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Follow-Up Letter from Henry Spira to John Oedzes

Henry Spira

Animal Rights International

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Animal Rights International

August 5, 1991

Mr. John Oedzes
Brown Packaging Co.
Old Dutch Valley Drive
PO Box 703
South Holland IL 60473

Dear Mr. Oedzes

We are in receipt of Rabbi Armand Rine's letter dated July 18, 1991. But the issue, Sir, has nothing to do with the Rabbi, it has everything to do with your apparent willingness to sacrifice worker safety and the humane handling of animals in order to save the few dollars it would cost Brown Packing to change over to currently operational alternative systems which permit ritual slaughter without hanging conscious calves upside down, in mid air, chained by one leg.

If you're searching for an appropriate context I recommend "Pinto Madness" by Mark Dowie, in Mother Jones, Sept./Oct. 1977. This expose documents how Ford compared costs to modify the gas tanks on Pinto cars to what it would cost them to pay for burn injuries and deaths caused by Pinto's exploding gas tanks. Their cost-benefit analysis came out in favor of death and suffering and they acted accordingly [unfortunately for Ford, an investigative reporter documented the story].

All objective documentation to date has shown that shackling and hoisting is more stressful to the animal than upright restrainer systems. As we have indicated in earlier correspondence the upright system is currently operational, no longer experimental, with the equipment commercially available. And at this time, alternatives much less costly than the Utica Veal double-rail conveyor system could easily be built.

Rabbi Rine states that the hoist and shackle method is "no more cruel and traumatic than any other method of restraint." With all due respect to the Rabbi's opinions, scientific research indicates otherwise. See for example research at the University of Connecticut, Rudy G. Westervelt, Don M. Kinsman, Ralph P. Prince, and Walter Giger Jr., "Physiological Stress Measurement During Slaughter in Calves and Lambs," Journal of Animal Science, Vol. 42, 831-832.

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Common sense would suggest not only that a live animal shackled and hoisted will suffer excruciating pain and distress, but also that this creates a hazardous workplace. And this is in fact documented in Temple Grandin's Fall 1990 article, "Humanitarian Aspects of Shehitah in the United States" which appeared in Judaism, a publication of the American Jewish Congress. Dr Grandin reports that at Utica Veal, "the installation of the restrainer resulted in a drastic reduction in accidents. Records reveal that for an 18 month period prior to the restrainer installation there were 126 working days lost due to five accidents. Three of these were very serious and one man had to have knee surgery. For an 18 month period after the restrainer was installed there was only one bruised hand, requiring two days off. The restrainer has been in place for over three years and there have been no additional accidents" (p. 442). Clearly this is an area which may well be of interest to legislators and worker-safety public interest groups as well as to aggressive pioneering litigators.

We continue to feel that it would be productive to dialogue on opportunities for implementing more humane conditions in your slaughter plant. We'd like to call your attention to an article in the June 1991 Kashrus Magazine (p. 18) which notes that Dr. Temple Grandin "feels so strongly about elimination of shackling and hoisting equipment in kosher plants that she is prepared to waive her normal consulting fees (requesting only expenses) for these consultations."

Sincerely,



Henry Spira
Phone 212 873 3674

copies made available to:
Steve Bjerklie
Patrick Boyle
John Hoyt
Sarah Lilygren
Rabbi Armand Rine
Rod Smith