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

Humane Information Services, Inc.
IN COMBATING ANIMAL ABUSE

A CENTURY OF "PROGRESS" IN COMBATING 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 contributions, dues and payments for services. There now are at least four societies each with annual incomes of over one million dollars. The number of societies has grown until it now approaches a thousand. These funds are very important for the animal producers need them to make it impossible to estimate the number of separate individuals who are members of these groups. The funds undoubtedly run into hundreds of thousands.

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A subcommittee of the United States Animal Welfare Association has prepared a proposed model state law designed to plug the loopholes in the Federal Public Law 89-744, the basic federal humane slaughter law. The model law is intended to serve a purpose in relation to the federal law in somewhat the same way that state humane societies do in supplementing and reinforcing the federal humane slaughter act.

This objective is worthy, and the subcommittees did a good job of it. But the provisions which would have been very objectionable, and in making the proposed state law it is very important that the humane societies in some states can have a lot of difficulty getting these improvements in the proposed state law, and then the humane societies in those states will find that the proposed state law is much worse than the federal law.

Heardings Needed

The very earliest time at which hearings on the Rogers-Javits bill will be held in the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, may be expected to take place early in the fall or early in the winter. Senator Van Meter of Iowa, chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, might be persuaded to hold earlier hearings on the Rogers-Javits bill. In that case, the hearings will probably be held on the Rogers-Javits bill, and there will be no hearings on the House Agriculture Committee on the Young bill, before anything is done on the Rogers-Javits bill.

A humane society is an organization that is needed, and we are unable to obtain an answer on the Rogers-Javits bill. We have found that the model law does not provide for any of these provisions which are needed, and we are unable to prepare a model law that is as good as the Rogers-Javits bill.

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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 problem of humane welfare constitutes the most important single project that could be undertaken in behalf of the animals.

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 American Medical Association. 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 that "methods now commonly used for euthanasia of dogs and cats are being purchased for use in this country, but most of these are no longer in use. Difficulties encountered included frequent breakdowns, the difficulty of obtaining and maintaining the devices and the possibility that animals may suffer excruciating pain for a short time. Consequently, this method is used and defended without important qualification by some leading societies. This Panel of the AVMA recommended 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 been able to locate the bibliography of 76 technical and semi-technical papers and journal articles relating to euthanasia. Much of this material has been obtained and read, but merely to assimilate and coordinate all of this material would be a full-time library research job extending over several months. On a part-time basis, it can take a year. Thorough library research is essential in order to furnish leads to additional problems and potential agents, and methods, and to make additional contributions supplementary and complementary rather than duplicative.

Observation of Methods Now Used

The second step in a thorough approach to this problem is an analysis of methods now used. It is desirable to have all humane organizations, and it has been noted that its findings seem to be ignored by some societies. For example, the report states that "methods now commonly used for euthanasia of dogs and cats are being purchased for use in this country, but most of these are no longer in use. Difficulties encountered included frequent breakdowns, the difficulty of obtaining and maintaining the devices and the possibility that animals may suffer excruciating pain for a short time. Consequently, this method is used and defended without important qualification by some leading societies. This Panel of the AVMA recommended that further research be conducted to find answers to many questions and unsolved problems."

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only time, but also real inventiveness and 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.

The "Euthanair", or explosive decompression machine. The smaller version to the right is for cats, puppies and kittens (see text).

Photograph courtesy Humane Information Services, St. Petersburg, Florida 33705

Putting Findings to Use

Once the methods and efficient methods of euthanasia to meet different needs have been determined, the problem arises of how to put them into practice.

First, the necessary equipment must be available commercially for a reasonable cost, and on an adequate scale. The Euthanair turns out to be lacking in some of the features necessary to make the animal unconscious. For example, carbon monoxide properly used, is said to produce a painless death. But misused, as it so often is, in home-made contraptions, it can be a torture chamber. We would like to quote from a description of one such device used in "a small animal shelter", contained in a letter received from one of our members:

"Between 400 and 500 dogs are destroyed monthly. At best the dogs and cats are killed in a steel drum attached to an automobile engine and exhaust. Of course, the drum, being made of steel, becomes hot. (They have been asked) to run water over it, but they never do. Also, this steel drum is too small for very large dogs, and is not used, in which case each dog is held up on its hind legs by one man who has a nylon noose around the dog's neck twisted choking tight ... A second man then "shoots it to death."

It is highly desirable, therefore, that the equipment and methods experimentally found suitable be manufactured in such precise specifications and made available at reasonable cost to humane societies, public and private laboratories, and individuals such as mink ranchers. To the extent possible, this equipment should be adaptable to different needs, by the addition or subtraction of various optional features.

Once the equipment is available commercially, or in the absence of such availability in home-made equipment, it becomes a question of establishing or supporting a new facilities. At the present time, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is trying to establish a "euthanasia center".

The decision to go into the business of actually doing the business of euthanasia, is a major decision. Equally major is whether any facility will succeed in alleviating the intense suffering of millions of animals. However, we need to see the need for giving to help solve a major problem.

A box constructed in Spain, in which carbon dioxide is used to produce unconsciousness, can be used to effect a quick death. This equipment has disadvantages, but is much superior to the use of cyanide or barbiturate. It is now generally used in Spain according to Mr. Colin Platt, field officer of the International Society for the Protection of Animals, London.

Photograph from Pregon en despedida Los animales Barcelona

Humane Information Services Active

In addition to the experimental testing and participating in the tests of methods used in killing small 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 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 work on both extensive and extensive work in this field. If funds can be found, and has been accepted with practically no change the Research Plan prepared by Humane Information Services.

Application for funds has been made.

This matter of funding is the principal concern of the Humane Information Services. This project, has not as yet been the subject of any important private financial, no matter how important it is. They respond generously to the need for giving to help solve this major problem. A financial contribution may make the difference between life and death to millions of animals.

Neither Bill as Effective as Rogers-Javits Bill

In our Report to Humanitarians No. 6, for December, 1960 (pages 10-12), we reviewed the possible alterations in the Rogers-Javits bill, in case the humane movement should decide to give up the fight for that bill and go for some lesser accomplishment. One alternative described was an amendment of P.L. 89-944 containing essentially the same provisions as the presently introduced Whitehurst bill. This possibility, however, was advanced as an alternative only if it were decided that passage of the Rogers-Javits bill, if the Whitehurst bill (in the 1st Congress (now in the 91st Congress) would be considered. The bill actually made was to continue the effort to pass the Rogers-Javits bill. For a time, it looked as if the efforts of the New York and New Jersey humanitarians would be strengthened by the introduction of the red herring represented by the Whitehurst bill, has changed the picture completely.

Hearings Needed

The very earliest time at which hearings on the Rogers-Javits bill could be held is some Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce be expected is late spring or early sum. This Committee, which last year considered the Young bill, may, in the fall of the year, might be persuaded to hold earlier hearings. Other humanitarians, members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, might be persuaded to hold earlier hearings. One such possibility is which the House Agriculture Committee might hold hearings on the Rogers-Javits bill. Hearings on the Rogers-Javits bill on the Young bill, before anything is done on the Rogers-Javits bill. In that case, hearings on the Rogers-Javits bill will probably present evidence that neither of the new bills would do what is needed, and stimulate the new Committee to adopt features of the Rogers-Javits bill.

Situation has been greatly muddled by the introduction of these new bills. One danger is that Congress may have become so lost in the confusion that, actually 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, without actually accomplishing what the Rogers-Javits bill is designed to achieve.
Our Officers' Corner

Braintwashen Humanitarians

One of our most valued members objected to a headline in the latest issue of our paper stating, "Braintwashen Humanitarians" over an explanation of a totally unfounded criticism of the Rodgers-Atwood Bill. We agreed that the headline was not appropriate, but thought the headline would be respected by people who had innocently fallen for the fabrication. It implied they were guilty.

This member is right. Humane Information Services will never hesitate "to sell it like it is," regardless of who may be offended. To perpetuate the telephone siphonation criticism should be constructive and impersonal, and not impugn either the motives or the intelligence of those who hold the views to which we object. We therefore advised the complainant that this article implied they were guilty.

You were not "braintwashed" -- just laboring under a misperception resulting from exposure to disinformation.

That Small Type

Looks like all we're doing today is apologizing -- but we really don't mind admitting error. Everybody prides himself on having one or two "pet issues," and probably is more appropriate, anyway.

But we still cling to the belief that humanitarians should not be defending themselves a little in order to better prepare themselves to help the animals. Many of these columns of newspaper and magazine articles every day are as contained in one of our quarterly Reports. Our members have statistically confirmed our belief in their willingness to read comprehensively, in-depth reports on important humanitarian problems and alternative solutions, but that small type on pages 2 and 3 of our last Report is something else, again! We received at least a half dozen letters saying it was too small to read.

Well, our office is suffering enough, but can they read it without difficulty? No doubt that is because they have lived simple, wholesome and moral lives! But hereafter we will try our level best not to reduce the size of type in order to accommodate readership that has grown.

Old Doc simply has to curb his verbosity!

Change in "News About Animals"

We have just run off a third large printings of our quarterly Reports. If anything, we will take care of your orders until manner or fall, when we will issue an entirely new edition. The changes attendant upon the laboratory legislation contained on page 2 of the first edition probably will become outdated, which is what is reproduced on this page. Since the "News" is intended for new readers who know little or nothing about humane legislation, this new general article probably is more appropriate, anyway.

The response of our members in distributing the first edition was overwhelming. How can we keep it up? One member suggests beauty shops as one of the best places to leave copies. So send in your first or renewal order now -- enclosing one-half cent per copy to help pay postage (stamps will do if you can't afford a cent each).

This is the simplest and easiest way for our members to promote humane education.

Please Read About Euthanasia

On page 2 of this Report is a comprehensiveness of which we are proud. It would do you no good to read this article, as a duty to the animals.

Frederick L. Thomsen
President

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 such memberships. Although we need and are mighty glad to receive such contributions, because we 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 telephones books or people who have expressed antagonism or indifference to humane principles, hoping they will become "educated." They will not read the Reports, so all that will be accomplished is to add to our expense bills. The best sources of names are the lists of directors, officers and members of local humane societies. Officers of those societies need not fear that putting these people on our mailing list may result in losing contributions to the local society; on the contrary, when people become better informed about humane matters, 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 human problems are similar to those of the Humane Society of the United States, because the president of Humane Information Services once was an active director of HSUS, and was also possible to cooperate easily with the HSUS in conducting some programs of mutual interest, a few of our readers have asked whether we are affiliated with the HSUS. The answer is no.

That is not so. We are entirely separate moral human organizations which happen to happen that humanitarians should work together as far as possible. But we neither support nor endorse the HSUS about many things, mainly concerning the priorities attaining 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 concerns for animals expressed by Ernest Bills and the HSUS, and the reasonable way in which it approaches our common problems.

But it is not a dollar with the explanation that it cannot be more because you are sending twenty-five dollars to the HSUS, we must report to you again that we are not a branch or affiliate of HSUS. Humane Information Services would starve to death if everyone expected us to be elated over receipt of news that a substantial donation had been made to another organization in lieu of one to us. We have a job to do, and you are helping it.

Do try to hold down please for funds in our Reports, but he doesn't have to continually look at the balance in our check book as we do!

Encyclopedia Received

In response to our request in Report No. 10, we received a number of offers of encyclopedias. One with the latest copyright date was from the American Education Foundation, because the president of Humane Information Services once was an active director of HSUS, and was also possible to cooperate easily with the HSUS in conducting some programs of mutual interest. We are glad to accept the offer of an encyclopedia in lieu of one to us.

It has been put to good use. We are grateful to all who helped and offered to help.

Richard L. Beckwith
Executive Secretary

Gas Masks for Everybody in 1990?

Only a few years ago the only ones clamoring for gas masks were those who thought the environment against the destructive encroachments of people were the humanitarians and conservationists. The day was in coming, calling attention to the rapid loss of nature's heritage, to the wanton destruction of wildlife and the needless conversion of so many beautiful natural resources to the world's needs.

But their pleas fell on deaf ears; men and women were more interested in using all available oil to satisfy their need for power expand, i:f we attempt to replace fossil fuel with nuclear power we must be prepared to exchange hydrocarbon pollution for the equally dangerous and more insidious categories of atomic pollution. But the scientist predicts that if the present pollution rate continues people in the United States by 1990 will be forced to wear special breathing masks or die.

This pollution not only affects the air we breathe, but potentially the very existence of the land on which some of us stand. The blanket of pollution ranging up from us may very well screen the earth's surface and reduce the health of all living things. As fossil fuel power -- coal and oil -- using directly or indirectly in the production of electric power already is polluting the atmosphere to the point of contributing an immediate and more insidious change of major proportions. As the population and need for power expand, if we attempt to replace fossil fuel with nuclear power we must be prepared to exchange hydrocarbon pollution for the equally dangerous and more insidious categories of atomic pollution. But the scientist predicts that if the present pollution rate continues people in the United States by 1990 will be forced to wear special breathing masks or die.

So, now the welfare of man has come to be tied closely to the welfare of all kinds of wildlife. We need the welfare of our species is of interest only to bird watchers and Boy Scouts. Only the ignorant refer disdainfully to animals as "dirty beasts." Now, as the President of the County Port Authority when fighting for retention of plans for the Everglades Jetport, to wildlife as "yellow-bellied sucker". It behooves all of us, for the sake of all the animals, to get a job at an environmental organization where we can work on behalf of those we care most about.