

A Boon for the Zoos

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It takes 25 months of gestation to bring forth an elephant. It took 20 months to bring forth an agreement between New York City and the New York Zoological Society under which the society is to run and renovate the municipal zoos. The accord culminates a decade of fruitless efforts to end the zoos' deterioration and the cruel living conditions of animals. The cages are so outdated that they offend even human sensibilities. A trip to one of the park zoos should be a delight.

The 50-year accord is thus cause for celebration. Not only will the Zoological Society operate the zoos in Central Park, Prospect Park and Flushing Meadows. It also will contribute \$1 million needed for the redesign of the animals' quarters, which will start soon.

Those plans will benefit from the society's expertise. It will determine which animals and exhibits are

appropriate to each zoo. Rebuilding the zoos will mean a capital expenditure by the city of \$21 million over three or four years. Operating costs will be shared equally by the city and the society, and so the the city's expenses will be lowered. If admission fees are eventually needed, as they are at the Bronx Zoo and elsewhere in the country, that will surely be preferable to leaving the animals poorly housed.

It's still too early to send up the balloons. The deal has to pass through the Legislature, the city's uniform land use process, environmental review, and finally the Board of Estimate. With luck, this safari will take a year. But our thanks go right now to Gordon Davis, the Commissioner of Parks, who concluded negotiations that had stymied others for so long. More visible changes can't come fast enough.

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