

In All Fairness

Why did white people give up their right to buy and sell black people? Why did men agree to let women make their own decisions regarding marriage, or allow them to own property or to vote?

Although the answers to these questions are historically complex, the demand for fairness and the desire to be fair were significant factors and have served as strong motivations in our social advancement. We naturally expect to be treated fairly by our neighbors, in our business dealings, and by our government. When we are treated unfairly, we become angry and sometimes resort to the court system for justice; in some cases, unjust treatment by a government can lead to civil unrest or even revolution. Clearly, fair treatment is fundamentally important to most people.

Recent research conducted at the **Yerkes National Primate Research Center** has demonstrated that capuchin monkeys have a "sense of fairness."¹

In an interview with the BBC, one of the researchers explained that they put pairs of capuchins side by side and that one of them would get a slice of cucumber as a reward for a task. "The partner sometimes got the same food reward but on other occasions got a grape, sometimes without even having

to work for it." As a result of seeing their partner being rewarded with a better reward for no work, they typically refused the task they were set. "The other half of the time they would complete the task but wouldn't take the reward. Sometimes they ignored the reward; sometimes they took it and threw it down."

The researchers concluded that an expectation of fair play, or "inequity aversion" probably has an early

Sometimes they ignored the reward; sometimes they took it and threw it down.

evolutionary origin and is likely to be a characteristic of many primate species.

Inequity Aversion

Citizens have an expectation of fair play. We expect the government to deal fairly with everyone. In the case of the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** and its policies concerning harmful experiments on monkeys and apes, fairness has been ignored and often derided. Fairness demands that research results such as those above be considered when deciding whether to continue hurting monkeys in NIH-funded experimentation.

The responsibility for ignoring the fact that monkeys have a sense of fairness and for ignoring other recent discoveries such as monkeys' abstract reasoning abilities², and the fact that monkeys seem to be aware of what they do and do not know³ lies with the researchers who are loath to call attention to the failed ethics of a system that rewards them for silence and for experimenting on monkeys, of course, but primarily with members of Congress for not acting fairly in the face of current scientific understanding.

Fair play seems to require that those

who conduct, promote, or provide funding for activities that harm others, regardless of the justification, should constantly reevaluate their decisions in light of new evidence. New discoveries could radically undermine ethical decisions made prior to and in the absence of such evidence. There is no indication that such reevaluations have ever taken place in Congress with regard to public funding of primate experimentation. This is unfair and stimulates our aversion to inequity.

A History of Fair Play?

It seems unfair to learn that monkeys use abstract reasoning and have an expectation of fairness and need the same nurturing as a human child, yet to continue paying scientists to hurt them. It seems that prejudice – the antithesis of fairness – is the only explanation. This seems to be the same reason that blacks were experimented on in Tuskegee and why boys at the Fernald State School in Waltham, MA, a facility for retarded children and orphans, were encouraged to eat radioactive oatmeal.⁴ Congress supported those experiments too.

Similar injustice and ethical blindness seem to account for the facts associated with the NIH-funded program of

It seems unfair to learn that monkeys have an expectation of fairness...yet to continue paying scientists to hurt them.

primate experimentation underway today. Right now, monkeys are strapped into chairs while scientists whittle away on their brains; right now, monkeys' heads are bolted in place while they are shaken and spun to learn about their sense of balance; right now, monkeys with chronic diarrhea are crouched

The Congressional Educator is mailed quarterly to members of Congress.

For information contact:

The Primate Freedom Project
P.O. Box 1623
Fayetteville, GA 30214

www.primatereedom.com

Persons are encouraged to send a copy of this document to their representatives.

(Continued on back page)

(Continued from page 1)

alone in steel cages; right now, monkeys are shivering in isolation slowly gnawing their arms and chewing off their fingers. Right now.

It's not a secret, the details are well known, and Congress pays for it all with taxpayer money.

Even a monkey would see that it simply isn't fair.

Notes

(1) Brosnan SF, De Waal FB. Monkeys reject unequal pay. *Nature*. 2003 Sep 18;425(6955):297-9.

(2) Fagot J, Wasserman EA, Young ME. Discriminating the relation between relations: the role of entropy in abstract conceptualization by baboons (*Papio papio*) and humans (*Homo sapiens*). *J Exp Psychol Anim Behav Process*. 2001 Oct;27(4):316-28.

(3) Son, L. K., Kornell, N., & Terrace, H. S. (2003). Confidence judgments by rhesus macaques on a serial memory task. Poster presented at the 44th annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, Vancouver, BC.

(4) United States Department of Energy (DOE). *Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments*. Commissioned January 15, 1994.

Did You Know?

Defenders of animal research in the United Kingdom repeatedly claim that animal experimentation should be done in the U.K. because other countries have weaker animal welfare regulations.

Defenders of animal research in the U.S. say the very same thing about animal experimentation in U.S. labs.

In mid-December of 2003, an undercover investigation at the largest primate research facility in Europe, the Covance laboratory in Germany, documented widespread suffering and abuse. The German government's reaction? An immediate investigation of Covance and an attempt to identify the people seen in the videos in an attempt to prosecute them for animal abuse.

Yet, when recent undercover investigations at the Oregon National Primate Research Center and at Huntingdon Life Sciences in England revealed widespread suffering and abuse of monkeys, the British and the United States governments reacted differently:

They blamed the investigators.

In the U.S., in every known case of animal abuse in a primate laboratory or of lying to the public in an apparent attempt to cover up the abuse or to cover up other improprieties, the laboratories and researchers involved have been protected by the NIH and often have been rewarded with career advancement or additional lucrative grants.

Primate Freedom Project
P.O. Box 1623
Fayetteville, GA 30214
www.primatetfreedom.com