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JUST A FEW QUESTIONS, PLEASE?

One of the few upsides of having months to worry and reflect about where we all are in our lives and our sport, is that we have time to reflect.

And ponder the fundamentals.

So here are some impertinent questions we should consider, and should have considered seriously and resolved long before now, not just rhetorically, if horsemanship and our sport are really to have a prosperous future. Or any future.

Are breeders who breed unsoundness to unsoundness, or unproven to unsound, or unproven to unproven, likely to be breeding a better, sounder, more durable race horse? Which will, in turn, further improve the breed?

Does it really make sense to “surgically correct” conformation defects in weanlings? For racing soundness? For future breeding soundness? For soundness, period? Is a surgically corrected yearling actually “sound,” in the sense of correct horsemanship? Are conformation defects that have been corrected surgically likely to disappear magically when a corrected horse enters the breeding shed? Is it possible that “corrected” conformation defects are actually genetically compounded and multiplied during future generations of breeding?

Should surgical corrections to weanlings and yearlings be disclosed to potential buyers? To the breed registry? If not, why not? Is there any way to become aware of such procedures other than through “the honor system”?

Should The Jockey Club, as the breed registry, take responsibility for the proper phenotype (conformation) of the Thoroughbred, as well as for the genotype (genetic composition as determined through DNA testing)? If so, how, and if not, why not?

Given the economic Regression that is undoubtedly upon us now – note the use of that word instead of “recession” or “depression” – can or should or will this economic disaster present us some unavoidable opportunities to address these

questions sensibly? The foal crop is already at 1965 levels. Given the delays that have been evident following previous economic calamities, will it be a year or probably two or more years from now that the foal crop numbers decline even more precipitously?

At some point, is it inevitable that the number of races conducted annually will finally begin to coincide once again with the supply of horses?

Will demand for durable, sound, substantial race horses ever reappear and return us to observing the maxim that racing is the proof of breeding? Where, when, and at what surviving tracks?

And just how can a track survive in the years to come? A breeder? A trainer? An owner? Where do any of them find the will to survive? On what basis?

Haven't common sense, as well as recent events, finally confirmed that our historic approach to testing for drugs and medications is desperately in need of thorough re-examination and restructuring? With unfathomable millions being spent on routine testing concentrated on therapeutic medications as it always has been, shouldn't we consider other approaches? Can correct, careful random testing of races going forward release necessary resources for concentrating on research, development, and sophisticated, expensive surveillance to discover and test for contemporary methods of cheating and abuse?

Is it likely that the ongoing collision of the profit-motive with the superior motives of enhanced horsemanship and respect for the breed itself – and the real reasons for breeding – will finally result in an heretofore unfathomable contraction of the sport in the aftermath of which those superior motives might again be asserted and respected? Weren't those superior motives once the foundation of the sport, that enabled its growth and elaboration



and the public support some of us can still remember, however dimly?

Isn't it time, or is it already too late, to distinguish publicly

between animal welfare and animal rights?

Clearly to separate the two, which are very different? To

understand that believing

in animal “rights,” a fantasy requiring that any animal provide its “informed consent” to participating in any activity, is actually contradictory to our long-held beliefs in the importance of animal husbandry, animal welfare, the humane treatment of animals, and even owning pets? Isn't it true that all those worthwhile practices contradict the “rights” doctrine that every species of animal – whether poultry, fish, livestock, equine, canine, feline, or human – is literally equal to any other in the natural order?

Will it fall to the leaders of our sport to organize any and all humane activities involving animals – whether the infinite variety of equestrian sport, pet ownership, zoos and aquaria, wildlife conservation practices, nurturing of livestock, poultry, and fish for human consumption – and tell the public how threatened these activities are by vegan extremists who seek to impose their lifestyles and beliefs on everyone else? Who use their freedom of speech and comment in the public square to advocate against the freedom of others to choose their own lifestyles? And who condemn racing's behaviors relentlessly while countenancing the wholesale and heartless, intentional kills of countless rescued pets and other animals? Isn't that extremist behavior not only unethical, but hypocritical? Shouldn't we be saying so?

I'm not sure whether these questions are actually impertinent – rude, insolent, and impolite – but I'm confident they're necessary to answer clearly and intelligently. Forcefully. And seriously. **T**