

things) forced the government of France to re-lay the foundations of higher education, so giving France, with remarkable speed, its now-distinct flavour of modernity. But even though Bastille Day is only a few days away, and although barricades have been an honourable way of making public protests since 1789, the question must arise of whether the truck-drivers are onto something.

It is not as though it were just truck-drivers. Since the announcement a month ago of the amendment of the Common Agricultural Policy by the European Communities (EC), French farmers have been busily building barricades wherever the police would let them — usually of farm vehicles, but sometimes of burning tyres as at Lille at the weekend. The ironical culmination of this excitement is that the railway line from Lyon to Marseilles was blockaded both by farmers protesting at the new EC policy and by others incensed by the truck-drivers' blockage of the highways, which prevented them getting their produce to market. What does it all mean?

France is both conservative and, ordinarily, law-abiding. In the tradition of the barricade, the lawlessness is a challenge to the government. The issues the two groups raise are very different: the truck-drivers object to a scheme under which they would lose their driving licences automatically as they accumulate driving misdemeanours, the farmers object to the reduction of their subsidized prosperity. The passion is easily understood, but the government's position is also reasonable: France has a poor record on road safety, while France alone could not subsidize French farmers to the degree that the EC now recognizes to be unaffordable and impolitic.

What is to be done? Within the EC, France has been for 20 years one of the most solid supporters of European cohesion and one of the most protectionist of member states. It remains the first, on grand strategic grounds, but the end of Mme Edith Cresson's short spell as prime minister earlier in the year spelled the end of the second view. In reality, there has not been much time for the government to explain its change of tack, but it has also been less than energetic in the task. Now, the time is almost exhausted; inevitably, the farmers will influence the result of the referendum on the European Maastricht Treaty due in mid-September, not to mention the assembly elections due next year. Although the reform of agricultural policy has nothing to do with Maastricht, the government of France may yet regret not having explained more clearly what it is.

The truck-drivers, many of whom now cross European frontiers habitually, constitute a different but more easily soluble problem. They cannot reasonably object to stricter rules on road safety, but they can ask to be dealt with on the same footing as other European truck-drivers. The European Commission, which has already legislated on the numbers of hours a day a commercial driver can be at the wheel, might reasonably be asked to get France off the hook by decreeing uniform standards of driving for licence-holders. The trouble, there, is that Britain and like-minded devolutionary countries are emphasizing the virtues of the devolution called 'subsidiarity' to persuade their people to ratify Maastricht . . . . □

## Keeping zoos alive

**The London Zoological Society should either run its zoo with enthusiasm or hand over to others who would.**

THE troubles of London's city-centre zoo are in danger of becoming boring. Every so often, the word is that the zoo is about to close, but then there is a last-minute rescue (most recently by the Emir of Kuwait. The danger is that people will become inured to the threat of catastrophe and that, somewhere along the line, there will be no rescue. That is why this is precisely the point at which the zoo's management must lay the foundations for the long-term survival of the London Zoo. The letter from Sir Barry Cross on page 102 gives no hint of how the Zoological Society of London will exert itself in that direction (which does not imply that nothing will be done).

Constitutionally and in practice, the London Zoo is a subsidiary of the Zoological Society, both of which have charitable status. Cross is right to say that the society will still have useful work to do even if the zoo is closed; whether its reputation (even among zoologists) would remain untarnished if that happened is another matter. And given that the society benefited both in reputation and in the scale on which its scientific work could be mounted during the long years of modest prosperity at the zoo, is it permissible now to contemplate walking away from a seemingly intractable problem? The society evidently has a sense that it is a dog being wagged by its tail, but also by the British government. But Cross's statement that the chief executive at the zoo in the past few years was "chosen" by the government does not absolve the society's council from responsibility.

What is now to be done? This journal holds that the London Zoo should be kept alive (and modernized) if at all possible — and that the outlook is not nearly as gloomy as supposed. What the zoo needs, first of all, is a membership scheme that offers ordinary people a sense of being in touch with modern zoology (biodiversity and all that) in return for an annual subscription. (That device brings the excellent San Diego Zoo more than half its revenue, but the London Zoo has a much greater catchment population.)

Although the Victorian Zoological Society was forever hearing first-hand accounts of Africa or the Amazon from just-returned explorers, London is probably even fuller now of people with that cast of mind, and with more exciting tales to tell. Could they not help to make membership worthwhile? Imaginative ways (such as shuttle buses) of getting people to the zoo (which, however central, is relatively inaccessible) would also help. But the most urgent need is that policy for the zoo should be determined by people with enthusiasm for its survival. Are the zoologists now so embarrassed by their zoo that they would let their subsidiary float off on its own? It is unthinkable that there is no group of well-wishers ready to give the London Zoo a further lease of life. Otherwise, the society has no choice but to muster the enthusiasm from among its own members. □