

Reports & Announcements

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REPORT:

Eastern Regional Planning
Conference, Mobilization
for Animals, February 13, 1982
Boston, Massachusetts

Mobilization for Animals is the former task force on laboratory experimentation which was originally set up at the Action for Life conference (see E&A 11/3) and subsequently integrated into the task force structure of A.R.M. at the Mobilization for Animal Rights conference (see E&A 11/4). It is now incorporated as an independent entity distinct from A.R.M. Its immediate purpose is to coordinate and successfully mount the largest demonstration against laboratory experimentation on animals which has ever taken place in this country. This demonstration will focus on experimentation on primates and will take place in three locations simultaneously on April 24, 1983. The targets of protest will be the primate research centers at the University of Washington, the University of Wisconsin, and Harvard University's facilities at Southboro, Massachusetts. For greater geographical accessibility, the western regional demonstration has been moved to the University of California at Davis.

The eastern regional planning session, which took place recently in Boston, was attended by approximately fifty hard-core activists who had clearly come to Boston to work. The exhausting but inspiring eight hour conference was divided into two sessions by a brief intermission for a vegan lunch and informal conversation among the participants. The morning session began with a detailed overview and summary of the preparations for the demonstration to date by Richard Morgan, national coordinator of the Mobilization. Morgan noted that media interest in the event is already

running high with inquiries a year and a half ahead by the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune. He estimated a turnout at the Southboro demonstration of at least 10,000 people.

The discussion which followed Morgan's talk focused on logistical questions and strategy and on the probable demands which the Mobilization would make of the primate centers: complete access at reasonable times to all parts of the facilities by the public; complete access to all files on experimentation; unguided and unannounced inspection of the laboratories by professional personnel; determination of the legitimacy of all proposed experiments by a panel of experts including at least one member of an animal rights group representing the animal's interest; and immediate cessation of certain experiments.

The afternoon session was devoted to the formation of a number of committees and assignment of tasks to the participants. The committees established were: outreach and organizing, research and documentation, promotional and organizing materials, fund raising, media and publicity, and logistics. The conference closed with the showing of a grisly but enlightening film on laboratory experimentation made by the Fund for Animals, which included graphic footage of burn "experiments" on unanesthetized pigs with a blow torch at a military testing center in San Antonio, Texas. Former military experimenter Donald Barnes also provided the participants with an update on the current status of the "Walgren Bill" on laboratory experimentation, whose provisions are currently being worked out with the input of Barnes and others. If passed, the bill will strengthen the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act by requiring that a panel of experts, including a person speaking on the animal's behalf, authorize experiments,

tighten the procedures for inspection of laboratories, and allocate funds for development of alternatives to live animal experimentation.

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A REPORT AND AN ANALYSIS:

Human/Companion Animal Bond Conference

The long-range importance of the First International Conference on the Human/Companion Animal Bond in Philadelphia in October cannot be over-estimated. If its ripple effect continues, we may be reaching a turning point in the long and complex history of the human-animal relationship.

Conference speakers, sponsors and attendees, totaling nearly 500, clearly reflected the variety of academic/scientific, charitable and economic interests concerned with the recognition and enhancement of companion animals in the lives of human beings. They were brought together by the University of Pennsylvania's four-year-old Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society and the new Delta Society of the Latham Foundation. (The Center is affiliated with the University's School of Veterinary Medicine.) Cosponsors included the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the Humane Society of the United States, and two British veterinary organizations.

The immediate interest of most of the participants was in making the case, scientifically and legally, for animal-facilitated therapy in institutional situations and for reversal of "no pets" policies in various types of public and private housing. Thus heavy emphasis was placed on the mental and physical health data

already accumulated by such psychiatrists as Aaron Katcher of the University of Pennsylvania and Samuel Corson of Ohio State and psychologist Boris Levinson, formerly of Yeshiva University. Katcher, for example, has shown that stroking a pet reduces hypertension, and that pet owners may live longer than non-owners. Of 92 hospitalized cardiac patients at a Maryland hospital, 53 had pets at home. After a year from discharge, only three had died. Of the 39 without pets, eleven had died within a year.

Corson's pioneer studies on the salutary effect of pets on the institutionalized in an Ohio nursing home and prison have prompted further studies and programs throughout the country, several of which were reported on at the conference.

Levinson, who 20 years ago virtually stumbled on the beneficial assistance of pets in psychotherapy and who has published widely on the subject, looked to the future. He foresaw the yet unnamed animal-human relationship field as a "full-fledged discipline, with a theory and methodology of its own." More research -- quantifying what, in a sense, is intuitively and anecdotally known -- he considered the key, particularly in the following four fields:

1. The historic role of animals in various human cultures and ethnic groups.
2. Effect on human personality development by association with animals.
3. Human/animal communication.
4. Therapeutic use of animals in psychotherapy, institutional and residential housing.

The 40 research papers presented showed that many scholars had anticipated the need. Anthropologist Joel S. Savishinsky of Ithaca College traced the historic and widely varying role of pets in numerous societies.

He, as did Katcher in another paper, postulated that the pet serves as an important medium between the realms of culture and nature. Maxine Fisher of Queens College discussed, from the standpoint of three of today's existing primitive societies, the eating of pets (dogs and pigs). Though the animal may end up in the pot, the person who raised it usually abstains.

It was no surprise that "companionship" appears to be the prime motivation for today's pet owning, according to results of several surveys. But, of course, it is the benefits of that companionship that are being analyzed most closely. New groups, besides the Pennsylvania Center, are entering this research area, such as the University of Minnesota. The Delta Society, a membership group, has been set up "for research, education and service on the interaction of people, animals and the environment." It is headed by one of the "dynamos" in the pet therapy field, Leo K. Bustad, Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University and author of Animals, Aging, and the Aged (Univ. of Minnesota Press). Its vice president, Michael McCullough, is a psychiatrist in private practice as well as being a clinical professor at the Washington State Veterinary School. (He is a leading proponent of using pets to reach emotionally disturbed people.)

The stake of the pet food, products and breeding industries in maintaining a large pet population is manifestly clear by their substantial funding of the conference. Today there are about 100 million pet dogs and cats on whom owners spend about \$5 billion annually. In 1974 pet food manufacturers spent \$70 million on T.V. advertising. The pet industry and small animal veterinarians are not unaware that by the year 2000, with its expected 31 million Americans over 65, the pet population could drop

dramatically due to pet animal restrictions on the type of housing often preferred by senior citizens.

As long as the "tool," i.e. "pet instead of a pill," aspects are not exploitive of the animal, the new trend in animal-human relationships should pay off for the animals by making their owners of all ages more aware of their pets' emotional and physical requirements. It should reduce, therefore, the numbers of animals euthanized annually because they are unwanted, unloved, unfit. Currently about 13.5 million animals are killed annually in pounds and shelters. At the conference the ethical obligation to the animal was made clear by John Hoyt, President of the Humane Society of the U.S. and by Bernard E. Rollin of Colorado State, author of Animal Rights and Human Morality (Prometheus Books).

As a result of the Conference and the impetus given to the emergence of a new discipline (or expansion of old ones), there should be major benefits. Soon more people may think more deeply about the various and conflicting roles in which they cast animals, for example, the lamb. It is cast by many persons in at least three roles: sacred, cuddly and "simply delicious." Recognizing and coming to grips with such ambivalence may be the turning point, referred to in the first paragraph, in the long history of human-animal relationships.

Ann Cottrell Free