

Research on Treatment of Animals

● (5:40 p.m.)

Mrs. MacInnis: We are doing something about human animals, and it is high time we began doing something about other animals. Only recently have Canadians generally come to realize that the conservation of species in the animal kingdom is vital to the survival of human beings. We are now constantly being told by biologists and ecologists that if we keep on allowing animal species to disappear, if we keep on allowing gaps to develop in the food chain of animal life, we ourselves will not be able to survive as a species. It is no longer a matter merely of polluting our environment; it is a matter of destroying our environment.

As my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver East pointed out, we know now that there is this other reason for our studying animal welfare. The reason is that it is so tightly linked with human welfare.

I will not go into facts and figures relating to cruelty to animals; we have heard a lot about that subject. I have also received increasing evidence that a great many of the repetitive experiments on animals, to test stress and other factors, are no longer necessary. These experiments have been made over and over again. Also, it is now being discovered that these experiments can be carried out with tissue and by mechanical means which will eliminate the necessity of torturing living animals. No one needs to have this point shoved down his or her throat. A committee of this House could be set up which would call before it different groups of witnesses so that the members of the committee, which would be constituted of members of different parties in the House would be in a position to make up their minds on these matters. We could call before us experts concerned with animal welfare. We could call before us biologists and ecologists who could tell us about the danger to our environment which would flow from letting this matter slide. We could have before us people concerned with conserving species by means of more humane trapping methods, other methods of sealing and other regulations, if such are necessary, all along the line.

The protection of animals should no longer be regarded as a contentious matter among parties. I think it affects all of us, and surely all of us should be prepared to send this subject to a committee without any prior commitment on our part. We should send this matter to a committee for study, just as we have so many of our resolutions and bills. I believe that we shall be surprised by the evidence that comes out in committee, and I am quite sure that we shall be moved to put Canada much closer to the forefront of modern thinking with regard to the protection of animals through regulatory legislation. I would like to give other hon. members a chance to speak on this matter so I shall conclude by urging once again that every hon. member support this resolution to send the whole matter to a committee of this House for study and report.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Isabelle (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am

[Mrs. MacInnis.]

pleased to speak this evening to the motion of the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch). I must say that I always follow his flamboyant speeches with interest; he delivers them with all the passion and vitality of a 20-year old.

I shall limit myself to parts (a) and (b) of the proposal of my hon. colleague.

Any society with humane feelings must be concerned with the way animals are treated in the field of medical research, and those who use them have added responsibility in that regard.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Medical Research Council share the concern of the hon. member with regard to the use of animals in medical research. Thanks to those two bodies, funds have been supplied to the Canadian Council on Animal Care to enable it to assess the problems concerning the care of animals, and ensure that instructions are given to the appropriate provincial authorities as well as to universities, government departments and research laboratories at the local level. The Canadian Council on Animal Care published a guide on the care of animals used for experimental purposes, which gives instructions to Canadian research and educational institutions, whether they be universities, government or industrial agencies, on the adequate care and lodging of animals used in laboratories.

This guide is extremely interesting and should be read by all those who are concerned with the care of animals. They will see that the Canadian government as well as the National Research Council provided funds to publish this very important book.

This guide is also intended to be used as an evaluation basis for the care given to animals in Canada. The work of the Canadian Council on Animal care has and will continue to help us fulfil our obligations to ensure the highest quality care to animals used for scientific and educational purposes. While studying this problem and preparing this guide, the Council, as was mentioned earlier by the hon. member for Vancouver East, consulted breeding experts as well as researchers and many private and government bodies concerned with this important problem.

The underlying principle which must govern the care to be given to laboratory animals is the prevention of pain or unnecessary discomfort.

● (5:50 p.m.)

Any tests involving pain or discomfort for animals should be avoided unless there are good reasons to believe that they will help promote science and the well-being of all living species. However, if laboratory research animals must suffer pain or discomfort, appropriate anesthetic or analgesic agents should be appropriately used throughout the experiment, in the appropriate manner and administered to them so as to relieve all pain.

Even in experiment, animals should be spared abuse. The guide for the care of animals used for experimental