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"ANIMAL WELFARE LEGISLATION IN SWITZERLAND"

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I. Summary

Since 1992 Swiss animal welfare legislation is also based on the constitutional term of the "Dignity of the Creature". The current state of the discussion against the background of animal experiments and transgenic animals will be briefly sketched. In addition, in the Canton of Zurich at least, animal welfare organizations have an indirect "association right of appeal against an administrative act" to challenge animal experiments before the courts. The office of "Lawyer for animal welfare in criminal cases in the Canton of Zurich" too, again unique, is aimed at ensuring increased application of animal welfare legislation by the courts.

II. Important contents and structures in Swiss animal welfare legislation

Animal welfare legislation in Switzerland contains some peculiarities which are worth noting for dealing with certain questions at an international level also. Thus more recent ways mankind deals with animals, in particular in the field of genetic engineering, animal breeding and recently cloning animals have led to the realization that the notion of "animal welfare" to date must be radically expanded. So the notion of the "dignity of the creature" has found a place in the Swiss Basic Law and in the Swiss Federal Constitution, which will be referred to again.

It has also begun to be recognized that implementation of legal animal welfare must not be entrusted to the state alone. So organized animal welfare was given the opportunity of participating in the administrative and legal proceedings in particular areas of animal welfare from a legally secured position. Therefore the indirect right of appeal by associations which animal welfare organizations have in animal welfare matters will be set out below, along with the Office of the Lawyer for Animal Welfare in Criminal Matters, which again is unique.

a) The dignity of the creature

Origin

According to the existing Animal Welfare Act of 1981 animals have no actual rights but interest in freedom from pain, in physical and mental integrity and in life worth protecting. However the fact that an animal is more than just an object with certain interests was also established by the Federal Court in 1989 when it recognized an animal as a "living and feeling being, as a fellow creature (...) the respect and esteem for which represents a moral assumption for man who is superior due to his intellect" (Ruling of the Federal Court BGE 115 IV 254). Here the Federal Court referred to the notion of the fellow creature elaborated by Fritz Blanke in 1959 and pointing in the same direction referring to the view of Karl Barth, the theologian in 1945, according to which animals have their own dignity worth protecting. The notion of the

dignity of the creature was included in the Aargau cantonal constitution in 1980. The discussion about protecting animals against genetic engineering and reproductive medicine and about the concept of being able to patent animals which flared up at the end of the 80's brought about a demand from animal welfare circles that the notion of the dignity of the creature be included in the federal constitution (Goetschel 1989 p. 31), which then also occurred in the referendum on May 17th 1992: Article 24novies Paragraph 3 of the existing Article and Article 120 Paragraph 2 of the new federal constitution therefore run as follows:

"The Federation issues regulations about dealing with the germ type and genotype of animals, plants and other organisms. In so doing it takes the dignity of the creature and the safety of man, animals and the environment into account and protects the genetic diversity of animal and plant species."

Here the Reporter in the National Council, Mr. Darbellay expressly emphasizes that: "We wish to show by this that man if he is involved in creation is a creature himself and he cannot do anything he likes; he must respect the dignity of this creation."

Although a new and serious constitutional concept has been available for about eight years, the discussion on its contents and scope has only begun as far as we are aware. Now there are writings and suggestions from philosophers, theologians and lawyers such as (and chronologically ahead of everybody) Teutsch, Saladin, Schweizer, Balzer, Rippe and Schaber, Bondolfi, Krepper, Praetorius and Goetschel. The Swiss Ethics Commission for Genetic Engineering was also used in the non-human field. From it the population and the administration expect to have the constitutional provision put into concrete terms and inserted in legislation which is not however currently available.

Relationship with the dignity of man

Without being able to go into detail, human dignity can be divided into two different notions: On the one hand into the position supporting the triumphal and anthropocentric humanism of a Renaissance philosopher like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (De dignitate hominis, 1487), according to which man is classified as "only slightly below God" in an over interpretation of psalm 8. Human rights are considered chiefly as claims against this background. On the other hand into the position of human dignity as an expression of morality, according to which the "real dignity of man consists in the precise observation of his obligations". Dignity as the ability man has to impose obligations on himself and to satisfy them was represented mainly by Kant. Robert Spaemann and Beat Sitter-Liver belong to this tradition as regards man's obligation to become responsible for nature and animals in accordance with his dignity. So it can be stated that the notion of the dignity of the animal requiring respect as an obligation arises from the dignity of man. Looked at like this one can only stand

up for human rights in a very limited fashion if one remains silent about the dignity of all creation and its members and about man. On the other hand, anybody wishing to see the dignity of the creature protected must of necessity also protect human dignity. Thus the dignity of a creature cannot take anything away from the dignity of man (Teutsch, 1995, 27 onwards).

The significance of the creature's dignity

In the wording chosen by the creator of constitutional law one can assume according to predominant teaching that the dignity of the creature must not just be protected in the field of genetic engineering. Rather it covers the whole legal relationship between man and animals. The dignity of the creature now protected according to the constitution forms the legal basis for various thematic areas relevant to animal welfare: Thus for example the genetic manipulation of animals, animal experiments, the breeding of animals and various other forthcoming reviews of animal welfare legislation.

Possible content of the dignity of the creature

Beginnings based on human dignity

The discussion about human dignity could be considered as a start. Thus in the area of human welfare it is illegal to ridicule somebody else and in particular the equipping of recruits with uniforms which are much too large to make them ridiculous violates their human dignity. That is why in animal breeding the question arises whether breeding for particular purposes should not be questioned or indeed forbidden such as that for so-called aesthetic purposes if the animal not only suffers because of it but also has his dignity, his intrinsic value violated and is thus exposed to ridicule.

In animal breeding

The political debate about animal breeding has chronicled a clear need for action. For instance the German animal welfare legislation underwent an alteration in the so-called "cruel breeding paragraphs" 11 b. Since Switzerland expressly also protects the dignity of the animal it must expand the welfare to date of animals against pain, suffering or injury. The protection of animals in animal breeding merely against suffering, pain or injury now planned in Germany accordingly only represents a minimum requirement.

Animals in animal experiments, cloned and transgenic animals

Ethical problems arise in the area of genetic engineering interventions in animals which in our view cannot be satisfactorily dealt with by the classical instruments of

the authorization process for animal experiments. Thus the distinguished animal welfare moral philosopher Gotthard M. Teutsch considers animals dignity violated "if they are chiefly regarded as the means and too little as the purpose, that is ... if their integrity is somehow violated without compelling reasons, although one would still need to clarify whether and to what extent there are any compelling reasons at all for such violation" (Teutsch, 1995, 56; also 47-50). The demand for a ban on the production, acquisition and passing on of cloned or transgenic animals is supported by this position (instead of many: Sitter, 1999, 477).

Animal experiments must be restricted to the absolutely essential degree according to Swiss law (Article . 13 Paragraph 12 of the Animal Welfare Act). The extent to which the authorization procedure needs to be refined when not only traditional but also cloned and transgenic animals require assessment, cannot be conclusively commented upon. However this may not be satisfactory from an animal welfare point of view if a controversial animal experiment authorization cannot be brought to court by organized animal welfare with the request to test its legality. Refusal of an animal experiment authorization sought can be legally challenged by the experimenter, but the approval cannot be challenged by individuals who are championing the welfare of animals. And it is just in cases of doubt as in the cloning of animals with the main long-term aim of improving the profitability of animal use that in a constitutional state not only the administrative authorities but also the courts should be able to discuss it.

b) Right of appeal for animal welfare in administrative law

Recognized animal welfare organizations were entitled by the right of appeal of associations against an administrative act to challenge administrative authorities' illegal orders (Saladin, 1993, 52-54, 61 onwards; Sitter, 1990, 188–190; Wirth and Goetschel, 1989, 88–94 and 99–144). Indeed the existing imbalance in the representation of interests in animal welfare procedures gives a sense of being strange and unjust. An animal owner can challenge an order which restricts him, a ban on keeping animals for instance. Nobody can defend the animal, at most the public administration which from experience does not suffice (Saladin, 1993, 51). In particular an animal welfare association cannot support the animal infringed, even if it has devoted itself for decades to the welfare of animals. Thus a long-established Swiss animal welfare association which went to court about a neglected and abused dog handed in to one of its homes had to let itself be told by the federal court that the association was not more affected in this case than any third party and was therefore not entitled at all to lodge an appeal (unpublished decision of the Swiss federal court dated 27.1.1989). Animal welfare organizations are kept away from legal animal welfare administrative procedures. They are excluded from responsibility and often do not even find out how a procedure initiated by them has ended.

Here we are dealing with a structural deficiency which can be eliminated by the association's right of appeal against an administrative act in administrative law. Just as in the association's appeal against an administrative act for environmental and nature conservation organizations already in existence in Switzerland the recognized animal welfare associations would be authorized to examine administrative files and if necessary to bring a decision to a judicial authority. The effects to be expected from the participation of animal welfare organizations in procedures should contribute considerably to achieving the aim of better legal protection for animals. Thus not only was equality of arms between the parties attained. A forfeiture would arise from this as the authorities and parties applying the law would be obliged to seriously come to grips with the matter of animal welfare (cf. Sidhom, 1995, 193 onwards, with references). The enforcement agencies would be strengthened since they could refer to an idealistic alliance when dealing with a party behaving contrary to animal welfare and faced with the threat of an appeal. The granting of an official appeal procedure would increasingly direct animal welfare activity into proper legal channels and thus facilitate proper enforcement. And the generally well-known positive effects of legal redress procedures would also benefit animal welfare and would encourage increased publicity about animal welfare, the promotion of further legal education and improved observance of equality before the law in the application of the law.

Indirect right of associations to appeal against an administrative act in the field of animal experiments

The beginnings of a right of associations to appeal against an administrative act already exist. Thus for instance the Canton Zurich Animal Welfare Law dated June 2nd 1991 grants at least three members of the cantonal Animal Experiment Commission acting together the right, within the meaning of an indirect right of action of an association, to legally challenge animal experiment authorizations provided by the cantonal National Economy Administration (§ 12 Paragraph 2 of the Canton Zurich Animal Welfare Law dated June 2nd 1991). Just three members of this commission are chosen based on suggestions from the animal welfare organizations. So while animal welfare associations do not have the right to submit an authorization decision by the National Economic Administration to an instance of recourse within the administration and then to a court, three representatives appointed by them do have the right (Saladin, 1993 54-56; Danner, 1993, 71 onwards; Leuthold, 1995). The Swiss Federal Office for Veterinary Matters also has the right of administrative appeal against an administrative act against cantonal animal experiment authorizations within the meaning of Article. 26a of the revised Animal Welfare Act (Lehmann, 1995).

However the endeavors regarding the association's right of action in administrative matters must not mislead about the fact that proper enforcement of the animal

welfare legislation cannot be replaced by it. In the final analysis only administrative law administrative decisions can be challenged in the main. Instances of violations of animal welfare constantly arise which have no connection with administrative decisions.

c. Right of appeal in criminal law / animal welfare lawyer

In Switzerland organized animal welfare can only become aware at all of convictions and sentences unsatisfactory from an animal welfare standpoint or of discontinuance decisions or in particular situations (for instance if an animal owner reports somebody cruel to animals and submits the case files to an animal welfare association or is represented by a lawyer involved in animal welfare). An animal welfare association was not able to make an application to extend the investigation. It also did not have the right to challenge discontinuance decisions or court rulings. The legislator for Canton Zurich endeavored to counteract this imbalance by creating this office (on the demands for animal welfare lawyers in Austria cf. Plank, 127 onwards and 142 onwards)

History of the animal welfare lawyer in Canton Zurich

This office came about within the framework of the people's initiative in the Canton Zurich "for a right of action and verification in animal welfare" which the three important animal welfare organizations in the canton submitted in 1988. Amongst other things, they thereby demanded the right to take on the legal representation of the animals harmed in criminal proceedings. The cantonal commission set up for preparatory discussion about the people's initiative looked for independent solutions in conjunction with the animal welfare organizations which could equally satisfy the state's and animal welfare concerns. They agreed on the Office of the Lawyer for Animal Welfare in Criminal Matters. This individual should have the same rights as demanded by the initiators for the animal organizations, namely the position of the injured party in criminal proceedings and the rights to proceedings associated with this. Through the solution suggested by it, the commission also guaranteed that a lawyer would appear in the proceedings and not some lay person with an interest in animal welfare. It was rightly expected that this individual with precise knowledge of the course of procedure was able to distinguish more promising interventions from less promising or appropriate ones in the criminal procedure. At the same time the question was avoided about who amongst the organizations was entitled to an association appeal against an administrative act in criminal matters.

The counterproposal put forward by the government council, also very progressive in other areas, (authority of vets to participate, indirect right of action by associations against animal welfare authorizations) was accepted as the new cantonal animal welfare law by an overwhelming majority in the referendum dated June 2nd 1991

and put in force together with the cantonal animal welfare regulation dated March 11th 1992 by April 1st 1992. The previous cantonal animal welfare provisions were repealed.

Legal basis

The *legal basis* for the lawyer for animal welfare in criminal matters is now § 17 of the Canton Zurich Animal Welfare Act dated June 2nd 1991:

"In criminal procedures re violation of provisions in the animal welfare legislation the National Administration and a lawyer appointed by the cantonal government at the suggestion of the animal welfare organizations safeguard the interests of the injured party" (in detail: Goetschel, 1994, 64–86).

His party rights are further set by the Canton Zurich animal welfare decree dated March 11th 1991 (§ 13 - 15). Thus the cantonal Veterinary Office furnishes him with copies of the criminal information drawn up regarding infringement of provisions in the animal welfare legislation. He has the right to inspect the files there which might be of significance for criminal proceedings (§ 13). The investigating authorities (district lawyers and governors' offices) inform him about the commencement of investigating proceedings in animal welfare criminal cases and invite him to attend the investigation open to the parties. He has the right to inspect the files and is given stop notices, disciplinary penalties and fixed penalty orders. He is invited to attend trials and is given the judgement (§ 14). In addition, he is authorized to inform an animal welfare organization located in the Canton Zurich about the progress and the outcome of the proceedings if commencement of criminal proceedings is due to their information (§ 15).

The rights of the lawyer for animal welfare in criminal matters

His individual rights can be divided up as follows: From the very beginning he is involved in all criminal proceedings in the canton given his right to inspect files and his right to be notified about investigations. His right to participate gives him the right to be invited to attend all investigations open to the parties. Thus he has the right to follow the interrogation of the person charged, of the witnesses and the experts and to appeal against the final determination or possible stop notice and to do so on criminal points. There follows from his right to file for an application his right to request a motion to take evidence and to request that official reports by the district veterinary surgeon or the Federal Office for Veterinary Matters be obtained. He can also request his own expert opinion, in particular if the authority suspects an accumulation of similarly based animal welfare cases. He must be informed unsolicited in full of all decisions and he can appeal against them. Appeal under federal law is also open to him.

To date the "animal protection lawyer" has made rather sparing use of his legal remedies. Thus he has not overtaxed his function by challenging mere discretionary decisions regarding sentencing and not become involved without reason in the room for maneuver of the penal authorities who are dealing with the animal welfare legislation (Goetschel, 1994, 80, with references).

Normally the person convicted must compensate the injured party for the costs and machinations arising from the *proceedings*. The aforementioned animal welfare lawyer also has a claim for compensation even if he is awarded modest recompense based on the time involved from the National Administration.

Legal status Lawyer and civil servant

As regards his position, the Zurich lawyer in animal welfare criminal matters is both a private *lawyer* and a *civil servant*: As a lawyer he is subject to the law for lawyers with the special feature that he has no natural person or legal entity as clients. He is not bound by any instructions, either from the animal owner or the animal welfare associations. He has the exacting duty of carrying out his brief thoroughly, correctly and appropriately according to his own judgement. Just like other lawyers he must inform representatives of the media correctly in substance and cultivate a degree of reticence in unfinished proceedings. He also has the right to appoint deputies if necessary if the work load becomes unreasonably heavy.

He shares public legal functions with civil servants, observes official secrecy and within restricted limits is subject to official secrecy especially about internal administrative matters (Goetschel, 1994, 83-85).

Experience and assessment

In our assessment the office of the animal welfare lawyer has proved extremely successful. It satisfies a genuine need and should be applied like this simply and profitably to other cantons or indeed states instead of or in addition to an association's right of appeal against an administrative act in criminal matters.

The degree to which penal animal welfare provisions have become known has increased, as has the motivation of criminal investigation authorities and courts dealing with animal welfare cases. The criminal procedural device by which somebody takes on the position of the injured party for others could also be possible in the area of environmental criminal law and also in that of child welfare.

The setting up of this office has initiated the creation of ethical animal welfare on an objective and rational level which can be implemented effectively and is convincing in the long term. It is quite common for radical animal protectors to appear un-

necessarily aggressive, excessive and not objective, not least because they are excluded from animal welfare proceedings. More circumspect but no less determined dispensation of justice in animal welfare cases is simplified with the transfer of genuine responsibility to organized animal welfare. The extensive acceptance of the office, the pressure on court decisions towards uniformity which appears effective, practical perceptions and the institutionalization of the perception of the interests of injured animals by a central representative permit further improvements in animal welfare to be expected.

Structure and development of the office

Unfortunately the office is initially restricted to criminal animal welfare. The incumbent is excluded from administrative proceedings like bans on animal ownership, indeed is not even informed about them, although administrative measures such as these would be of importance in the criminal assessment of an individual cruel to animals. It would be worth examining how the office of an "animal protection lawyer" worthy of the name and with the appropriate *rights* should be elaborated in other countries so as to really help animal welfare law to make a breakthrough. Here more extensive work on animal welfare law and constitutional law is desirable to come to grips with possible doubts, such as the department of public prosecution's monopoly to prosecute, the shift in the balance of power within justice and the undesirable self-monitoring.

III. Environmental Lawyer?

Based on the structure of the official animal welfare lawyer, a scientific research is made under our supervision to install an environmental lawyer. This official person should have the duty to represent the environmental interest in every investigation and court case based on infliction of environmental law. Thus the discussion on rights of nature is widespread, the question never or seldom has been raised, if not such a official lawyer could take care of the representation of the nature's interest in being untouched and protected. The study who started several month ago will end in a legal theses in this issue and will point out how far this visionary instrument can support or even replace state attorneys in their daily work to protect humans against crime.

The installation of such an institution will surely have a great impact on the discussion about the legal status of the environment and the implementation of environmental law worldwide.

IV. Conclusion

According to constitutional law considerations animal welfare laws and environmental laws should be capable of being examined by the courts not just to the detriment but also to the benefit of animals and of the environment, even if or precisely because laws contain imprecise legal terms like the "dignity of the creature". The implementation of animal welfare lawyers and environmental lawyers worldwide to represent the animal's or environment's interest in every investigation and court case will push the discussion much forward in which degree nature has to be protected more effectively.

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