Are We Right in Demanding An End to Animal Cruelty?

By Roger Caras

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The claim made by the hunting community was that "The Guns of Autumn" lacked typicality—that the word used by a lot of them: typicality. It did not show all of hunting, just what they call "slob hunters." Okay, when we ask to react to the show by CBS, I was forced to agree with the hunters.
that the show did omit too much. I listed these points as missing from "The Guns of Autumn"—points that would have helped viewers have a more representational picture of hunting as it is in America. A picture painted by an Andrew Wyeth instead of a Paul Klee. That the show did fall somewhat short of real typicality. Paul Klee won.

But there is something else about the show, and I think a little more is at stake than what we are talking about here. It was the reaction of the hunting community to the show. The industry complained that it had boomer their faking self-image. Our libraries are choke-full of books that further the fiction that the hunter is the original and true great American. The hero-in-the-field-type book is found in all public libraries by the hundreds. Our newstand are covered with American Rifleman, Guns and Ammo, Guns Magazine, Sports Afield, Field and Stream, Outdoor Life, and all of the other magazines that are filled with nothing but articles about how great the way is and how brave and how durable, how the hunter is the only real sportsman and the only real animal lover.

Most newspapers today have hunting and fishing columns—sometimes more than one. "The American Sportsman" was on ABC for years featuring every imaginable kind of supercelebrity doing everything that moved and always looked to make the cool hero. Manufacturers—like the gun manufacturers—make hunting goods that are the cool hero. Sporting goods manufacturers issue catalogs filled with the things for killing.

I think the hunters have acted an awful lot like communists. Isn't that what communists do, try to get the other side muzzled so that they can't be heard? Isn't that what the hunters didn't? O'Keeffe won. The hunters try to force "The Guns of Autumn" out of existence! I think the American hunters have a majority of communists talking to them ever to wear such a bumper sticker with pride again, except perhaps in the mid­dle of the forehead where it would look as silly as it really is.

Why do you and I frequent the hunting show? He has his magazines, books, catalogs, and radio ads, television programs. He has a President that calls for Na­tional Hunting Day. He has all of that, yet, unlike us, he is afraid to have us speak. While I, at least, welcome his voice, I have never heard a hunter talk for us. One time making us look like fools. It is not without reason that the National Shooting Sports Fdn. and the National Rifle Assn. and other interested groups print brochures telling hunters how to reply if challenged by a non-hunter. Imagine you and me reading a guide to tell someone why it is wrong not to spay a cat or why it is bad to play coon-on-a-log.

I think it is very germane, very im­portant for us to understand why we in­still such fear in hunters when we do nothing more or less American than ex­press our view or why they literally go wild when a network expresses a view that isn't dictated chapter and verse by their party line. The answer to all of that contains the answer to the question, "How can meat eaters still ob­ject to hunting?" Think about this:

If, for one, a woman is a hunter has a right to decide whether or not she is ready or able to become a mother. I firmly believe in birth control and abor­tion, but that doesn't mean I have to work in an abortion clinic in order to justify my belief. I believe autopsies should be done on the deceased for the proper determination of cause of death and for the further education of medical practitioners. Must I then want to work in a post-mortem room? I believe that Charles Manson at least belongs in prison for the rest of his life—at least that.

Must I want to be a prison guard? I believe in death from leg­al punishment. Must I vie to become the hangman? I believe in a strong pro­fessional code that insures to keep order in our cluttered urban lives. Must I rush after every sten and run to the scene of every mishap, crime, criminal disaster? I know our surplus dogs and cats must be euthanized in great num­bers. Must I want to do the job? (At one time, for a time, I did do it and know what it is like well enough.)

I must want to do every dirty job that there is to be done in our society? Must I have leverage to care about the leper? Must I be paralyzed to want to contribute to the handicapped? The argument that meat eaters are in trouble on this hunt­ing thing only seems like a sensible argument. There is no sense to it at all.

We have the digestive system of the carnivore, and many of us still eat meat—most of us, in fact. That does not mean that we cannot decry unneces­sary killing and hunting. And it certainly does not mean that we cannot scream bloody murder when fellow men get their kicks out of inflicting pain and death, for when one of us does it we all do it. Let there be no mistake about that. In the humane community we are not isolated—we have no ivory tower and no corner in heaven. We are of man, of the union of man and woman, of the man to a human life span, and we live in the company of our fellows. We share the glories and the griefs of all our species. We are one.

I, for one, believe a woman has a right to decide whether or not she is ready or able to become a mother. I firmly believe in birth control and abortion, but that doesn't mean I have to work in an abortion clinic in order to justify my belief. I believe autopsies should be done on the deceased for the proper determination of cause of death and for the further education of medical practitioners. Must I then want to work in a post-mortem room? I believe that Charles Manson at least belongs in prison for the rest of his life—at least that. Must I want to be a prison guard? I believe in death from legal punishment. Must I vie to become the hangman? I believe in a strong professional code that insures to keep order in our cluttered urban lives. Must I rush after every sten and run to the scene of every mishap, criminal disaster? I know our surplus dogs and cats must be euthanized in great numbers. Must I want to do the job? (At one time, for a time, I did do it and know what it is like well enough.)

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enforcement of the Endangered Species Act more difficult, if not chaotic. The bill would exempt from the act’s provisions those inventories of parts or products of endangered species lawfully within the United States by or on Dec. 28, 1973. The problem the bill would create for enforcement authorities lies in the difficulty of distinguishing legal from illegal inventories. The result would undoubtedly encourage smuggling of products derived from endangered species. Also, the dumping of existing inventories on the market would re-establish their use and encourage further smuggling.

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The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, the agency in charge of the execution and enforcement of the U.S. Animal Welfare Act, reported in July that the number of animal dealers, exhibitors, and researchers licensed and inspected under the act rose sharply in 1974.

By the end of 1974, APHIS had licensed a total of 5,133 animal dealers, a 20% increase over the total number (4,287) licensed in the previous year. There were 1,097 licensed or registered animal exhibitors, up 23% from the 890 listed a year earlier. A total of 967 research facilities were registered at the end of 1974, compared to 865 the previous year, a 12% increase. The result of the increase of licensees and registrants, plus stricter enforcement, more than doubled routine compliance inspections during 1974—22,939 compared to 10,965 in 1973. Searches to sensitize a total of 5,133 animal dealers, a 20% increase over the total number (4,287) licensed in the previous year. Litigation was under way in 31 cases of alleged violations, up from 11 cases the previous year.

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Last October a federal administrative law judge issued a cease and desist order against a Fayetteville, N.C., kennel operator charged with violating the Animal Welfare Act. J. L. Joyner, owner of the Twin Oaks Kennels, was charged by APHIS with shipping puppies in poor health without proper forms and identification. APHIS and Joyner reached an agreement, endorsed by the judge, to eliminate the violations.

Sale of Monkeys Banned by HEW

The U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) has banned the importation of monkeys for commercial sale into the U.S. because they threaten humans with a variety of infectious diseases. HEW issued the order last October to prohibit the importation of nonhuman primates except for bona fide scientific, educational, or exhibition purposes. The order also establishes a mandatory disease surveillance and control program for monkeys imported under provisions of the regulation.

Although significant, HEW’s action will reduce only slightly the massive number of exotic animals being imported into the U.S. by the pet industry. The industry continues to import many species of animals that pose a disease threat to people, domestic animals, and native American wildlife. This, coupled with a high mortality rate of wild animals caught and shipped by commercial animal dealers, as well as a high euthanasia rate for animals rejected by their owners after they have been purchased, has made the traffic in imported pets a national scandal.

For the past 2 years officials at the U.S. Dept of the Interior have been talking about issuing regulations to limit the importation of wild animals that would be injurious to people by employing the little-used Lacey Act of 1900. HSUS has encouraged Interior to proceed with the proposal, but it now appears as though the agency has reached an impasse on the issue.

Congressional opposition has been a major reason for Interior’s dilemma. Last June, Rep. Robert L. Leggett (D-Calif.), chairman of the Subcommittee on Wildlife Conservation of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, held a private, unrecorded meeting with pet industry representatives and subsequently rejected Interior’s proposed regulations. Leggett said the regulations would be burdensome to importers and nearly impossible to discharge.

In July, Nathaniel P. Reed, assistant secretary of Interior for fish, wildlife, and parks, assured Leggett that Interior would review his recommendations. But Interior has not yet submitted any new proposals to Congress.

HSUS is convinced this issue will be ignored by Interior and Congress unless the public protests the lack of government action. HSUS urges all members and supporters to write immediately to the Dept. of the Interior urging the Secretary to issue the final regulations and protesting the continued sacrifice of exotic animals by the pet industry. Write to: The Hon. Thomas Kleppe, Secretary, The Dept. of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

CARAS Continued

again and again, and I will say it on the day I die if I have time. It is wrong to cause pain. It is wrong to cause fear, and to allow preventable pain and preventable fear to exist is not less a culpable offense than causing it. That is my credo. I will argue it in heaven or hell. I will face any man or woman alive and argue it forever. It is wrong to cause pain and fear—to allow it is as bad as causing it. And just as long as that credo and that belief can be introduced into any specific argument, we need never fear a test or a challenge. That is a clear and positive right. I am more sure of it than I am of my private view of God and religion. I am more sure of that than I am of anything else in my experience as a man. As long as I believe that that credo is a valid view of my responsibility on earth, I, for one, will fear no argument and no man—I can live on and with it.

I hope you can find in your own heart a conviction as strong, for together we will strike fear in more than the heart of the hunter. We will one day eradicate all among us who are vestigial, all who are left over from the cave, all who have come forward into our time and threaten to contaminate the future of mankind (our children) with the stink and the rot of pain and terror glorified. They are wrong; we are right. I can state no other certainty with so much conviction. God bless you for what you stand for, and for what you do, and for where you are leading mankind.

Regional Office Moves

The HSUS Gulf States Regional Office has been relocated. The new address is:

HSUS Gulf States Regional Office
Building A, Room 209
5333 Everhart Rd.
Corpus Christi, TX 78411