

Traditional values return to Humane Society Chief leaves, animal rights era ends: [Final Edition]

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

Former executive director Kathleen Hunter came to the society a decade ago aboard an animal rights bandwagon heavily involved in causes such as opposition to medical research on live animals.

Hunter and the society parted ways last Wednesday night following a meeting of the board and a lengthy discussion in her office with board chairperson Dr. Howard Seiden and two other directors.

“(Hunter) long ago broke her affiliation with groups like Ark II,” said society secretary-treasurer Robert Hambley, the only director who has been a board member since before Hunter was hired.

FULL TEXT

The animal rights era has ended at the Toronto Humane Society.

But the radical influence within it has been waning for years.

Former executive director Kathleen Hunter came to the society a decade ago aboard an animal rights bandwagon heavily involved in causes such as opposition to medical research on live animals.

Hunter and the society parted ways last Wednesday night following a meeting of the board and a lengthy discussion in her office with board chairperson Dr. Howard Seiden and two other directors.

The once radical co-founder of an organization known as Ark II, which advocated protests on behalf of animal rights issues, was without a job after the meetings.

Society officials are remaining silent while a financial settlement is negotiated.

The question that remains unanswered is why Hunter's 10-year reign as the chief administrator came to such an abrupt end.

“(Hunter) long ago broke her affiliation with groups like Ark II,” said society secretary-treasurer Robert Hambley, the only director who has been a board member since before Hunter was hired.

“It's the end of an era,” Seiden said in an interview, while adamantly refusing to discuss Hunter.

“She's gone. There's no impropriety, no scandal and no story,” he said.

Hunter could not be reached for comment.

Both Seiden and Hambley were rankled by a report in The Saturday Star that Metro Toronto police escorted Hunter from the building. They say police were neither required nor called.

Hunter's departure opens the door for a return to the more- conservative, traditional values held by the society until 1986, when animal rights activists staged a coup by gathering proxy votes from a majority of the society's unwitting 3,500 members.

By 1991, a more conservative group of directors had regained control of the board, which oversees an annual operating budget of \$7 million, a membership list pared to 2,000 and the contributions of 50,000 donors.

``The last thing we should be doing is something political. We want to go back and do what the society was set up to do," Seiden said.

The society holds a \$780,000 contract to provide a shelter for stray dogs and cats captured by the City of Toronto's animal control department.

The directors have set up a ``management team" headed by Jack Slibar, originally hired to work as liaison between the society and government.

Slibar is affiliated with the Toronto-based Mackenzie Institute, a think tank devoted to the study of terrorist activities.

In 1991, the institute conducted a study of the animal rights movement, detailing the 1986 takeover of the humane society.

In a 1993 update of the study, obtained by The Star, the institute reported that Hunter's ``freedom of action is somewhat curtailed. Moreover, recent evidence suggests her commitment to militancy has been sharply reduced."

Illustration

PHOTO: KATHLEEN HUNTER: CHIEF LEFT SOCIETY AFTER MEETINGS WITH BOARD.

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