

[English]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

RESEARCH

STUDY BY STANDING COMMITTEE OF CARE, UTILIZATION AND TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

The House resumed, from Monday, October 26, 1970, consideration of the motion of Mr. Winch:

That, in the opinion of this House, the following matters should be referred to a standing committee designated by the Prime Minister, with authority to call for persons and papers and report its deliberations with recommendations (a) the use of animals for medical research purposes, their care and utilization, and procedures for government licensing and inspection of, and control over, all premises using animals for laboratory research or medical training (b) as far as federal jurisdiction permits, recommendations regarding legislation providing penalties for those abusing animals, and any persons making a business of raising or catching animals for sale to research individuals or centres and not keeping same in a humane manner (c) the most humane method of trapping fur-bearing animals (d) consideration of the entire Canadian picture relative to the maintenance of fish, bird and animal wildlife and the regulation required for conservation (e) consideration of federal and provincial jurisdiction on the aforementioned items, and proposals for an effective manner of attaining federal-provincial agreement and legislative action.

• (5:00 p.m.)

Mr. Jack Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, I followed with more than usual interest the earlier debate on this motion, motivated in part by concern for the welfare of animals, particularly those used in medical research and, in addition, as one who has lived not only in northern Ontario. When one live's only a few minutes drive or walk from the virgin forests you probably come to appreciate the value, beauty and necessity of maintaining animal life in Canada. And as a resident of the City of Toronto, where drives and long trips have to be undertaken in order to recognize the beauty of Canada's north-land, I probably take more interest in this subject than the average human being who has not had the opportunity to live in northern Ontario or for that matter in the Northwest Territories. In addition, it was brought home to me forcibly, as often happens to a father of children, by seeing programs on television or reading articles put out by wild life organizations and seeing the kind of abuse that cruel men sometimes commit when dealing with the animal world. A son or daughter who sees this kind of cruelty taking place recognizes that you are a legislator and asks what the government is doing in this field or, more particularly, what are you doing. So, from a sense of interest in the first instance, as a result of my early life and from a sense of obligation to children who look to a father for guidance and direction in this area, I have done a bit of research. I want to say at the outset that I welcome the hon. member's motion.

You know, he is not making suggestions or recommendations as to the kind of regulations we should have in dealing with animals. He is not suggesting the most humane method of trapping fur-bearing animals nor is he suggesting methods which might be used to preserve wildlife and animal life in Canada. He is suggesting that

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a special committee be set up to consider all the things he would like to see done in this field. Why does he feel that this is necessary? I suppose he has done at least as much reading as I have. He is probably a member of a wild life organization, maybe of one or two, and because of his interest in this field I am sure that people not only from his own constituency but all over Canada write to him, knowing his concern.

Who can disagree that today there is a necessity and a sincere desire to safeguard the health and welfare of research animals? We do recognize that there is cruelty. No government can legislate against cruelty. A government can only draw up guidelines for the direction of people who are entrusted with the care of these animals. In the past I believe there has been an abuse and a waste of research animals, not because the majority of researchers are callous, but because in all societies there are people who, in the absence of guidelines, act in an uncontrolled and disdainful manner. Our society is still far from perfect and we must constantly strive to bring about improvements. One of the wonderful things about Canada is that we get as disturbed as we do about the destruction of seals, the destruction of wolves, the destruction of animals, hunting them by aircraft and even the licences which have been given recently for the killing of polar bear for what have been described as good economic reasons. This amount of concern makes me feel we have little to worry about in this area.

What improvement has the federal government brought about in the use of research animals? It has established the Canadian Council on Animal Care and the Animal Care Resources Panel. Members of these responsible bodies, acting from a sincere desire and sense of obligation to provide the highest possible standards of care and treatment of animals used for scientific research and for teaching purposes, have produced a booklet called "Care of Experimental Animals—A Guide for Canada." I respectfully suggest that this be required reading for all engaged in this field. The concepts presented in this guide are derived from scientific principles, moral considerations and from a feeling of responsibility for the lower forms of life. Let me quote from the introduction to this guide:

Before the decision to use an animal for experiment is made, consideration must first be given to the possibility that lower orders, or non-sentient methods would provide the necessary information. If not, it is the responsibility of the investigator to choose judiciously the species of animal.

In this short quotation is summarized the entire field of responsibility of the scientific profession toward the use of animals in research, and I stress the word "responsibility" because the scientists in this group do recognize their obligation in this field. Surely, it is their responsibility to consider whether lower forms of animals or non-sentient forms of life can be used to provide the answers that research is seeking. This would prevent some of the cruelty which is inflicted upon animals and eliminate some of the waste to which I referred earlier.

The major principle for the care of experimental animals is the prevention of unnecessary pain and discomfort. We seem to be balancing two priorities here as so