PATRICIA CURTIS, ANIMAL RIGHTS (NEW YORK: FOUR WINDS PRESS) 1980.

This book gives a true account of what every sensitive person should know. Moving across the broad spectrum of animal use and abuse, it removes any shadow of doubt as to whether the rights of animals should be taken seriously.

The value of the book lies in its exceptional clarity and authenticity—a product of the author's intimate knowledge of the subject and her superb skill in communication. There is no need for embellishment: the facts speak for themselves. Written in plain, unemotional English, each story illustrates how the rights of our fellow creatures are constantly being violated by exploiting interests. Significantly, those who bear the brunt of the criticism are usually in the employ of these interests, which have hitherto been shielded from blame.

In correcting widespread misconceptions about the nature of man's treatment of subordinate animals, the book forms a prelude to a major campaign which must be fought and won if a beachhead is to be established in this area. There is no denying that the ethical challenge is the most potent weapon that has yet become available to animal welfarists. Once it becomes generally accepted that individual animals are entitled to receive just treatment, the main obstacle to progress will have been removed.

This can only happen, however, when the public becomes sufficiently incensed over the injustices perpetrated on animals, a process which is dependent on awareness. Who would have imagined for example, that the utter boredom and total deprivation of freedom experienced by a caged zoo animal is comparable to a sentence of life imprisonment imposed on a hardened criminal? That the modern system of livestock husbandry—factory farming—is not only depriving billions of creatures of their birthright, but that it is actually harmful to humans? In the chapter, 'We Are What We Eat: Factory Farming', the reader is told of the 'chemicalisation' of the food supply, of its possible effect on ourselves and the environment, of how grain that could be used to feed the Third World is sequestered by agribusiness, of research being done on mechanized systems that would drop broiler chickens into conveyor belts or suck them up from the floor into giant "harvesting" machines that would eliminate the need for slaughtering each chicken separately.

At the opposite end of the scale, the same chapter describes the deplorable treatment of fully conscious animals awaiting slaughter for kosher meat. These animals are exempted from the provisions of "humane slaughter" laws, which stipulate that livestock be stunned. The imaginary author, Jennifer McNair, a veterinarian, introduces us to vegetarianism as a practical alternative to dependence on the slaughterhouse. She lists the different categories of vegetarians but emphasizes that, although she herself is one, she does not try to convert others. Instead, she is concentrating on helping animals "through what I think we can achieve right now—better laws, more information, humane changes in intensive agriculture."

In bringing home to the reader the unwelcome news that innocent creatures are being martyred in the interests of "progress", Patricia Curtis has rendered an invaluable service, both to those who would be activists in improving the lot of defenceless animals and to the many others who would wish them well. It is to this latter group that the animal rights movement must speak if the rights of animals are to be taken seriously by people in a position to effect change.

This, then, is an important work, and a copy should be made available in every public library and school library across the land.

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