

IT SEEMS TO ME by TOM HORNER (Reprinted from the Dog World, July,24,1983)

DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDE

WATCHING THE groups on one of the days at Windsor I found myself in the company of a very distinguished American breeder of and writer on the trimmed terrier breeds. This man and his equally knowledgeable wife have bred, trimmed and handled a large number of their favorite breed to championship and best in show awards over a very long period in America, but are still keen enough to come over to this country once or twice a year to look at their favorites on their native soil.

The remark that stays in my memory from this meeting was made when Jasper, as I will call him (it is not his name), was looking at one of the group with a somewhat jaundiced eye; few of them it seemed came up to his standard of presentation. "You know", he said, "no judge should ever send a badly presented dog into the group, it denigrates the breed."

Widespread

This attitude, with its inference that the groups and best in show are more important than breed judging, is quite widespread in America and those countries where the American way of looking at dog shows is followed. Make no mistake, this point of view is very powerful in the world today, it is evident in Canada, South American and Australia to name but three areas where large shows are held.

But it did surprise me to hear Jasper say this, as in view of his great success as a breeder, I would have expected him to take the opposite view or at least to have been rather less vehement on the subject.

In Britain only a small minority think this way. For most of our breeders to breed first rate stock or an outstanding individual is the *summit* of their ambition. Most people take their dogs into the group if they win BOB but groups and BIS are, for the majority of serious British breeders, a minor consideration compared with the progress of their breed and their own animals in particular.

This may, at first sight, seem to be a short-sighted approach, but it has one very favorable result, it produces a steady supply of good animals from those breeders who have the know-how and the resources to breed successfully.

Nearly all our most successful breeders are single minded about breeding — winning is a secondary consideration and winning against other breeds is not something our breeders

lose any sleep over. It is, of course, welcome when it happens, but few people expect it to happen to them more than occasionally and so do not get up-tight when it doesn't. There are exceptions of course.

Condemnation

This attitude of not expecting to win in groups might sound like a condemnation of the standard of judging at group level in this country, but I don't think that is so. There is quite as much, if not more, beefing about the judging of the all-rounders in America, where of course they have in proportion many more all-breed judges than do we.

Which-ever way you put it, like begets like, or history ultimately indicates which dogs of a particular period were the best. It is true to say: "*by their progeny shall you know them*", and over and over again it is found that outstanding dogs come from outstanding forebearers. It is very rare these days for a really top flight specimen of any breed to be bred from indifferent stock.

Stockmanship

Judges who lay greater stress on presentation, showmanship or handling skill than on the actual intrinsic merit of the animals they judge, will seldom find themselves among those judges that the history of the breed concerned will indicate as the most able, because the dogs they have put up have proved to be among the most successful parents of their generation.

I was surprised that through his success as a breeder Jasper did not seem to have become aware of the well proven maxim of stockmanship that the best judges find the best animals.