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We Are All Creatures Of The Earth!

Thoughts From Cellblock B, Schuylkill County Prison

HILARY L. MARTINSON

It is Labor Day and for the second year in a row, I have travelled up to Hegins, Pennsylvania, to protest the largest public pigeon shoot in the country. Between five and six thousand birds—"rock doves" gathered from barns and granaries—are to be blasted out of the air. I have joined forces with other animal activists to protest this barbaric pastime in a society that deems itself "civilized."

I arrive by bus around nine in the morning to hear gun shots ringing out around the community park. I walk toward the shooter fields, where this year 250 state troopers have been summoned to "protect the peace," an irony considering they are soon surrounded by injured birds fluttering to the ground, wounded and quivering in pain.

The scene is the same as in years past. Birds are taken out of wire cages by 9- to 12-year old "trapper boys"—happy, grinning kids in orange shirts that say, "Shoot pigeons, not drugs." Deprived of food and water for days, the birds are weak and disoriented when the trapper boys place them individually in wooden boxes to await their shooter. As the box strings are pulled, the pigeons attempt to fly away. Some are immediately shot to pieces, and their feathers litter the park. Others lie injured on the ground, and a few are lucky enough to wing their way to the tree tops. The injured birds are collected by the trapper boys, who break the birds' necks, rip off their heads, or simply discard them alive in the garbage to suffocate among the carcasses of earlier victims. An acceptance of, and insensitivity to suffering, pain and violence are the lessons these young boys learn. And crime statistics illustrate that violence is one lesson children are learning well.

INTO THE HOLDING CELL

As I run onto the shooting field, I fall on the slippery gravel and badly scrape my knee and elbow. I am arrested as I reach the pigeon boxes, before I can pull the strings and send pigeons flying free. However, due to my injuries and those of a handful of other activists who have run out with me, the shoot on that field is delayed for about 20 minutes. I am taken to the hospital by ambulance to get bandaged up and receive a tetanus shot. From there, I am deposited at the local high school to be photographed, fingerprinted and booked.

Eighty-five activists are "processed" today—51 of whom decide not to pay a fine, but to go to jail. When we arrive at Schuylkill County Prison, a male guard yells at us, "Men, come to the front of the line. Girls, into the holding cell." He apologizes that he will have to be sexist today (i.e., by allowing men to come to the front of the line and not abiding by the "ladies first" rule), unaware that he is sexist for a different reason, the way in which he labels us. Every guard, both female and male, refers to all 45 women as "girls," although our ages range from 19 to 59. Despite this, we are deemed female children, whereas six men, ranging from 19-33 years of age, are designated adults.

It takes three hours to "process" me. When ordered to put my belongings on the counter, I place there a book I have brought with me, *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*. One of the male guards says, "This better not be pornography." I look at him with disgust. "No," I say. "It is not." He then states that he was "only joking." I am taken away for a strip search.

CRUDE THREATS AND SEXUAL TAUNTS

That night we are confined to our cells during the initial 48-hour lock-down period. It is possible to communicate by yelling out the windows or underneath the door where we receive our food trays. One woman among us, "Valerie," begins communicating with "Caspar," a male inmate in Cellblock C. After learning her name, he immediately asks what she looks like, then inquires about her weight. I am amazed that Valerie's physical appearance is the most pressing topic he has to discuss with her. Caspar tells Valerie that he likes to draw and that he will draw a picture of a bird for her. During their conversa-

tion, the other male inmates feel a need to interject their own crude comments, taunting us with sexual threats and calling us sluts, whores, bitches, cunts and pussies. "Fuck the pigeons," they yell out of their windows at the unseen, nonviolent women. "Do you know how to respect a cock?" "Can you handle 10 inches?" Each hateful comment poses a threat of sexual violence.

Caspar is labelled a "homo" simply because he spoke kindly to a woman; the other inmates begin yelling the same revolting comments to him as they had to us. Caspar's "offense" is that he has not illustrated his manhood in a traditional way—by attempting to dominate, insult and physically threaten us. He is seen as weak by his fellow inmates, so he is ridiculed and ostracized. In this microcosm of society, people are scorned for going outside their assigned gender roles. Men who released pigeons at the shoot were also called "homos." Female activists are called bitches, lesbians and sluts by both men and women—the hostility to our nonviolent message and to us personally is incredibly fierce. It is unacceptable that we have intentionally challenged a blood "sport" which we consider unethical and barbaric. It is implicitly understood that women are supposed to be subservient and not question or challenge the system, nor the men who run it.

WE ARE NOT MEN/ THEY ARE NOT HUMAN

Going to jail is a conscious decision I have made. I have refused to post bail. During my incarceration, I have experienced the stress of being confined in a small area for an extended period of time. It has made me think of the billions of animals, imprisoned against their will for their entire lives, the pigs and calves on factory farms, the rabbits and monkeys in laboratories, the foxes and minks on fur farms and the dolphins, elephants and bears in the entertainment industry. These animals never have a choice, while I can post bail and walk free whenever I say the word. Even in jail, I have basic rights, yet their misery, fear, and loneliness and loss of all freedom go unacknowledged: only their deaths will set them free. In my cell, I am also free from torture, but that is not true for the animals who endure whips, chains and the slaughterer's knife because they were born into a different species.

Now I see clearly what is wrong. I have experienced an all-pervasive hostility and hatred from the shooters, spectators and male inmates, simply because I was born a different sex, a different "breed." Violence against animals is born of the same mindset, accepted and perpetuated in all facets of our culture, from the food on our plate, to the clothing we wear, to the products we use. Chilling, indeed, are the similarities between the exploitation of animals and our experiences as women in this sexist society. It is no coincidence that women are continuously equated with animals: we are bitches, chicks, dogs, foxes, beavers, cows, pussies, pigs and birds. It is generally considered an insult to be called an animal: animals are seen as inferior beings who exist solely for our whims. Boys and men insult each other by comparing their behavior to that of a girl's (e.g., "girlish" attributes synonymous with inferiority). We, as women, are oppressed and discriminated against as a group, simply because we are not men. In the same way, animals are shot at, electrocuted, whipped, experimented on, burned, beaten and butchered because they are not human.

Regardless of who we are, whether bird or human, reptile or rodent, we are all sentient creatures who feel pain and want no part of it. "The question is not, 'Can they talk?' nor 'Can they reason?' but 'Can they suffer?'" says 18th century philosopher Jeremy Bentham.

As we fight to alleviate our own oppression as women, we cannot justify the oppression of others. And as I sit here in jail, watching 40 women look out for one another, I envision a society where patriarchal violence is a thing of the past. There are three pigeons perched on the prison wall. Perhaps they are watching over the activists who tried to set them free. ▲

Hilary L. Martinson is a feminist and animal rights activist who explored the connection between the two at Mount Holyoke College. She works for PETA in Washington, D.C.

A History of Struggle Against Twin Oppressions

HILARY L. MARTINSON

Women have traditionally been in the forefront of the historical fight against the exploitation of animals. Notable leaders within the anti-vivisection movement, like animal rights activists today, were often labeled "emotional," "illogical," and "anti-human" when, in reality, they were fighting against an oppression which came chillingly close to their own. The same holds true today as feminists join together to illustrate the connection be-

tween the oppression of women and animals while personally relinquishing habits and notions imbued with patriarchal and speciesist violence.

Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904) fought for women's and animal's rights in England and throughout Europe during her lifetime. While traveling in Italy in 1863, Cobbe learned of a laboratory where animals suffered tremendously, so much so that people living nearby could hear the animals' screams. Cobbe circulated a petition against such cruelty. Her opposition to vivisection led

to the founding of the Florentine Society for the Protection of Animals. After returning to her home in England, she continued her fight for women's rights while becoming increasingly involved with the anti-vivisection movement.

In 1875, when the first governmental Commission on Vivisection was formed, Cobbe assisted in introducing legislation in the House of Lords that would regulate vivisection. After a year of deliberation, Cobbe's bill was defeated, yet she turned her devastation into resolve, forming the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV), an organization still active today. In addition to her anti-vivisection campaigning, Cobbe played an essential role in passing legislation allowing women to sue for

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divorce as a consequence of physical abuse. Cobbe fought for those who could not fight for themselves, whether a battered wife or a vivisected dog.

Another leader in the anti-vivisection movement was Anna Kingsford, born in 1846 in Stratford, England. Kingsford, a feminist, edited *The Ladies' Own Paper* in the 1870s. Upon discovering the anti-vivisection movement, she completely immersed herself in it. To become a more credible spokesperson, she enrolled at the Faculté de Médecine in Paris, as women were not permitted to attend medical school in England. After completing her medical dissertation on the relationship between health and vegetarianism, Kingsford became the first Englishwoman to receive a medical degree, graduating second in her class. She completed her medical studies without participating in any kind of animal experimentation.

During the same period in the U.S., Elizabeth Blackwell, born in 1821, received her medical degree from the Geneva Medical School in New York. As a doctor she did charity work for the poor in addition to speaking out against animal



Hegins Pigeon Shoot

JULIA MILES/PETA

research in her book, *Scientific Method in Biology*. What Blackwell found most disturbing was the way working poor women were used as vivisector's pawns, often in degrading and humiliating ways. It was not uncommon for a group of medical students (nearly all men) to "observe" a woman of lower class—strapped to an examining table with her genitalia exposed to the entire class. Considered unrefined because of her economic status, she was thought less sensitive to pain and humiliation. Jokes under these circumstances were not uncommon according to Sir James Paget, a prominent doctor at the time, who stated, "[S]ome of even the most distinguished

members of the profession would commonly tell utterly indecent and dirty stories."

Such mockery and disrespect in the laboratory continues today. In 1984, vivisectors laughed at their injured "specimen" at the University of Pennsylvania's head injury lab, which was later closed down. Ingrid Newkirk, national director of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), writes, "Two vivisectors laughed as a small, helmeted baboon, strapped to an operating table and probably under the influence of an administered dose of phencyclidine (PCP or "angel dust") struggled with the canvas straps that held him down." Regardless of the purported goal of these experiments, one idea remains: It is perfectly acceptable to dominate and oppress those who are weaker.

The concept of animal rights and opposition to the oppression of those who cannot speak for themselves is not new. In the past few centuries, many feminists have recognized that patriarchal violence perpetrated against animals is strikingly familiar to their own victimization. Many of our foremothers seized the opportunity to speak out against the traditional acceptance of violence—toward the underprivileged, toward women and toward animals.

In 1907, a statue was erected in Battersea Park in London, in memory of an old, brown dog who was used and re-used in experiments for two months until death brought him freedom from suffering. The inscription on the statue poses a question to us all: "[H]ow long shall such things be?" ▲

Hilary L. Martinson is a feminist and animal rights activist. She works for PETA in Washington, D.C.

EVERYDAY REBELLIONS

GEORGIANN CARLSON

Their voices, amplified by bullhorns, cut through the crisp autumn air. "One, two, three, four, open up your bloody door...five, six, seven, eight, all you teach is pain and hate!" they shout. The people marching on the sidewalk behind them join in.

The demonstration takes place in front of the Animal Lab building at prestigious Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois every Wednesday night. "Come out, Charles Larson, you murderer, you quack," calls the group.

Charles Larson is the "Butcher of Northwestern." But in spite of the fact that those who have worked for Larson admit he is "crazy," that he "gets off on torture, he really loves it," Northwestern continues to let Larson torture and murder cats and monkeys (none of them are ever allowed to live) in order to get grant money.

The same horrifying experiments have been done in Northwestern's labs for the past 28 years. They include, but are not limited to: implanting electrodes with screws and dental cement into the skulls, diaphragms, chest and abdominal muscles of the animals; fusing the neck to the skull with drill holes, machine screws and dental cement; and removing the scalp to implant nuts and electrodes, resulting in chronic exposure of tissue and unrelenting pain.

According to leading scientists, Larson's experiments serve absolutely no purpose. Animal rights groups have asked Northwestern to open its lab doors to outside agencies who check on laboratory animal abuse cases, but the university refuses to cooperate.

Concerned Citizens for Ethical Research (CCE) has been demonstrating in front of the lab building for many years. On certain Saturdays they hold large, multigroup actions. Roughly 90 percent of the activists are women.

In good weather (rare in the Chicago area)

the activists walk with their children and dogs. In bad weather they freeze and endure. People who drive by are usually supportive, honking horns and giving a "thumbs up" sign. But there are those who are not so kind. Older males often give dirty looks or shake their heads in disgust. They shout as they drive away, rarely having the courage to speak when stopped at the light or curb. Male students are the worst, screaming obscenities and gesturing frantically.

The local press, off and on campus, has covered the horrors of Northwestern's animal labs. A political letter-writing campaign aimed at cutting off grant money failed to bring about change. Evanston residents fill the town hall to overflowing when meetings are held, but to no avail. Northwestern is a rich and powerful school. It can buy who and what it wants.

But they are afraid of us. Each time a demonstration occurs, Northwestern sends its PR men outside. We are dangerous, an embarrassment. The campus police photograph us and our cars and run checks on our license plate numbers. When we ask questions, they say they are "just doing their job, simply protecting school property," but they are hostile. People driving down Sheridan Road cannot help but see the shocking posters. They are forced to face what is going on behind the locked doors of the animal lab. They are made aware that their tax dollars are being used to mutilate and kill animals in the most inhumane and heartless way possible.

CCE is involved in a long, grueling and exhausting battle. But the bravery and dedication of the activists serve as a constant reminder of Northwestern's arrogance and cruelty. ▲

For information: Concerned Citizens for Ethical Research, P.O. Box 1334, Evanston, IL 60204-1334. 312-792-7117.

ACT NOW!! FOR ECO-JUSTICE

"THE TRADITIONAL DRUMBEAT IN NATIVE MUSIC IS A SYMBOL OF THE EARTH'S HEARTBEAT. WHEN YOU DANCE TO THIS DRUMBEAT IT IS WISE TO DANCE ON TIPTOE, FOR YOU ARE TREADING ON MOTHER EARTH."

From *Walking Softly On Mother Earth* by Cathleen Kneen (Women & Environments Winter/Spring '91 issue).

Facts excerpted from The Green Consumer by John Elkington, Julia Hailes, and Joel Makower, Penguin Books and the Protect Our Planet Calendar, Running Press Book Publishers.

Per-person daily household trash produced in Calcutta, India: 1.12 pounds; in New York City: 3.96 pounds.

ACTION: Buy products packaged in recyclable materials such as cardboard or glass. Don't buy products excessively packaged or wrapped.

Barrels of oil wasted annually because the federal government has not raised efficiency standards for cars by 1 mile per gallon: 420,000. Amount of oil the U.S. would have to import to meet present demand if the average fuel efficiency of all cars on U.S. roads averaged 42 MPG: none.

ACTION: Write to Washington, D.C. and urge your representatives to initiate appropriate legislation to raise car efficiency standards.

Pounds of agricultural pesticides applied each year in California: 80 million pounds. Portion of the 35,000 pesticides introduced since 1945 tested for potential health effects: 10 percent.

ACTION: Buy organically-grown produce. Also buy fresh local produce in season from local farmer's markets. The demand for fruits and vegetables out of season necessitates importation from countries where pesticide restrictions are limited, exposing farm workers as well as consumers to certain contamination.

Plastic beverage bottles Americans go through every hour: 2.5 million. Styrofoam cups thrown away each year in the U.S.: 25 billion. Plastic containers dumped overboard daily by commercial fishing fleets: 640,000. Northern fur seals drowned each year by lost plastic fishing net: 500,000. Estimated number of sea birds, marine mammals, and fur seals killed each year as a result of eating or being strangled by plastics: 1 million, 100,000, and 50,000, respectively.

ACTION: Do not buy anything packaged in styrofoam or other similar flexible foam materials. Only buy plastic if it is stamped with a recycle number that will be accepted in your local community for recycling. Never throw away plastic containers. Reuse them! Always cut through plastic six-pack rings before discarding so animals will not be strangled by them. Buy products made from recycled plastics, such as outdoor furniture by Planet Earth.

Trees wasted each week by Sunday newspapers not being recycled: 500,000. Homes that could be heated by the wood and paper thrown away each year: 5 million homes for 200 years.

ACTION: Deforestation contributes to the problems of global warming, air pollution, and soil erosion and runoff. Save trees by recycling paper. Recycling also lowers the demand for wood. Buy recycled office paper, stationery, and household paper products. If local shopkeepers do not carry these products, urge them to do so. Consider using newspaper as giftwrap. The stock exchange pages, movie listings and comics make fun and unusual packages!

Gallons of water that can be contaminated by a single quart of motor oil: up to 2 million.

ACTION: Have your motor oil changed at a service station that uses recycling equipment.

U.S. drivers waste 100,000 barrels of oil each day simply because car tires are not inflated properly.

ACTION: Check to make sure your tires are inflated properly. This action will save you both gas and money!

These facts may be overwhelming, but the resolve and action of one person can and does make a difference. Doing something is better than doing nothing and the best time to start is now!

As consumers are becoming more environmentally aware, they change their buying habits to protect the earth. Many so-called "green" products are finding their way to our supermarket shelves. But just because a product has an environmental name or is described as "environmentally friendly," "biodegradable," or "recyclable" does not necessarily mean it is truly safe for the environment.

ACTION: Ask yourself these questions when shopping for an environmentally-safe product:

Does this product contain toxic ingredients? Is it overpackaged? Is packaging made of recycled material? Is the package recyclable? Was an animal killed or hurt to produce this item? Is this product repairable, or must it be replaced? Do I really need this?

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has introduced the Compassion Corps, a new program for members who wish to take an active role writing letters and making calls aimed at increasing the "people power" available to combat animal abuse. Compassion Corps members receive a quarterly bulletin containing tips on effective activism and information on specific, pressing cases of cruelty, plus special action alerts.

ACTION: If you would like to join Compassion Corps, send your name, address, phone and fax numbers, and PETA membership ID number to Compassion Corps, P.O. Box 42516, Washington, DC 20015. If you are not already a member of PETA and you wish to join, write to them at the above address, or call (301) 770-PETA.

The BirdHouse, a manufacturing firm in Northwest Montana, has created a program called Project Bluebird created to put birdhouses and bird feeders in yards, neighborhoods and wild lands throughout the nation. For each birdhouse or birdfeeder purchased (\$35 which includes shipping and handling), a bluebird house will be placed along trails created in the woods to attract the bluebirds. \$5 of every purchase will be donated to a charity of the buyer's choice. Birdhouses are made from recycled materials, such as old barn wood or scraps from new construction or remodeling projects, and fastened with nails and nontoxic glue. They can be cleaned for reuse year after year. And they are great looking too!

ACTION: To order a birdhouse or bird feeder, write The BirdHouse, Department BT(ND), P.O. Box 396, Somers, Montana 59932 or call Jay North at 406-857-3521.