently, the AVMA has constituted another panel on Euthanasia, chaired by Dr. C. Roger Smith of the College of Veterinary Medicine of Ohio State University. Members of the panel include surgeons, medical doctors, psychologists, pathologists and veterinarians. Apparently the objective of this Panel is to bring the findings of the first Panel into line with research conducted subsequently.

Library Research Needed

As an indication of the extent of work which has been done in this field, Humane Information Services has reviewed the literature of 76 technical and semi-technical papers and journal articles relating to euthanasia. Unfortunately, many of these have been obtained and read, but merely to assimilate and coordinate all of this material would be a full-time research job extending over several months. On a part-time basis, it can take a year. Thorough library research in euthanasia in order to furnish leads to additional problems and potential agents and methods, and to make additional contributions supplementary and complementary rather than duplicative.

The Electroshock, a Box in which the dog is secured, electrodes placed on the ears. A one-second stunning current passes through the dog, producing instant unconsciousness. Immediately afterward the current passes for two seconds from the hind to the front ear through the hind electrode, and the animal is dead. This method, giving the quickest and possibly the most certain death, has been found quite practical in operating droplocks which should be possible to modify (see note below). Photograph courtesy The Humane Society of the United States

Determining Pain Perception

The third step is a reconciliation of the available fragmentary information on how to recognize the presence or absence of pain in an animal being euthanized, to determine when unconsciousness really sets in, and when death occurs.

One well-known and conscientiously-managed humane society shelter is using a certain drug for 'euthanasia', because it appears to be very humane. Actually, this drug has not immobilized the animal, like curare, the use of which in various laboratories has long been severely criticized by humanitarians. The brain of the immobilized dog remains active and the heart continues to pulsate after respirations have ceased. A recent newspaper article describes the dangers in using curare for electroshock surgery, saying that if improperly used it could cause death "too horrible to describe. Yet, because so little has been done to furnish humane societies with information on how to, and how not to, distinguish pain perception in euthanasia, this potentially very cruel method now is being used by one of the better societies, in the belief that it is humane.

Many reflex actions occur in an animal being euthanized, often as unconscious. For example, the optic discs relax, resulting in autonomic defecation and other excretory processes. Immediately after the animal is examined after death, that it has gone through a very harrowing experience, it may not have experienced any pain. Similarly, convulsions may occur either before or after loss of consciousness.

Invention and Testing of Equipment

The fourth step is to synthesize the various findings of the first three steps into theoretical conceptions of humane agents and devices and methods for euthanasia considered to be best suited to the different species, ages, health and temperaments of animals, and the considerations of efficiency and operating costs which also must be taken into account. It is not easy to come to the conclusion that a particular agent, such as carbon dioxide, is humane. Whether it tends to be used only upon the general characteristics of the agent or method, but also in large measure upon the way in which it is applied and the kind of equipment available.

For example, preliminary investigations were conducted in December by Humane Information Services, officers of the Connecticut and New Jersey Branches of the Humane Society of the United States, representatives of the International Society for the Protection of Animals, in cooperation with Mink Ranchers, Recently, in a study of mink ranchers in New Jersey and Massachusetts. These tests were designed to determine the suitability of carbon dioxide in killing commercially-raised mink. They showed the value of cooperation among humane societies in such matters, with each society contributing its respective talents and resources toward the common goal of developing safe or defensible methods. Humane Information Services wishes to thank Messrs. John Roor, Charles Clasing, A. Lloyd Davis and John Walsh for their fine cooperation in this work, which was conducted under trying weather and other conditions.

These tests gave evidence confirming that carbon dioxide is well suited to the euthanasia of mink from a humane standpoint, but showed that mink are so hardy as to require a long period in a high gas concentration before death occurs. Mink left in this condition for 15 minutes or more of exposure and seemed to be none the worse for their experience. The test mink should not be adopted by mink ranchers unless some completely new type of equipment can be constructed, where after each death carbon dioxide is introduced for death can be offset by increasing the number of mink that can be killed by one machine. Further, each machine for each start must be made in designing and constructing suitable equipment, and the tests conducted all over again. The preliminary investigations made in this study to date very strongly to the probability of the need for defensible methods, and that the devices now commonly used for euthanasia of different animals will be found to be most suitable only experimentally, if at all, at any one point. What is needed is not some more leaflets or slide presentations explaining or defending present methods, but a thorough-going study which will lead to the development of new types of equipment which will be both useful and humane.

This development work will require not...
or mechanical ability. Mistakes will be made, and progress achieved only after much trial and error.

Once suitable equipment has been designed and built for euthanasia of any kind of animal, it must be thoroughly tested under practical operating conditions. Only then can it be said to produce a painless death. But mistakes have been made. Home-made chambers have turned out to be lacking in some of the features necessary to make them humane. For example, carbon monoxide properly used, is said to produce a painless death. But misused, as it so often is, in homemade contraptions, it can be a torture chamber. We have been told repeatedly that the most humane method is that which turns off the gas quickly. This equipment has disadvantages, but is much superior to the use of legal and illegal narcotics, now generally used in Spain according to Mr. Colin Platt, field officer of the International Society for the Protection of Animals, London.

Humane Information Services Active

In addition to arranging and participating in the tests of methods used in killing mink which have been described in these Reports, and a large amount of library research, Humane Information Services has devoted much time and effort in attempting to obtain the cooperation of private businesses, firms and other agencies in conducting various phases of the total project.

The department of veterinary science of a leading university has agreed to carry on both intensive and extensive work in this field. If funds can be found, and has accepted practically no change the Research Plan prepared by Humane Information Services.

Application for funds has been made.

This matter of funding is the principal obstacle to further development of this project. Our suggestion, in Report to Humanitarians No. 9, that contributions be made was not the Rogers-Javits bill, or the Senate Commerce Committee hearings on the bill if many humanitarians sponsoring the Rogers-Javits bill, has changed the picture considerably. The proposition that the Whitehurst bill was placed in the Clark-Cleveland bill for the Whitehurst bill, probably will present evidence that the Whitehurst bill would do nothing to reduce animal suffering during experiments and tests.

New Laboratory Animal Bills in Congress

Whitehurst Bill, H.R. 13957

A new bill to expand the presently very inadequate coverage of experiments with laboratory animals by Public Law 89-594, the so-called Pavoop Alaska, and to extend its regulation of the housing and treatment of all animals throughout their stay in the laboratories, has been introduced by Congressman Whitehurst of Virginia, and referred to the Agriculture Committee. Although this amendment would strengthen the Act, it would require specifically a "housekeeping bill" and would do nothing to affect the use of animals in experiments and tests.

The Whitehurst bill appears to extend the scope of P.L. 89-594 to roadside zoos, circuses, county and state fairs, humane, dog and cats in pet shops. But these provisions would apply only to establishments engaged in interstate commerce.

Young Bill, S. 3221

Another bill was presented by Senator Young of Ohio, and referred to the Senate Commerce Committee. This is identical in some respects to the old Clark-Cleveland bill. The Young bill amends P.L. 89-594 by transferring responsibility for administration of the Act from the Secretary of Agriculture to the Secretary of H.E.W. (where it was placed in the Clark-Cleveland bill formerly promised by the many important considerations of humane humanitarians who now denounce the Rogers-Javits bill because if it is administratively possible) the Whitehurst bill is weak on enforcement, and in its present form seems to have little or no chance of becoming law.

Neither Bill as Effective as Rogers-Javits Bill

Taken together, the Whitehurst and Young bills, if passed, would not accomplish as much for the animals as the Rogers-Javits bill alone. Neither, for instance, would promote replacement of animals in laboratories. The Whitehurst bill would do nothing to reduce animal suffering during experiments and tests.

Whitehurst Bill a Possible Later Alternative

In our Report to Humanitarians No. 6, for December, 1960 (pages 10-11), we reviewed some possible alternatives, in distinction to the Rogers-Javits bill, in case the humane movement should decide to give up the fight for that year and go for some later date. One alternative described was an amendment of P.L. 89-594 containing essentially the same provisions as the presently introduced Whitehurst bill. This possibility, however, was considered as an alternative in which it were decided that passage of the Rogers-Javits bill in the 86th Congress (now in progress) would be better than a delay, because the humane movement had actually done to continue the effort to pass the Rogers-Javits bill. For a time, it appeared that the chances of passage in the Senate were greatly improved. The continuing frantic efforts of opponents of the bill to prevent its passage, in conjunction with the introduction of the red herring repre- sented by the Whitehurst bill, has changed the picture considerably.

Hearings Needed

The very earliest time at which hearings on the Rogers-Javits bill could be had, seems to be the time after the Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce can expect is late spring or early summer. It is clear that the hearings have been held by the Subcommittee of the Agriculture Committee. The Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, might be persuaded to hold earlier hearings on the Whitehurst bill. If so, and if Congressman Whitehurst demanded hearings, the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, might be persuaded to hold earlier hearings on the Whitehurst bill. If so, and if Mr. Senator Yarborough of Texas, chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, might be persuaded to hold earlier hearings on the Whitehurst bill. If so, and if he were to request the Senate Committee to adopt features of the Rogers-Javits bill. That situation has been greatly muddled by the introduction of these new bills. One danger is that Congress may have become so involved with the Rogers-Javits bill that its maneuvering in the humane movement that it will take the bit in its teeth and pass something on its own initiative which will be intended to satisfy the bulk of animal lovers who are not informed on such matters, who do not know what is going on, and who do not know that the Rogers-Javits bill is designed to achieve.
We Need More Names

Some members who send names and addresses of people to receive our Reports seem to think they mark send a corresponding number of dollars for memberships. Although we need and are mighty glad to receive these extra contributions, please do not feel that because you cannot afford to pay for their memberships. Our only requirement is that the new names represent people you have reason to believe may become interested in helping animals by reading our Reports. Don't send names taken from telephone books or others who have expressed antagonism or indifference to humane principles, hoping they will suddenly become "educated." They will not read the Reports, so all that will be accomplished is to add to their ever-expanding list of names. The best sources of names are the lists of directors who are members of local humane societies. Officers of those societies need not fear that putting these names on a list may result in losing contributions to the local society; on the contrary, when people become better informed about humane problems they are likely to give more generously to local as well as national societies.

No Connection With HSUS

Because our views on a number of important humane problems are similar to those of the Humane Society of the United States, because the president of Human Information Services once was an active director of HSUS, and it is possible to cooperate easily with the HSUS in conducting some programs of mutual interest, a few of our members have expressed the idea that we are affiliated with the HSUS in some way. That is not so. We are entirely separate non-profit humane organizations which happen to believe that humanitarians should work together as far as possible. But, we need to add, that the HSUS about many things, mainly concerning the priorities attaching to different kinds of humane work, the most effective ways of attaining some humane goals, and the kind of information which should be given to members. We never will hesitate to express such differences publicly as well as privately, even though we admire the undoubtedly sincere convictions of others who hold the views of the HSUS, and the reasonable way in which it approaches our common problems.

Gas Masks for Everybody in 1990?

Only a few years ago the only ones classed as being concerned about the environment against the destructive encroachments of people were the humanitarians and conservationists. Now, we see people calling attention to the rapid loss of nature's heritage, to the wanton destruction of wildlife and the heedless conversion of so many beautiful natural resources to the greed of man.

But their pleas mostly fell on deaf ears; men -- and women -- were more interested in using and destroying nature's assets. When people referred to "crimes against nature" they usually meant a murderously-defined criminal offense rather than the destruction of our natural environment.

Now, suddenly, everyone has become acutely aware of this problem, and the need for some drastic preventive and curative action. This great escalation of interest in the preservation of nature's heritage is, also, attributable to any noticeable growth in aesthetic appreciation or concern for the welfare of all life, however minute, biologically active or not. Rather, it stems from the impact of dire predictions that the very existence of human life as we know it is threatened by a population explosion which is spreading across the globe at an alarming rate and by resulting pollution of the environment which seriously endangers man as well as plant and animal life.

Within a generation, at the present rate, the world's population will triple. Land on which to stand and lie is becoming scarce in many parts of the world. The wildlife threat to the environment comes from man's efforts to meet the mounting pressure on limited space by stray bed, tillable land, the cultivation and the use of containing fertilizers and pesticides, and the provision of increasing energy needs through use of fossil fuels.

We attempt to postpone world famine by greater use of fertilizers and pesticides dealing with preservation of the environment.

Serving Will Never Hesitate to "Tell It Like It Is," Regardless of Who May Be Offended.

We, serving will never hesitate to "tell it like it is," regardless of who may be offended. We do not mind criticism. We are not mad at non-constructive criticism. We do not have people who will insist that we should keep silent, that we should not point out that pollution rate continues people in the United States by 1990 will have to wear gas masks, that the world will triple its population. We never will hesitate to express such differences as we have with the Rogers-Javits enactment publicly as well as privately, even though we admire the undoubtedly sincere convictions of others who hold the HSUS.