

Rienow

TO: The State Commission on Revision of the Penal Laws
FROM: Dr. Robert Rienow, State University of New York
SUBJECT: Proposed revision of Anti-Cruelty laws

I am Robert Rienow, professor of Political Science at State University of New York at Albany. Although I am a member of the national Board of Trustees of the Defenders of Wildlife of Washington, D. C., I prefer for this appearance to divest myself of organizational connections. I should like to confer with you as an educator who writes numerous textbooks in Citizenship that are in national distribution, and as a political scientist who, like you, is aware of the political forces at work in our society, and appreciates the role of lawmakers in contending with them.

As an educator I am concerned over the growing callousness of our society. We in the schools, as we struggle to refine the sentiments and impart compassion to our youngsters, run up against increasing emphasis on brutality and violence amongst our educational competitors: the comic books, the movies, and TV. You are as aware as I am of the recent findings of a Senate Committee which showed that much of our juvenile delinquency may be attributed to the outlook toward violence which the TV fosters.

If our society is to remain civilized, educators need your help. You must not isolate us so that in our championship of compassion and understanding we come to be looked upon as

fuddy-duddies. The stakes are too high; let brutality have your approval--even by implication-- and you aggravate all the problems of law and order and civilized conduct.

I plead with you, therefore, to make no compromises with ideals. We educators cannot idolize Henry Bergh and offer him as an example to our youth if you belittle his attainments as a humanitarian by watering down our social condemnation of brutality. You as lawmakers and we as educators are called upon sometimes--indeed, most times-- to stand for principle, for the primitive forces of society are all too quick to take command. There should be no doubt about our social commitment. You, I think, must stand fast against any possible justification of cruelty.

And why else would we want to dilute this statute? Let me speak to you for just a moment as a political scientist. We have just completed a study of the Senate of the United States in its period of corruption from 1875 to the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment. It will appear in February under the title of "Of Snuff, Sin, and the Senate." Let me read from the advance pages just a few words to show that this proposal to base cruelty to animals on intent is an old political ~~device~~ ^{device} with shameful antecedents.

"But when the corporation lawyers slyly inserted one word 'knowingly' into the penalty clause of the Elkins

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Rebate Act to make it read: 'Every person or corporation whether carrier or shipper, who shall knowingly offer, grant, or give or solicit, accept or receive any such rebates, concessions or discriminations, etc...' it took the astute Senator LaFollette to ferret out this 'one little innocent appearing word' which served completely to annul the penalties of the Act for all the higher officials of the railroads concerned."

I am sure this committee will recognize as quickly as did Senator LaFollette that the effect of the word "intentionally" and the other weakening changes in the anti-cruelty law will rob it of all authority, influence, and effectiveness.

In a world where horror and monsters, brutality and perfidy, already have too many champions and exploiters, I urge you to make a determined stand for a set of values worthy of the promise of a new generation.

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