PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

In 1965, a U.K. Governmental Committee (the Littlewood Committee) described the practice of animal experimentation as "a moral and social problem of the first magnitude." And so it is.

It is a vast and complex problem, riddled with ethical dilemmas, because the problem is not simply about animal welfare, nor even animal rights; it is about us. It is about how human beings, at least in the West, perceive, understand, and seek to control the world they live in.

Perhaps this can be said about all aspects of animal and environmental exploitation, but nowhere does the truism stand out more clearly than in the vexed case of animal experimentation.

A glance at the chart illustrates the point. Almost everything that our society does results in experiments on animals. In most instances this experimentation is inextricably bound up with other ethically and socially questionable practices such as intensive farming and environmental destruction. Moreover, our failure to deal adequately with pressing human problems such as mental health in the West and famine in the developing world is bound up with it, too.

What our society does, and what it fails to do, is all part of the same mindset. That mindset is anthropocentric; egotistical, aggressive, hyperexpansionist, and reductionist. It seeks to dominate and control our environment. It attempts to solve complex problems by dissecting them into their "component parts" and subjecting these parts to "rational" analysis and scientific "proof."

It is not difficult to see, then, that any radical solution to the problem of animal experimentation (i.e., its cessation) cannot be attained by tackling the problem itself. The problem is the inevitable consequence of our thinking, the end of the line. A radical solution represents a fundamental challenge to our entire culture. Animal experiments will not be stopped until we have changed the world.

Those of us who recognized this years ago but continued to struggle with pragmatic problems, attempting to paper over the cracks by legislation, have found little reward in our piecemeal achievements. Moreover, pragmatists are criticized from all quarters, by exploiters of animals and defenders of animal rights alike. Yet, we continue to do this work, because we can see no other way, at least in the short-term, of effecting changes which will benefit at least some animals now.

Those animals are the innocent victims of our culture. They are suffering and dying in their millions. They have no voice with which to plead their own case, and they cannot afford to wait while we philosophize about whether or not they have natural rights, nor can they wait for us to change the world.

We must each decide, following the dictates of our own consciences what individual contribution we can make to attaining the short-term goals which will benefit at least some animals in the foreseeable future.

New laws will be passed whether or not we choose to participate in the legislative process. No opportunity should be lost to ensure that these laws turn out to be the most favorable for the animals which can be attained at the present time.

In particular, we should concentrate a great deal of our effort on Europe. The
European Parliament at Strasbourg, France, can effectively be lobbied, as shown by the recent success in stopping importation of sealskin products into the European Economic Community. E.E.C. Directives have the force of law in the ten member countries of the Community. Through this machinery, we have the opportunity to attain piecemeal reforms, such as the removal of LD50 and Draize tests from testing protocols.

These battles are often thankless, and the importance of always keeping in mind our long-term goals cannot be over-estimated. It is these goals which keep our spirit alive.

Once I despaired, not expecting to see world change in my own lifetime. Now I see that the world is continually changing.

It is hardly possible these days to pick up the British Medical Journal without finding some passing reference to holistic medicine, nor to turn on our independent television station, Channel 4, without seeing someone extol the virtues of exercise, whole food diets, yoga, or "alternative" cancer therapies.

The present acceptance of these alternative approaches will ultimately reduce laboratory animal use, but primarily, they are changing our society. They are changing, for example, our expectations about health and shifting the burden of responsibility away from the medical profession and back to the community and the individual. These are radical changes.

Despite the magnitude and complexity of problems facing us in the animal rights movement, there is reason for optimism. Most of us tackling this problem are radical thinkers—Aquarian Conspirators, if you like. Our thoughts and actions matter. We are changing the world simply by being in it.

Here I would add a cautionary note. This is not a crusade. No fundamental or radical change has ever been attained by bludgeoning the "other side" into submission. Beware of crusade and of crusaders. Persons who feel they have "right" exclusively on their side are invariably not only wrong but dangerous.

At a recent U.K. meeting on "Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science," chaired by Tom Regan, I was engaged in a heated discussion with some anti-vivisectionists who challenged me to deny that all vivisectors were "scum." The challenge was issued with such hostility and venom that the inference appeared to be that if I refuted this obvious "truth," then I was "scum" also.

Well, I do refute it, most strongly. People who experiment on animals do so for a variety of reasons. A proportion of those people do genuinely believe that their work is helping sick people and that, therefore, it is ethically justifiable. It may still trouble their conscience. Two "vivisectors" of my own acquaintance are ethical vegetarians.

These are not evil or demented people. They are simply in the front line of subscribing to an ethic to which our entire society tacitly subscribes. Challenge that ethic and up go the defences. We cannot change the minds of animal experimenters by attacking them with arguments which invalidate their entire belief system. It may be possible, by reasoned argument, to change the minds of a few scientists, but intuition tells me that the long-term solution does not lie in rational discourse.

The behavior of each and every one of us is dictated largely by a series of patterns, formed in response to the environment and events to which we have been subjected. Many of these patterns are entrenched; we cling to them because we are afraid of what might be left if we let them go. In every case, when behavior patterns can be discarded, what remains is our true humanity; raw, caring, loving humanity. Be it a politician, a butcher, an animal rights activist, or an animal experimenter, what we all have in common deep inside us is much more real and much more powerful than the differences between us. We are all afraid; we can all feel pain; we can all love.

No longer do I regard myself as a crusader. I have often found, when I lay aside my rhetoric or reasoned arguments, that the "opponent" will do so, too. What can happen then is more than an argument which neither side can win, but communication between two human beings who may think very differently, but who, when they really get down to it, find much in common in the way they feel about issues.

I believe that only this kind of communication can effect lasting change, be-
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HOW ANIMALS AND HUMANS LEARN, BEHAVE AND INTERACT, HOW THE BODY FUNCTIONS AND IS CONSTRUCTED – studied by animal experiments.
EXPLORING WORKS UNDER THE SEA AND IN SPACE.
PREPARES FOR WAR AND CIVIL DISORDER.
EXPECTS MEDICAL CARE FOR ALL MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DISORDER (HANDICAP, DISEASE, INJURY).
BELIEVES THAT:

A. It has a moral duty to protect and improve the quality of human life;

B. It is both necessary and morally permissible to use animals for these purposes.

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