

*Treatment of Animals*

government grants, and drug companies selling their products to government agencies. This was another measure aimed at improving the treatment of animals in our care.

I do not entirely agree with the comments of the hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. LeBlanc). He suggested that improved treatment of animals is brought about by the gradual effusion of time and that automatically, as time goes on, we shall treat the wildlife of Canada in a better way. I do not believe that. The history of man shows that these things do not happen automatically. But I agree with him when he suggests that the more appropriate and practical way of handling this problem is to refer it directly to a committee of the House. That could be done if the hon. member for Vancouver East were to write a letter to the steering committee of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and ask that this matter be put on the agenda for discussion. I would be happy to consider signing such a letter with the hon. member. That would be a practical way of bringing this problem to the attention of a committee of this House. There are already many committees sitting. Perhaps, though, it would not be amiss if a committee were to consider this important matter.

● (5:50 p.m.)

Man has followed a long process in working his way up from the swamp. It is time we have paid some attention to the poor, the helpless and the weak in our society. I am not referring only to animals, but to human beings. Not too many generations ago we regarded the young, the old, the sick and the poor as instruments that were of no great concern to society as a whole. That generation witnessed children working in mines and people languishing in prison for long periods without trial and often without food. The treatment of our animals was much worse.

In 1800 Richard Martin presented a bill in the British House of Commons to prohibit bull-baiting. In 1809 a bill was introduced to prevent wanton and malicious cruelty to animals. It passed the House of Lords, but was rejected by the Commons. The same action was repeated in 1810. Under our British democratic system people have been working for a long time to improve the welfare of animals in their care. In the process we have to think very carefully about how we will improve the welfare of animals.

When speaking of cruelty in the killing of animals it is well to realize that man is not

[Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary.)

their only enemy. Animals eat other animals, and are eaten in their turn. This is only one element in the over-all balance of nature. If this were not true, the over-all animal population would double or triple. Many more animals would be born, and many more would die because of predators or from starvation. It is not certain that the total suffering would be less under these circumstances: there would be more long, drawn-out suffering than there is at the present time.

We know that many young animals die in their first year of life. They are killed and eaten by other animals; they die because they cannot find enough food; they die because of storms and ice conditions; they die because of the forces of nature, as they did long before man came to hunt or trap them. It is difficult to say that their natural enemies will bestow upon them a kinder or more humane death than that which man provides.

There are some very serious concerns about the way we trap and treat animals in the wilds. The hon. member for Rimouski mentioned some of the improved methods of trapping that are available. Some very painful methods are used at the present time. With the leg-hold system the animal is often suspended in the air by one leg, or held for hours or days by one member. Often the animal is left lying long enough until he chews off the leg that is caught in the trap. The animals freeze or starve to death if they are left in the trap long enough. Human beings should be able to find better methods of killing animals, which are a necessary part of maintaining the balance of nature and the commerce of our land.

It is true that we have not done as good a job as we should have done. This question should be referred to a committee of the House for study. As the hon. member for Rimouski mentioned, new types of traps have been used and others have been partially developed. This is an improvement in this area. Legislation has been passed in other countries. Anti-leg hold trap legislation has been passed in England, Scotland, Wales, Austria, Norway, Finland and Germany. In the United States its use is strictly limited in Massachusetts and South Carolina.

At the present time in Canada, trapping legislation is in the hands of the provinces and is confined to setting up limits and curbing poachers. Trapping in the Northwest Territories, of course, is in the hands of the federal government; it is controlled by the federal parks branch of the Department