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## ANIMAL WELFARE: THE TRUE POSITION

Several advertisements have appeared recently in the press on behalf of the 'International Fund for Animal Welfare', attacking the Conservative Party's policies on the treatment of animals.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare is *not* a registered UK charity. It is a company registered in the United Kingdom at Companies House. It is conducting a campaign against the Conservative Government (see advertisement in *Sunday Express*, 5th June 1983).

### Hunting

Conservatives have always believed that hunting is not a political matter. An official enquiry set up by the Labour Government in 1948 recommended that hunting should not be banned as being cruel. The last time a ban was imposed on the hunting of deer (on Exmoor) they nearly became extinct when the local population took the matter into their own hands.

### Seals

The Conservative Government took the lead in achieving unanimous support for an EEC Directive which will provide for a two-year ban on imports of harp and hooded seal pup products from 1st October 1983. This community action has ensured that there will be no Norwegian cull of seal pups this year and any Canadian cull will be minimal.

### Whales

In 1979, the Government took the initiative in the European Community to ban the importation of all whale products. Agreement was finally reached between Member States, and the ban came into effect on 1st January 1982.

On the world scene, the Government has played a leading role in the work of the International Whaling Commission, and since the election in 1979 has put considerable pressure on hunting nations to cease operations. In 1982, as a result of this and other countries' pressure, the Commission agreed to a ban on commercial whaling throughout the world, except by certain ethnic communities such as the Eskimos.

### Snares

The law prohibits the use of snares except under licence. The Conservative Government introduced the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which totally prohibits the use of the self locking snare. If all snares were to be banned, the illegal use of dangerous alternatives such as toxic chemicals or spring traps would be encouraged; these are likely to cause greater suffering.

### Experiments on Animals

The Conservative Government has published the White Paper on Animal Welfare (Cmnd. 8883) which contains very stringent proposals for the control of the testing of cosmetics on animals. In future, all applicants for project licences for the testing of cosmetics should be referred to a new Animal Procedures Committee. They will apply strict criteria in judging the application. There must be no other scientifically satisfactory method available which does not involve the use of an animal. Where there is a choice between procedures, those chosen should use the minimum number of animals, cause the least suffering, and be most likely to produce satisfactory results.

In 1981, the number of experiments to test cosmetics was around one half per cent of the total number of experiments. The Conservative Government gave serious consideration to a total ban on such experiments but found that it would not be possible to do so, for two reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to define that which is strictly a cosmetic when substances may simultaneously be of medical or other therapeutic value. Secondly, such testing may also be required to comply with statutory or other requirements to protect users and those working on production of cosmetics.

The White Paper also proposes to tighten up the law protecting animals in other areas. For the first time, legislation will extend to all *procedures* involving animals, and not just experiments. Thus breeding and supply establishments will come under control, as will the treatment of animals in laboratories at all times. The use of animals for instructional purposes in schools will be banned. Anaesthesia and analgesics must be used wherever possible. The Inspectorate will be strengthened and given enhanced duties in operating the new controls.

Neither the Alliance nor the Labour Party in their Manifestos make any proposals to ban the use of animals in experiments. The proposals the Labour Party make concerning farm animals would cause farmers' costs to rise; European competitors would be given an enormous boost as home-produced food became more expensive. Such proposals could only damage the agricultural interests of the country, and put farming jobs at risk.

NC/LC