

In the last 25 years various movements have vanguarded important social issues of which the civil rights and womens rights movements are two good examples. Invariably these movements have addressed significant social problems and have been the agents for constructive changes in society. The same spirit that formed these movements has adopted what I call the "animal rights" cause. I find myself at odds with some of these groups when they are opposing the exploitation of some animal or groups of animals on principle, without addressing the biological and economic realities of the situation.

The premises that the exploitation of wild animal populations for sport or profit is wrong underlies many of the arguments put forward by some of these "animal rights" groups. The logical extension of these arguments suggests that we all should become vegetarians. What could be more cold-blooded than our present system of meat production in which the animal is pumped up with synthetic hormones so it will grow more quickly, and often only sees the light of day on its way to the slaughter house? Clearly the current methods of slaughtering food animals, in my opinion, is no less brutal and inhumane than the killing of seal pups with a club, though I recognize that this is very difficult to evaluate. Vegetarians are in no position to be smug because they too consume wildlife albeit indirectly. To feed a burgeoning human population, the expansion and intensified use of cultivated lands has been necessary. The result has had drastic

implications for the local wild populations of plants and animals. A particularly good example of this is found in the prairies where the remaining vestiges of short grass prairie in Canada now totals only a few hundred square kilometers.

Environmental issues are often very complex and rarely can be reduced to a simple question of right and wrong. The Canadian harp seal hunt is a fine example of this. Greenpeace, using largely the sentimental appeal of seal pups, made the seal hunt in Canada superfluous by destroying the overseas markets. This was despite the fact that the bulk of scientific opinion held that the hunt was not endangering harp seal populations. The result: an important source of income was eliminated for many maritime fishermen and natives. Furthermore, a scenario in which the harp seal populations build up to a level where they compete with fishermen for fish stocks is not unthinkable. Thus the humble fisherman is dealt a double blow.

Humans are the erthropes: we must consume to live, so intrinsically we are exploiters. Decisions involving the environment need to be made in light of this fact, not in spite of it. That is not to say that we are free to squander the world's natural resources in the most expedient fashion. On the contrary, if at least some segments of our natural heritage are to be conserved for future generations, reasonable and responsible steps need to be taken towards minimizing our impact on the natural environment.

Pat Fargey
B.Sc. Zoology

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CHOPPING BLOCK

by Jens Andersen

Yours truly, Jens Andersen, is currently in the process of moving from one abode to another, an operation which reveals - in a most painful and time-consuming manner - the vanity of possessing worldly goods, packing the damn things into cardboard boxes, and lugging them around.



In place of my column I offer a choice tidbit: a short essay by the illustrious H.L. Mencken.

It was written in 1927, at a time when a number of suicides among college students was being blown up to epidemic proportions by newspapers and various other alarmists (I have heard similar rumblings recently, by the way). One college president, when questioned on the subject, told a reporter that the cause was "too much Mencken." Mencken at this time was at the peak of his career as a pessimistic critic of American life, and he was asked for a reply to the college president's charge. This is what Mencken said:

I see nothing mysterious about these suicides. The impulse to self-destruction is a natural accompaniment of the educational process. Every intelligent student, at some time or other during his college career, decides gloomily that it would be more sensible to die than to go on living.

I myself was spared the intellectual humiliations of a college education, but during my late teens,

with the enlightening gradually dawning within me, I more than once concluded that death was preferable to life. At that age the sense of humor is in a low state. Later on, by the mysterious working of God's providence, it usually recovers.

What keeps a reflective and skeptical man alive? In large part, I suspect, it is this sense of humor. But in addition there is curiosity. Human existence is always irrational and often painful, but in the last analysis it remains interesting. One wants to know what is going to happen tomorrow. Will the lady in the mauve frock be more amiable than she is today?

Such questions keep human beings alive. If the future were known, every intelligent man would kill himself at once, and the Republic would be peopled wholly by morons. Perhaps we are really moving towards that consummation now.

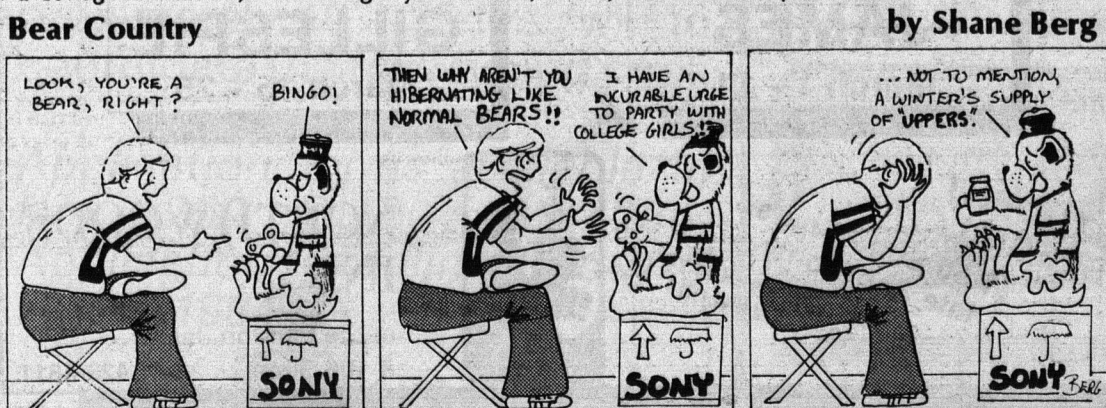
I hope no one will be upset and alarmed that various bishops, college presidents, Rotary lecturers and other such professional damned fools are breaking into print with high-falutin' discussions of the alleged wave of student suicides. Such men, it must be manifest, seldom deal with realities. Their whole lives are devoted to inventing bugaboos, and then laying them.

Like the news editors, they will tire of this bogus wave after a while, and go yelling after some other phantasm. Meanwhile, the world will go staggering on. Their notions are never to be taken seriously. Their one visible function on earth is to stand as living proofs that education is by no means synonymous with intelligence.

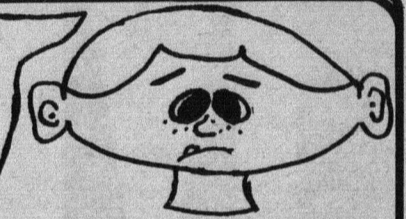
What I'd like to see, if it could be arranged, would be a wave of suicides among college presidents. I'd be delighted to supply the pistols, knives, ropes, poisons and other necessary tools. Going further, I'd be delighted to load the pistols, hone the knives and tie the hangman's knots.

A college student, leaping uninvited into the arms of God, pleases only himself. But a college president, doing the same thing, would give keen and permanent joy to great multitudes of persons. I drop the idea, and pass on.

by Shane Berg



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