Are We Right in Demanding An End to Animal Cruelty?

By Roger Caras

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article was delivered as the keynote speech at the 1975 HSUS Annual Conference last October in Houston, Texas.

O
discussion has been titled "Cruelty—So What?" What kind of a question is that? Do we need an explanation for what we do, what we believe in, what we fight for? Surprisingly enough, we do. Should we pause, and should we determine if we are right. Perhaps, and mind you I only say perhaps, we take too much for granted, for who here has really questioned our cause in a very long time?

If we are right, we would see an end to the fur trade. What would an end to the fur trade mean? Many highly skilled and creative people would have to rechannel their talents into some other commercial and social use. Furriers, close down your salons. Leave our wildlife alone and close those imaginary pleas and work toward these ends? Are we right for those things we hate—nothing to do with religion. Nothing! And we have hacked out a cancerous sore in the scientific community (not as an adversary but as a friend): about 80% of what goes on in the laboratory has nothing whatsoever to do with the good of mankind Only 20% can be ex- aminated to that level. That remaining 80%, is for the fun, profit, reputation, or other benefit of the experimenter. I am not qualified, or paid, to say to me that we can start with an 80% reduction in the number of animals used, and if that conclusion is a reductum ad absurdum, I'll settle (for the time being) for 75%. We may be a little less sure of ourselves besides the laboratory bench than we are by the rodeo chute or the slaughterhouse trap. But this I can tell you. We have enough right on our side to push ahead, know it clean, and then it is very straightforward.

I think rodeo can be modified so as to no longer torture animals. It need not go. It can accommodate itself. It can be a wild west show that will not cut into regional pride, will not deface self- image and tradition. They can make a mark of history. But those accommodations must be made. They persist in our time not as history, but as the huckstering of showfolk. They are quick buck tricks, crowd pleasers (they had real crowd pleasers in the Roman arena, too—Caligula loved them). Let us not mistake huckstering for historical pride and na- tional image. We are right in calling for a modification, a profound modification of the present rodeo card, and let the devil have his company, for that is good company for both.

Well, we are raising havoc, aren’t we? We have let the fur industry simply die, we have hacked out a cancerous sore in the meat processing industry, and we have asked the people of that branch of the show business known as rodeos to straighten up and act like men and not monsters. Where else would we lay our heavy hand?

In the laboratory, for one place. Are we right when we ask for modification in the research community? You better be—United, unlike some of you, I am not an ant-vivisectionist. My mother died of lung cancer, and I know what that means. I would see a lot of mice die of that disease before I would see another member of my family, or one of you, die of cancer. I do not know enough about medicine to know point-for-point what must be done with live animals and what can be done instead with cell cul- tures and computer models.

Perhaps none of us knows quite enough or quite as much as we should. But I do know this from long association with the scientific community (not as an adversary but as a friend): about 80% of what goes on in the laboratory has nothing whatsoever to do with the good of mankind Only 20% can be ex- aminated to that level. That remaining 80%, is for the fun, profit, reputation, or other benefit of the experimenter. I am not well sure of ourselves besides the laboratory bench than we are by the rodeo chute or the slaughterhouse trap. But this I can tell you. We have enough right on our side to push ahead, know it clean, and then it is very straightforward.

Next, what might we question our- selves on? I think we might cate one—hunting. That is a multi-bil- lion-dollar industry. The per capita in- comes of some states, business, show tickets have a special. It was called “Eagles of the Guns of Autumn,” and it was our president, John Hoyt, deported himself handsomely—coming off as the reasonable, intelligent, and informed gentleman he is. Not everyone on the show did as well.

The claim made by the hunting com- munity was that “The Guns of Au- tumn” lacked typicality—that was a word used by a lot of them: typically. It did not show all of hunting. Just what they claimed it was. Okay. We were asked 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 representa-
tional picture of hunting as it is in Ameri-
can. A picture painted by an Andrew
Wyeth instead of a Paul Klee.

I think the hunters have acted an awful lot like communists. Isn't that what com-
munists do. Try to get the other side
muzzled so that they can't be heard? Isn't that what the hunters didn't do? They
tried to force "The Guns of Autumn" out
of existence? I think the American hunting community of communist taxis
ever to wear such a bumper sticker with
pride again, except perhaps in the mid-
tie's, for the further education of medical
students. I firmly believe in birth control and abor-
tion, but that doesn't mean I have to work in an abortion clinic in order
to justify my belief. I believe autopsies
don't have to be done in our society? Must
we frighten them, you know. I firmly believe
in a strong pro-

Health is an absurd anachronism; it is
a leftover thing. It is a shard of a 
buried culture, an unwelcome artifact of
another kind of man. We are trying to
excise it, or exorcise it, not reaffirm in
some incestuous little cluster that we are
right and somebody else is wrong.

We all know you can photograph wild-
life and not shoot it—or that you can
look at it, but not shoot it. We all know these things, so what we are trying to do is get rid of
something that is sick in society and
that is murderous to the handicapped. We are trying to something that is sick in society and
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No running game being given live rac-
coons and other small animals to tear
apart and practice on. We have the digestive system of the
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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 find persons evading regulations went to 11,691 in 1974, up from 6,001 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.

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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