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# McCarthy on Slaughterhouses

McCarthy's article on the abattoir led to a review of my notes for a layman's sermon on "the moral basis of vegetarianism" that I presented to our Unitarian church congregation in 1983.

After touching on the usual subjects, including the health risks of eating meat, I proposed a potluck where parents and children could learn more about the vegetarian dietary option. There would be meat (the always popular hamburger) and non-meat dishes offered for comparison.

My role would be to purchase a calf (a conveniently child-sized animal), and to provide the tools of the slaughtering trade, such as flaying knives and bone saws. Small slickers and boots to protect the children's clothing would also be needed.

The adults and children who wanted hamburgers would slaughter the calf and prepare it for the barbecue. For educational purposes, a child would be encouraged to trigger the "captive bolt," a device that stuns, but does not kill, the animal prior to cutting its throat. Those children who wanted to handle the knives would be allowed to if they were dexterous enough. The smaller children would carry out the offal, and help with cleanup.

My drift had become clear early on, and here a very audible gasp rippled through the audience (which included at most two vegetarians).

That gasp symbolizes the entire morality of eating meat in a society where it is not required for survival. As McCarthy suggests, we might benefit from examining that morality more carefully.

BILL BECKER  
Woodland Hills