In Case of Insomnia — Man vs. Nature

By Storm Kaufmann

One of the major tragedies of the growth of human populations, and hence the extinction of numerous species of plants and animals, is the loss of most other forms of ecological balancing, an irrevocable depreciation, the plant and animal worlds. Small citizens groups and, spurred by the "righteous" public conscience, have finally begun to take action. But a variety of approaches are necessary because animals (I'm henceforth dropping the plants) are threatened in a variety of ways: destruction of their supporting ecology, extermination as a menace to life or property, or killing for food or clothing purposes. The first is easy, the second is difficult to anticipate. Probably best would be to remember that ecology has delicate balances requiring centuries (at the very least) to evolve and establish, and that any attack on a component endangers the whole ecosystem. In the future, ecological science will be more likely developed into a technique to permit high certainty estimation of the consequences of actions. The extermination campaigns are the most infuriating because of their blind purpose; the producers of the animals (that is, the managers of the public parks and states) do not at least have the excuse of exterminating (thoughtlessly or not) animals for food.

A case in point are wolves, a much maligned and misunderstood animal (and a hunted animal) that play a vital role in the ecosystems of much of the west. They are not only intelligent but also that rarest of all resources, a game animal that is non-consumptive, or at least very consumptive. It is estimated that over 90 percent of the elk population in some areas is maintained by wolves; the elk themselves, and the wolf, the predator of the elk, are an integrated system.

The wolves are from a ranch grown and bred). Check the mate-consumer to refrain from buying such meat. The US has already taken significant aquatic life. The extermination campaigns have been so zealously pursued as to ensure the death of the wolves. Some states have made the killing of wolves a felony, but here's a suggestion for the states that have not: pass a law making the buying of wolf meat a felony! The states should be concerned with the welfare of the people, not with the welfare of the animals. The animals are from a ranch grown and bred).

Krenge Auditorium hasn't seen a flare like this since the science Advisory Symposium on October 1. Daniel Elbing, folk hero of the '70s, came to MIT. Baring crowds came to see him and he left them yawning in the aisles. The Man was supposed to speak on "The People's Right to Know" — a topic that the release of the Pentagon Papers should certainly be able to address well. The Student Center Committee, which invited him back to MIT in hopes of getting a stirring address like the one he gave three years ago, got only black marks for the poor arrangements they made. And the 1000-plus students who showed up got only the consolation that at least they did not have to pay to get in.

Where to begin? Chronologically, the first indications that the event might be far less than could be expected might have been Sunday afternoon, when the SCC sat down and formulated their "exclude-the-pres" policy. As Chairman Steve Wallman explained to The Tech that night, "I'd rather see one more freshman get a seat than have the Boston Globe cover this." The argument that allowing one person from the Globe in would allow 460,000 people (1972 circulation figures) read Elbing's remarks that evening, while Elbing himself was barred from the meeting. The policy seemed also to extend to The Tech — if reporters wanted to be present in an official capacity, they could sit in the choir loft and watch the back of the speaker's head.

SCC was finally persuaded to relent — a little. MIT, which was counting on the Elbing speech as part of its first weekly news show, was allowed in one-half hour early to set up on the floor. Other reporters were allowed to roam around and shoot from different angles. There were a lot of bitter jokes in the loft about the irony of a speech about the public's right to know — at which the press was discriminated against.

Wallman really needn't have worried. However, the whole White House press corps would have had to have been here to exclude a single freshman from a seat. Most of the back sections of the hall were sparsely populated at best, and lots of seats went begging. That freshman might not have gotten too good a seat — but only because most of the best seats were saved for SCC members.

The best is yet to come... The press still almost lost its right to know. Panic struck in the loft when Associate Proctor Louis Menand got up to introduce his friend Elbing and the reporters discovered that the only way they could hear was to listen through the monitors on their tape recorders. The reporters telephoned Steve Wallman setting their stoves and the MITV crew made a similar unkinking feeling when Elbing opened his speech with comments about the lighting which was far from good — and it was turning into something of a good picture. But these problems were solved, and Elbing started to speak.

And speak. And speak. One-case-one-comment. Each comment by the audience was followed by a comment or question from Elbing. It was interesting, as it was explanatory — in great detail — the results of some behavioral research that everyone had heard of before. However, the audience, for whatever authority can, when carried to excess, was dangerous — it was only brought up late in the day, when the SCC had already done the job. It was one that any bright 15-year-old could do.

Unfortunately, there aren't too many bright 15-year-olds (making $2,500 a night), and so the question of Elbing's credibility was raised. Unfortunately, the audience was from a very small college, and so it was stuck with Elbing. As the night wound on, and he lost whatever links he had with the audience at the beginning, people grew restless, and many got up and left. Even Wallman apparently got so bored that he left his front-row-seat in the hall before the end. We, the audience, would have told distorted Elbing by taking notes and coming up to the left — presumably to make the discussion more cooperative. SCC had been.

Letter

McCoUmmich Jodddenn

To the Editor:

The problems discussed in the article on "A Case of Insomnia — Man vs. Nature" [March 12] are internal to McCormick. The Tech should not have interfered, especially since the article has greatly aggravated the situation. At the time we strongly requested that Mr. Elbing not be printed and so did Dean Eisenbreg. We feel that The Tech should have respected these requests. We also request that any other articles on the subject he based not on reports, but on facts.

Judicial Committee of McCormick

(All statements in the article were based on fact. While The Tech takes responsibility for the content of its stories, we take responsibility for the facts and applicable comments — always verifiable — actions of the community to enjoy.

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