

Humane Animal Traps

Mr. Gilbert: Thank you. I always thank my colleagues for their kindness in helping me. I hope the hon. member who introduced this bill will bring forward another bill dealing with kindness to human beings. One of the members who preceded me talked about Hugh John Flemming's wife forming a kindness to animals club. It is about time there was a kindness club directed to human beings. I would think that a former diplomat, a member who has been attached to diplomatic missions across the world, would bring forward a bill abolishing nuclear weapons which kill people by the thousands. When I think of Nagasaki and Hiroshima it occurs to me that his next bill should be concerned with kindness to human beings.

I also hope the hon. member will widen the parameters to include killing in slaughter houses. What is humane about hitting a cow over the head with a big hammer, or slashing the throat of a chicken or turkey? I notice I have the support of the hon. member for Niagara Falls (Mr. Young). Therefore, although it is important that the hon. member has brought the bill before the House at this time, it is rather narrow in scope. It should really include the wider sphere of the humane treatment of other animals, more especially the humane treatment of human beings. I look forward to the hon. member introducing other bills in the House dealing with human beings, but I am very happy that this bill is going to committee.

● (1750)

Mr. Roger Young (Niagara Falls): Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert) for noticing my nod of agreement with him. My thoughts are somewhat in line with part of what he said, and I shall explain what I mean. I am not going to speak for a long time because I want to be off my feet before the hour of six o'clock to allow the subject matter of this bill to proceed to committee.

I heard some speeches this evening, Mr. Speaker, which made me want to make a few comments that might put the situation in a little bit off balance. We have spoken about the killing of animals. The hon. member for Broadview referred to this exactly as I would have said it. There is no really nice way to die, whether it is in terms of humans or animals. It is death, and that is pretty final.

I heard the hon. member who originally proposed the bill this evening talk in terms of "cruel and unusual punishment", which is something that usually comes up more in a debate on capital punishment than in terms of leg-hold traps for animals. I wonder whether he would have brought out some of his sentiments in that other debate.

I grew up on a farm, Mr. Speaker, and I have seen birth and I have seen death. I have lived with animals, and I have had to put down animals as humanely as possible when they have been injured or born deformed. It is not a nice thing to do. But I want to disabuse the House of the notion that all those people who trap and all those who manufacture and sell traps are unfeeling, bloodthirsty, and blood lusting, that they are uncaring monsters.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): I did not say that.

Mr. Young: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are some who seem to feel that. I did not say that that was an exact quote, but there are some people, whether in this House or outside in the country, who seem to feel that way. I happen to come from a riding which has within its boundaries the largest manufacturer of animal traps in this country, so I think I can speak with some knowledge.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Ah!

Mr. Young: I am not speaking entirely on their behalf either. The hon. member says "Ah!". I have spoken to them several times about the products that they are selling and about the upgrading of their traps and the revisions they are trying to make.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): They could build better mousetraps.

Mr. Young: They tried to build better mousetraps. They tried to build all kinds of better traps. This firm—I will not name it—I can tell the hon. member was the first to bring the Conibear trap on to the market, the most humane trap that we have today. They have also sold for many years the Victor leg-hold trap. I can tell the hon. member, who may not know this, that the Victor leg-hold trap has now been revised to the point where there are offset jaws, where there are inset pads, where there are no teeth in the jaws which close on the trap. All of this makes a trap more humane for an animal, Mr. Speaker, but it does not come out in the bill the hon. member is talking about.

I do not necessarily like to see this, but I can also point out, from checking market sales, that about 20 per cent of the sales of traps in this country today are made up of the Conibear trap, or more humane trap, and about 80 per cent are made up of the leg-hold variety. I think that says one thing to all of us here and to the people in this country: the market rules. Sales rule. If there is not a suitable alternative, the trapper is not going to buy it. He just cannot buy it today.

The hon. member's bill would subject manufacturers, sellers, and importers of traps to criminal punishment. I do not think it is fair to do this in the absence of a viable alternative. That is what I did not like in particular about the hon. member's bill, which I would have spoken very heartily against, because I think it is unfair treatment to those who are trying to produce a better trap.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): The bill has been withdrawn.

Mr. Young: The bill has been withdrawn, but I know from conversations with some of these manufacturers over the past couple of years, and as late as this afternoon, of the number of committees to which they belong. I know of the number of study sessions that they go to, and I know the amount of expense they go to in trying to develop more humane traps. So I do not think we should just load this all on to the backs of the trap manufacturer or the trapper, as was so well pointed out by the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth).