

PRIME MINISTER

Experiments on Living Animals

I fear this
would raise more
problems than it
would solve
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Attached is an H paper from the Home Office covering a draft White Paper on Experiments on Living Animals which will be discussed at H Committee next Tuesday. The White Paper is in fulfilment of a Manifesto pledge to update the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 which at present governs animal experiments.

The principal feature of Mr. Mellor's proposals is that the licensing of experimenters and experiments would be transferred from the Home Office to a new Quango called the Animal Procedures Board. The advantage of this, according to the H paper, is that it takes the Home Secretary out of the scientific and ethical judgments which are required in organising animal experiments. On the other hand, the Board would employ about twice as many staff (60) as are currently employed in the Home Office to do the same job. It is clear from the draft White Paper that the Board was a relatively late development and has not yet been cleared with other Ministers.

Mr. Mellor presents the White Paper (and the proposed legislation) as a tightening up of the law on animal experiments. Apart from the proposal for a Board, it is a vast improvement over the old law. There are, however, important areas where the animal lobby would regard it as loosening control. For example, under the proposed new legislation experiments on living animals for the acquisition of manual skill and for teaching are allowed whereas under the old law they were not. Moreover, under the new law there ^{would be} is no special protection for cats and dogs whereas there ^{is} ~~was~~ under the existing law; however rational this might be, it will raise howls of protest. - agreed

This is a small but undoubtedly sensitive area, as you will know from your constituency post-bag. My feeling, having worked on this subject, is that there is virtually no credit at all to be gained from legislation on animal experiments. Any rational

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bill will fail to satisfy the animal lobby, which is, of course, becoming increasingly vocal, and the publication of the White Paper will simply open the whole issue up.

TF.

TIM FLESHER

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