

Humane Animal Traps

each proposal the committee is maintaining its credibility as the legitimate testing agent for new types of traps. By careful consultation with the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph the medical integrity of its inquiries is being preserved. By passing this bill, force will be given to the concerted efforts of the members of this committee and it will provide a good example for provincial governments.

I think it is necessary to make clear that the provinces must take an active interest in this issue. The committee is in the process of developing standards and methods of safe trapping. These standards, when they are formally tabled, will be enforced in all federal jurisdictions where trapping is carried out. It is necessary for provinces to see that the federal government is not making idle gestures. By passing this amendment, the provincial governments will have to take action. It is, after all, the provinces that are responsible for the management and control of fur-bearing animals. The federal government can provide the data for a restructuring of the trapping policy. It can make adjustments in its own legislation, in keeping with the spirit of the data. It cannot, however, change provincial statutes. By force of example, this amendment will provide the necessary impetus for change.

This bill is a rational, well-thought-out proposal. It is reasonable in tone and it combines the idea of humane treatment of animals with practicality. It sets a precedent for provincial governments to follow. Finally, and perhaps most important, it protects both the trapper and people concerned with humane trapping.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues in the House to support the measure brought forward by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich to prohibit the use of leg-hold traps. I congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson), on moving the motion that the substance of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry.

Mr. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) for drawing to the attention of the House this very serious matter and for giving leadership in doing some thing constructive about it. He has given consideration to the whole trapping industry.

My interest in this subject was prompted by my admiration for the work of the wife of a former member of this chamber, Mrs. Hugh John Flemming. Mrs. Flemming is a great Canadian who lives in my constituency. She founded the Kindness Clubs whose good work is now international in scope.

I would like to voice my strong support for this bill asking for an amendment to the Criminal Code to prohibit the use of leg-hold snares and other inhumane types of traps. The leg-hold trap is the most barbaric form of torture man has inflicted on the animal kingdom. As its name suggests, the trap catches its victim around the leg or paw and holds it in a vice-like grip between steel jaws. The trapped animal or bird awaits death by thirst, starvation or exposure, torture that can

last for days and even weeks. Another way of dying is for the victim to rip off or chew off a foot or leg.

About three million fur-bearing animals are trapped each year in Canada during the five month trapping season. It has been estimated, however, that six million unwanted birds and animals—eagles, owls, porcupines, woodpeckers, etc.—are accidentally caught and die needlessly because of the continued use of the leg-hold trap.

The primitive leg-hold trap is the main method of catching our fur-bearing animals in Canada. A trap was invented and has been on the market for almost 20 years, called the Conibear trap, with the use of which animals caught in it die either instantly or in a matter of seconds. This trap does have disadvantages such as cost and it is not really effective for the dog family; wolf, fox, and coyote. Fox is the most important of these commercially and only accounts for 1½ per cent of pelts sold. More research is needed to improve this trap, and even though it is better than the present leg-hold trap, still it is not widely used.

In September, 1973, a federal-provincial committee for humane trapping was called for, and an eight-member committee was created by the federal-provincial wildlife conference. After a full six months, a co-ordinator was hired to organize its work, so the Committee could not begin operations until mid-1974. Eight months after it was formed, the committee decided upon its aims and objectives.

The committee's mandate is to co-ordinate and encourage the development of humane trapping methods and devices; and to recommend to the provinces traps and trapping techniques which will provide, in so far as the state of the science and the art will allow, the greatest "humaneness" in holding or killing fur-bearing animals.

This sounds all very well and good, but what has the committee accomplished? To date, over 100 devices have been submitted to the committee for consideration. Of these, only three are undergoing final testing, and four are in the initial stages of testing for mechanical and biological suitability. If the results from these tests are satisfactory, the committee will submit these devices for field testing. In other words, not one device has arrived at the final stages of testing. The reason for this is simple. This worth-while committee does not have enough money to finance its operations properly.

It is good that the government has initiated a committee to look into this matter, but it would be showing real concern if it were to finance the committee's operations properly so that a solution could be found quickly and thereby stop the needless cruelty to our wildlife.

In concluding, it states in the proposed bill that the government should amend the Criminal Code to prohibit the use of inhumane animal traps where a practical alternative is now available or becomes available. This definitely receives my support, and this is where the government's financial support is needed to alleviate the problem of the lack of progress in the development of a quick-kill trap that would improve the humaneness of trapping and also satisfy trappers' needs.