



Arthur Hancock

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Breeding, Drugs, and Breakdowns: The State of Thoroughbred Horseracing and the Welfare of the Thoroughbred Racehorse.

Good morning, honored members of Congress.

I am here before you because I am gravely concerned about the future of the Thoroughbred industry. I am a fourth generation breeder and owner, and I also have children who are interested in this way of life. I hope to protect it for them.

There are many wonderful aspects about the horse business, the beautiful farms, the rich tradition, the pageantry, the excitement of competition, and the thrill of victory, but there are also many negatives in the industry that I am concerned about such as inbreeding, over breeding, oversupply, operations on young foals which are not required to be divulged, bribing at auctions, and other issues which we have the means, if not the desire, to fix ourselves. But my primary worry and the main issue which concerns me is the complete lack of uniformity on many issues; specifically, the permissive medication policies that vary from state to state, and the catastrophic results that this medication is wreaking upon our industry.

There are 38 racing jurisdictions in the United States and they all have their own rules. As you know from recent stories in the news, use of steroids is rampant and the rules governing its use vary from state to state.

So, why are we in this situation, and how can it be remedied? What is this Thoroughbred industry? It is a conglomeration of different entities, each of which has its own function as well as its own agenda. There are the breeders, the owners, the veterinarians, the trainers, the jockeys, the race tracks, and all of their affiliated organizations. It is a mega agri-business worth billions of dollars that employs thousands of people who are represented by all of these separate and different entities. There is T.O.B.A. (Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association), The Jockey Club, the Jockey's Guild, the N.T.R.A. (National

Thoroughbred Racing Association), the Breeders' Cup, the American Horse Council, the A.A.E.P (American Association of Equine Practitioners), the H.B.P.A (Horsemen's Benevolent Protective Association), the R.C.I. (Racing Commissioners International), and the racing commissions of 38 different racing jurisdictions. All of these fiefdoms have their own Nero like C.E.O.'s, and each of them envisions himself as the savior of racing and most of them don't even own a horse.

As I see it, the real problem with the Thoroughbred industry is that nobody is in charge. We are a rudderless ship, and the way we're going, we will all end up on the rocks. It is impossible for us to govern and regulate ourselves. We are too fragmented and too diverse. Not one of these groups has the power to bring uniformity and integrity to our sport. In my opinion, only a Federal racing commission or commissioner can save us from ourselves.

Congressman Whitfield of Kentucky says that the Horse Racing Act of 1978 is the vehicle through which we may remedy the situation. Each state can be controlled by the Federal Government because if it does not comply with the rules, the racing signal can be cut off. For instance, if there is a Federal ban on steroids and a state does not comply, it would lose its signal.

I have said for years that we must remove drugs from our game. In 1960, horses made 11.3 starts per year and in 2007 they made 6.31 starts per year. This is a dramatic drop of 44% and is a startling statistic which shows that the breed is becoming softer and weaker. This leads one to the inescapable conclusion that there will be more frequent and severe catastrophic injuries in the future and that these will do us irreparable harm irregardless of the track surface. It is a vicious cycle. Chemical horses produce chemical babies. Drugs must be banned if we

are going to survive as an industry and if thoroughbreds are going to survive as a robust breed. Believe me, we are in peril.

I am reminded of a story. There was once a large fine house wherein lived a number of mice. There were plenty of scraps of fine cheeses, breads and cakes, and the mice flourished. Then the owner decided to get a cat and this cat wreaked havoc on the mice and their comfortable lifestyle. All of the mice convened in an effort to find a solution to this life-threatening problem, and they decided to put a bell on the cat. This was considered to be a wonderful idea and was hailed throughout mousedom. Then one of the mice said, "But who will be the one to put the bell on the cat?"

That is our dilemma; we have no one to put the bell on the cat. It is impossible for us. The fiefdoms cannot come together and they will scream loudly at the prospect of any infringements upon their domains. Our only hope is a federal racing commissioner or commission, and I have said this publicly since 1990.

In the early eighties, Senator Mathias of Maryland spoke to The Jockey Club Round Table in Saratoga and warned us to clean up our own act or the government would do it for us. The industry mobilized, went to Washington and said we would do it ourselves....and the results speak for themselves. That was twenty eight years and hundreds of committee meetings ago, and things have gotten worse, not better. It never happened and never will, unless you mandate through the Horseracing Act of 1978 that we have the means to bell the cat. Where would car racing be without NASCAR; professional basketball, without the N.B.A.; professional football, without the N.F.L. and A.F.L.; or baseball without a commissioner. Some years ago, baseball had a problem with steroids and

because of a federal inquiry it has now cleaned up its act....yet baseball had a commissioner to enforce the rules.

So, why can't we do something about the drug situation on our own? The answer is, there is big money behind these drugs and there is a lot of pressure to continue with the status quo. This pressure comes from veterinarians who say that the drugs are therapeutic. When I worked at the race track in 1966, the only time the veterinarian came to the barn was to check the horse on race day or if he was sick. Now, they are there every day, and veterinary bills for owners can run over \$1,000.00 a month on a single horse. Last year, I told a veterinarian that I didn't want my horses to get any medication unless they were sick and he replied, "You want to win races, don't you Arthur?" The veterinarians are running the show.

Now I don't mean to say that all race track veterinarians are bad people and I don't in any way mean to disparage them. I respect them. They use these drugs because they can, and the drugs they give a horse are for the most part legal, although there are some who will use the masking power of the legal drugs to mask other more sinister and illegal substances. For instance, cobra venom was recently discovered in the possession of a trainer and it was given to him by his veterinarian. If evil can exist, it will. If evil is permitted, it will prevail. America, by the way, is the only nation on this planet which permits the use of most of these medications. England, France, Ireland, Japan, Australia, and on and on don't allow them. Steroids are banned in every other country except ours.

The drug issue is destroying public confidence as well as the breed. People wonder why we haven't had a Triple Crown winner since the seventies. Well, when a horse gets Lasix in the Kentucky Derby and loses 30-40 pounds and the same thing happens in the Preakness two weeks later, how can he be at full

strength for the Belmont where he gets it again; all of this in the span of five weeks.... and Lasix is not the only drug the horse gets. He may get steroids and many other drugs like butazolidin, which is a pain killer.

So, I am convinced and terrified that we are losing our industry, the public confidence, and the American breed called the Thoroughbred. The horse is the star. He is our show, and look what we are doing to him. Help us right these wrongs. Let us remember that the definition of insanity is repeating the same behavior over and over again expecting different results. Let us have "0" tolerance and national labs for testing. Any expense to create integrity and save the breed would be cheap. Ben Johnson said that nothing can be great unless it is right. Help us make horse racing right and great again. The very survival of our industry is at stake here, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to close with a poem written by the late Winston Churchill.

"Who is in charge of the clattering train,
The carriages creak and the couplets strain.
And the pace is fast and the points are near,
But sleep has deadened the driver's ear.
And the whistle shrieks through the night in vain,
For death is in charge of the clattering train."

Thank you for listening to me. Your time and efforts are deeply appreciated and it has been a privilege and an honor for me to appear before you.

Thank you, and good day.