

On Being Eaten by Lions

The white-haired man across the Ambassador's dinner table was expounding to nobody in particular, 'My father was eaten by lions'. And although his neighbours did not seem interested, we certainly were; for we knew exactly what he meant, and felt it acutely in the wider context of modern life. 'Yes,' went on the man, 'having built up a successful but not sufficiently large contracting business through many years of intense effort, the Old Man suddenly found himself in unexpected difficulty, was taken over, thrown out, and publicly disgraced.' We found ourselves thinking that this was doubtless engineered by some envious and more powerful lion or lions, for so it has been with too many worthy and trusting people in our time and ken. Usually it is the good ones who suffer, the baddies being more wary and able to keep out of trouble or at least jail. Commonly they join forces and go on to ever-expanding iniquities.

Lions (*Panthera [Felis] leo* agg.) and Tigers (*P. tigris* agg.) are the largest members of the cat family (Felidae), which 'characteristically catch [their] prey by stalking and sudden leaping attacks'; though voracious, they are apt to kill far more than they actually need. So, too, are and do their human counterparts of which we are thinking after that prompting across the dinner table. Let us dwell on a few examples taken from various contexts—without mentioning names but giving such stoic readers as remain with us the rewarding sport of filling these in mentally.

First we may consider the machines—without mentioning names here either but which contraptions of many and sometimes wondrous kinds increasingly enslave us by engendering all-too-easily-acquired-and-difficult-to-forego dependence. To keep going they gobble up Earth's once-for-all fossil fuels and other irreplaceable raw materials at an ever-increasing rate, polluting the soil, air, and waters, on which we should live graciously but now find it increasingly difficult to subsist. These machines are of our own making and fault for which we pay dearly; so, too, are the other 'lions' that we shall now consider.

Thus we have the states and cults that enslave and too-often devour us, commonly depriving us of liberty and spirit as well as, to an ever-increasing extent, our hard-won possessions and rightful freedoms as individuals; the brainwashing of the 'left is right' principle, as we have long called it, is an insidious but dangerous case in point.

Next we may mention some personal experiences, of ourselves and worthy friends, that indicate almost unbelievable, and by many disbelieved, callousness and even jungle cruelty of action by large or not-so-large international organizations and institutions that were supposedly established in the most altruistic spirit to help a needy world. Let us be charitable and say that they probably *think* they are acting for the general good—but beware their effects on personal freedoms, ambitions, and the very heart of democracy. The stories we could tell, and many others which we know to be true, are often quite hair-raising.

Many special cases are provided by the major global organizations which are at once our hope but chronic source of near-despondency, which repeatedly claim that they are taking care of things within their vast 'family', and that accordingly we mere mortals should not worry. This has the most unfortunate effect of putting individuals and smaller groups off doing what they would like to do, and often could do very effectively with their freedom of choice and action for the good of a tottering world; yet what the spokesmen of these global organizations are really concerned about far too often is self-preservation, empire-building, or at best mere maintenance of the *status quo*. Nor have they much capability or seeming desire of freedom of action; so they strive above all to prevent free rivals from developing or even existing. In this context and with the present aura of dire financial stringency, it is apt to be the newer and more dynamic outfits that suffer first and most, regardless of the world's needs which they were established to relieve (we are not considering parkinsonian ploys or 'toys for the boys'), and it is interesting to see how short is the 'life' in them of anybody who speaks out. Several free voices have been silenced of late, but fortunately there are still some surviving, and we wish all power to a courageous one that has recently confronted 'Member States' with outspoken insistence that they 'give... the funds they had promised', while warning that otherwise 'plans in every part of the programme will have to be greatly curtailed, if not abandoned'.

If that is not being eaten by states which are 'lions' it is difficult to imagine what is—unless it was our own earlier experience, when there were funds to spare, of being told in effect that we could not have any unless we would do precisely what the donors wanted and nothing else. And yet to our mind and many others—demographers, ecologists, and experienced practitioners of various other trades—the greatest and most terrifying

'lion' of all is human population swarming and the concomitant pandominance of Man. What chance has Nature as a whole to survive, and, consequently, what chance has the world? Little if any solace can be derived from the ironical circumstance that the remaining real free lions in our constricting world are being 'eaten' by the inexorable increases in human population pressures or else caged in the interest of Man's insatiable curiosity *cum* bravado.

N. P.

To Help the Multinationals?

Whether or not the multinational corporations—good or not-so-good, and now widely under fire in the United Nations and elsewhere for 'milking' undeveloped countries—be also considered as voracious 'lions' along the lines expounded above, it is high time we started some concerted reverse action in their direction on behalf of the environmental movement which is suffering widely and often excruciatingly from the chronic lack of funds. For the multinationals possess the funds, having often far larger budgets than many states or even federal governments, and wield extraordinary if often insidious power.

Based on over-developed countries, the powerful multinational firms are apt to 'invade' peacefully (or sometimes not so peacefully) the poorer countries for mainly selfish purposes ranging from obtaining essential raw materials to mere commercial exploitation. This last may in turn range from the crudest levels, involving virtual slavery or the proverbial 'string of beads' for untold riches, right up to being of fully mutual benefit and hence desirability, as seems increasingly to be the case nowadays but should be far more often and widely. Yet only occasionally do multinational or other moneyed commercial enterprises seem to have a widely constructive 'missionary' function, however keen individual participants may be on, for example, the local avifauna or flora or other aspects of Nature.

Especially when exploitation is the objective of a multinational's invasion, huge sums of money are apt to be spent on advertising and even worse 'pushing' of products to persuade indigenous peoples to buy them—and all too often to get seriously 'hooked' on them. If only a small or even tiny proportion of these advertising and 'development' costs, and ultimately of the profits of such injections, could be set aside for contributing to the support of environmental institutions, research projects, higher (and lower) education and training, nature reserves, and other good works on behalf of the environment and particularly Nature in the under-developed countries concerned, with perhaps a little to spare for those of us who are struggling to survive and function in other parts of this lion-ridden world, it could help materially to solve many problems—especially in these times of appalling inflation, exorbitant taxation, shortage of cash, and concomitant financial stringency.

We are confident and virtually convinced that, reciprocally, the industrial corporations involved could benefit very considerably—indeed, if things were managed aright, probably out of all proportion to the magnitude of their support for our cause. Particularly could the multinationals involved then counter many of the criticisms that are being levelled increasingly at them, by pointing out the good work they were doing in financing *environmental* enterprises. At least it could then no longer be said with any truth that they spend more on advertising what they claim to do for environmental and other conservation than they actually put into such efforts! (Increasingly much of such money and effort is now being spent 'at home' to conform to environmental laws and regulations in industrial countries with enlightened legislatures.) Moreover a healthy environment in a developing country should surely sweeten and probably prolong the life of a worthy multinational in it. So the advantages could, and properly should, be widely mutual and cumulatively reciprocal.

We therefore urge that, both individually and collectively, all concerned advocate such proper 'milking in reverse' of commercial concerns in the great cause of maintaining environmental quality and, ultimately, positive environmental amelioration—such as we know full-well to be feasible though often costly. This should be in addition to propounding and applying the rather negative 'polluter pays principle' or PPP. Indeed it seems that an active campaign along these lines is needed—actually quite desperately—and such a campaign may be deemed to have been launched already last November in Kyoto, Japan. For there, with the approval of our Japanese hosts who have suffered so grievously from the effects of human population pressures, at the final plenary session of the International Congress of Scientists on the Human Environment, our intervention proposing such a campaign was greeted with such universal applause and favourable comments as to confirm our confidence in its timeliness and propriety.*

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* Since the above was written, discussions have advanced promisingly towards holding our next-but-one International Conference on Environmental Future in a suitable country on this general topic, bringing together environmentalists and industrialists (such as leaders of major commercial corporations) in a suitable atmosphere for free exchange of views towards collaboration that should be mutually beneficial at least in the long run.