

Animal Liberation: Devastate to Liberate, or Devastatingly Liberal?

Anonymous

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“One can only empathise with individuals, motivated by a sincere desire for reform, who join ecology groups, consumer organisations and alternative political parties. In any of these groups these individuals are directed by a firmly entrenched leadership through a maze of politically motivated compromises to an end that is sadly predictable: the indefinite postponement of profound social transformation, the enrichment of the careers of a few bureaucrats and the permanent disillusion of a number of intelligent individuals.

from ‘Call it Sleep’ — Cronin/Seltzer

The movement which has sprung up around animal rights has gained widespread notoriety and a fair amount of support. It appeals to all sorts of people, generally the compassionate souls and especially the young. Kids, grown up in a world where the cruelty and horror has never been more openly and apparently fraternised by the media, and educational system look for something to do about it all. The lure of the animal rights movement lies exactly in that it appears that you can do something about it.

With its sit-ins, hunt sabotage, commando-style Animal Liberation Front (ALF) raids etc. the movement certainly has the airs of militancy surrounding it and even if someone doesn’t get directly involved in stuff then they can still feel part of it. It would be hard to deny that this is where it has its appeal, nestling smoothly alongside the altruistic, caring for the wounded. All sorts of folks pass through the movement, from the gentle and mild mannered to the angry or the just plain weird.

But for all of the militant pretence there has always existed within the animal rights movement the belief that the current social structure can adapt itself to existence without animal abuse. All sorts of pressure groups campaigns are set up, so as to persuade parliament to bring in legislation which will miraculously end humans persecution of other species.

Any casual glance at history will of course show that such reformist politics, asking or pressurising governments to reform their practices and laws, offer no road to genuine change but a dead end. Here in the cul-de-sac of half granted demands and absorbed “sell-outs” you’ll find countless genuine desires for social transformation twisted into new forms of oppression. The meaningful change we crave is permanently postponed by those in power.

All this amounts to is a constant banging of heads against brick walls and one would’ be forgiven for thinking that the resultant bruising caused to the brains of animal rights campaigners is responsible for the staggering naivety within the movement. But it goes further than that- The stupid belief that the huge profits involved in the abuse of animals (which are so intricately linked up to financial gain and exploitation in other areas of life) will just be casually given up by the vast corporations and governments who benefit from it, is the result of people allowing themselves to remain blind to the very harsh reality of the society we are forced to inhabit and a refusal to attack the very people who’ve put the blinkers on us.

The problem is compounded by people in the animal rights movement enthusiastically clutching onto any sign that something beneficial is happening for animals and claiming that this is part of the “road to victory”. In conversations people still talk about the fur trade as if it has been destroyed (which it hasn’t) and other such garbage. The trend is to be content that something is happening but never to examine the content of what is happening.

At the very most, only the mildest demands could ever be met. Perhaps there will be some reduction in the intensity of farming practices, maybe even an end to vivisection for the purpose

of testing cosmetics. But the likelihood is that these victories (as the animal rights movement would no doubt see it) would be merely cosmetic in themselves. Operations like these could be moved (and already are) overseas where there is less dissent — ensuring for the capitalists who conduct them — their continuation, their profits, the pacification of opposition and encouragement of faith in a parliamentary democracy that keeps the wheels of commerce (and therefore exploitation) spinning round and round.

I once heard someone offer to pay a bloke to vote for Labour — just because they had a proposed ban on hunting with hounds in their manifesto! Even if such a ban did come about (very unlikely) the purpose of that would be to prevent something else. The prospect of more widespread activity against the rich people who go hunting and the police who protect those leisure interests extending beyond the killing fields, into other areas, could, at some point, develop into something more threatening for those who make the laws (ie. those who go hunting and their mates) and require pacifying in some way. But they are already dealing with this in different ways: hiring private security firm (which creates another niche in the market — making hunting more profitable than before and therefore more powerfully protected) and having the police and Crown Prosecution Service utilise existing laws more thoroughly. The Home Office are also bringing in a new, catch-all aggravated trespass law, which aims at criminalising travellers, squatters, hunt saboteurs and ravers, (though the general wide ranging nature of this Criminal Justice Bill will go far further than eliminating these mere annoyances for the dominating elite). The heady militancy of Brixton sabs going out solely to attack huntsmen, looks set to become a upping of the stakes, too little, way too late.

The point is that what the people in the animal rights movement call animal liberation, is not brought one step closer in reality by any of the so called successes. More laws can never, bring about more freedom (though they can be used to grant legal rights in response to 'radical' demands). Freedom is something that just cannot be legislated into existence. It is not a bit of paper to be argued over by Eton Schooled Wankers in some big Westminster building or 'offered' to us by Left Wing Council Bureaucrats trained in comprehensives. Freedom is an existence that has to be fought for and taken.

Becoming Part of the Problem

1. Modern life brings with it the distressing realisation that all is not well with society. All around us we are acutely aware, that for all the gloss and glamour offered in the adverts and shop displays, there exists vast suffering on an unprecedented 'scale. The horror Of the world is no longer something that is invisible, it is openly on' show, with dying children competing for the same front page spread as the Royal Family. Contrary to what many people in the animal rights movement believe, many of the atrocities are not hidden away, behind closed doors. Their representation on film or print is staring us daily in the face. If people are seen to be apathetic in any way to this is not because they are not disgusted by it, but have been so saturated by its images they've become anaesthetised to it. And importantly, it's not just that people are presented with too much information but that they're not given the means of understanding how it all adds up. Ever wondered why so few of us care to think about what is happening in Northern Ireland?

2. In today's society everything is up for grabs. Everything has an economic value, from the beautiful faces we fall in love with at the movies to the gore of serial killers. And with each

aspect of society there springs forth an opposing view, which is marketed alongside the original to double the sales. The status quo can, quite easily, shout out dissent on virtually any particular aspect of itself, whilst at the same time, joyfully continuing its onslaught against life.

3. Around animal rights, thousands of people have changed their diets, lifestyles and politics etc. because of an awareness of the abuse that animals suffer in society. In itself, these are not bad things. In some senses people have to be respected for trying to live differently. But, at the same time, they are not, on their own, going to change the conditions for animals. The reality seems to be that as a substitute for change, they offer us the farce of consumer dissent and we in turn, pay up the ridiculous prices for the 'alternatives', give ourselves initials, organisations and heroes to cling on to in order to escape a terrifying realisation; that these things are irrelevant because they have been so easily absorbed into the very economic system that oppresses animals. They have become institutionalised ways of life to suit those who are upset or angry about the exploitation of animals.

4. In virtually all of the literature put out under the umbrella of the animal rights movement nothing other than the suffering of animals seems to matter. The subject, whilst a very real one, is portrayed as if it existed in an otherwise perfect environment.

5. Labour MP Michael Foot once said that he'd vote for a pro-bomb Labour party rather than an anti-bomb Tory party (of course they're all pro-bomb today which makes life much easier for Michael). In much the same way some people's animal rights fanaticism gets so single minded that most would probably vote for a pro-animal rights Hitter (some evidently secretly wish for one too). On a more practical level I have heard hunt saboteurs celebrate the news of major road developments as these will inevitably affect the availability of hunting land and meets. Is this what wildlife needs — more roads? As long as 'solutions' are within the confines of capitalist society then no one is really going to be much better off and some are going to be a lot worse off. We are offered choice a or b, left or right, channels 1 to 4 but they're all bad as long as they control the choices we perceive as available to us. There is no reason to choose between them as they all offer the same shit with different coloured sugar coatings. By refusing to seriously consider creating our own options, we repress our intelligence, strength and a history of courageous people who have fought back.

6. During the Gulf War, animal rights magazines such as *Turning Point* expressed their distaste for what had gone on by merely pointing to the 'deliberate' oil spillages which caused massive destruction to the local environment and wildlife. This of course was a real tragedy, but what was astonishing was that was all that was said in these publications. Such a huge event — that surely involved, directly and indirectly, most of the working population of the entire world;¹ which entailed the pointless deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, demonstrated the clinical devastation of modern weaponry and the minds of the terrorists who wield it; brought about near insurrections in Southern Iraq and Kurdistan; saw people in Paris and various American cities taking to the streets to riot in protest — was trivialised into a small story about British rescue workers helping out with distressed birds.

¹For example in a jet fighter alone there is the Labour of the shop floor workers in the many assembly factories, then there are electricians, computer programmers, designers, the miners who extract the iron ore, the steel smelters, the oil rig workers and those in the refinery and plastics plant. The transporters, by sea, air and road and the clerks, typists and communications workers who co-ordinated the manufacture. Not forgetting all those who slaved to produce all the things needed to keep the others alive.

7. And more pertinently, such a story played a key part in the propaganda presented to us. Not because the pictures showed something that was not occurring, but that the footage of oily birds was placed out of context. It may well have been footage taken before the war and the 'deliberate' omissions started. In the end it might as well have been because tanker spillage, dumping and all that accompanies the extraction of black gold at the fastest rate and lowest cost means that, war or not, the Gulf shoreline is always like that. Conscience teasing pictures of oil stricken birds directed our gaze solely on Iraqi atrocities and conveniently covered up U.N. involvement in bombing offshore oil rigs and later U.N. napalming of mutinous Iraqi troops (whose arms were well needed in the insurrections taking place in Southern Iraq). The U.N. deliberately didn't overthrow Saddam precisely because they needed him to quell the rise of worker's councils (autonomous from Kurdish nationalism and Shi'ite fundamentalism) and violent attacks upon his state (eg. destruction of secret police headquarters). At a time when the class war was hotting up in that area, as a revolutionary response to the power mongers and war, we here had our global powerlessness reinforced by the media — the animal rights media, as guilty as the rest.

8. It is not that the massive environmental destruction should be ignored but realised that it exists within a context. The fact that each and every aspect of animal persecution can be shown to be intricately linked to a web of hierarchical domination stretching right across every aspect of society, is ignored by animal rights groups. There are a million good reasons to be violently angry with those who make the decisions and wield the power in this world. Certainly the abuse of animals is one, but it's not necessarily the most important, or worst symptom of this sick society.

9. In all their opposition to animal abuse, however sincere, the animal rights movement has done little to avoid the deadly trap of fragmentation. Whilst fighting 'their' particular oppression it seems that, generally, individuals in the movement have lost sight of the fact that it is part of the total oppression. Whenever one problem is separated from all the other problems a solution really is impossible since they are all linked and because, once isolated and specialised, a movement is weakened.

10. Whilst all around us the traditional forms of social control and organisation like the family, corporation and even the state begin to lose their total power over the individual, modern, more voluntary forms appear to fill the gap. It's a distressing concept to some people, that the cooperative, the collective, welfare or community they're involved in, functions perfectly as a pacifying pressure release from the terror of living in the modern world (which is why they repress the faintest thought that what they're doing is changing nothing). In the past the political left was responsible for this, but now with liberalism far more trendy than the rigidity of traditional politics, all of the single issue groups and right-on organisers, do the job for them. It's the same process, just dressed up in different clothes. ACT UP, a campaigning group on the issue of AIDS and HIV, protested about condoms and clean syringes not being allowed in prisons. Some demand, making the living death of prison slightly more tolerable. By whose morality is it okay to endure the living death of prisons and all the threats to life that involves but not okay if there's a chance of dying of AIDS? Looking at the cosy careers of ACT-UP, it's certainly not based on the morality of those who have to suffer in them. On the rooftops of Strangeways and through the dense smoke of a burning HMP Wymott, there were no cries for clean works or some rubbers from the rioting prisoners.

11. Today, in the striving for a more tolerable society, the individual is misled into giving themselves up for the glorification of an abstraction. Be that animal liberation, socialism, anti-

sexism or whatever. People seem to have unconsciously assumed that their life's desires are unattainable so instead of fighting for themselves, they end up fighting for an ideal or a cause, which gives them the illusion of self-activity. So many individuals remain oblivious to the fact that their attempts to change society are permitted and even encouraged, as long as they alter or change nothing fundamental to the maintenance of class society, or worse, realise this, but cynically go along with it for the ride anyway.

12. In the same way that the left (in particular the unions) used to ease tensions in the work place (to a superficial extent) by enabling management to manage dissent easier, with so-called equal opportunities (to be exploited), anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic legislation, electoral reform (to be more democratically oppressed) etc. the animal rights movement is being used to build a cleaner image for capitalism. Free range eggs, cruelty free products etc. are just as much illusions as are equal opportunities. The illusion that some things are getting better is nothing more than a way of catering for all tastes and making a killing in the process. If you can more easily tolerate this society by using non-animal tested bleach, then the middle class people who make the decisions about product production are happy. And you who accept this, at the expense of working out a theory and practice for destruction of this shitty class and their society, are losing.

13. Of course when I first got involved in animal rights I didn't see things so clearly at the start. It was just a way of expressing the fact that I didn't want to have to use living beings, kill them and eat them to survive. I wanted to see things differently and not have an exploitative relationship with animals. Animal rights is, at its best, an expression that people do genuinely want to live in a better world, a world free from this one's exploitation. Those that get involved are initially people who sincerely want change, but as time goes on ... What d'ya know, nothing's happened, nothing's changed. People drop out, drop into the martyr role or see some other career niche (socially or economically) and remain quite content, professionally campaigning their guts out.

14. Simply by concentrating on one of class society's repugnant features (the abuse of animals) and ignoring the relationship of that to the whole of society and all of the relationships within society, is exactly what those in power demand of their opposition. This ignorance becomes acutely apparent when the everyday activities of people in the animal rights movement are examined. There is an incessant chattering about this or that aspect of animal abuse, right down to the latest nick-name for tins or that terrier man, buying Meat Trades Journal or Horse and Hound to check up on the specified opposition. To an extent it's understandable, but it becomes really tedious after a while. It's the same kind of trivia you encounter within drugs circles, football fanatics, workaholics, etc. Here one abstract subject becomes all-important, drowning out all of the subtleties and other interesting things that makes talking to people worthwhile. Soon you get to realise that all you have in common with these people is that you also disagree with animal suffering, and if you took at that kind of relationship based on negativity, it doesn't amount to much.

On being the Greatest allies of our own gravediggers

15. In modern society we don't have to agree with every detail, in fact we are positively encouraged to argue and take sides over a whole host of specialised issues, as long as we accept

this view of the world and view life from the perspective of power as presented to us by teachers, sociologists, documentary makers, etc.

16. The animal rights movement does this perfectly, from setting up campaigns, so trivial as ones about specific animals (eg. the dolphin in Flamingoland) to collaborating with newspaper articles about the horrors of specific cosmetic companies, laboratories or factory farm practices. All treated in isolation, implying that there is a fault in the system and that if this was sorted out then everything would be all right. Generally this involves asking those in power, be they company directors university research professors or members of parliament, to do something about it, just as the media are asked to be so kind as to talk about it.

17. All of the reference points for 'change' (petitions, demonstrations, non-violent direct action etc.) have been given to us by those in power (or those who'd like to be). The way that the issues are presented, as unique horrors, is the way that this kind of information is put forward by the media, schools etc. The animal rights movement sees only the pain and the misery but never the cause, never its connection to something far wider, something that infests everything right down to the simplest dealings in our daily lives.

18. In some of its critiques of modern medicine and its use of animals as experimental models, the animal rightists accuse researchers of treating the symptoms (eg. cancer tumours etc.) and not the causes (in this case possibly stress or diet etc.). But the same critique is easily applied to the movement's ills. The symptoms of wide scale abuse of animals are easily apparent, but the underlying cause of the disease itself? A social order based upon exploitation and hierarchical power through every level of its existence is rarely treated with a mention.

19. By seeing things from the perspective of power, in suggesting that the cruelty of capitalism is to be opposed along the lines of issues, divert people from applying a generalised critique of society and putting that into practice to eliminate our enemies and the social circumstances they've created which allow all of these single issues to exist. Playing with a cause like a TV programme that we can fit into a busy schedule prevents us from making a cause out of our own lives.

20. I've seen so many people write off to companies, members of parliament, make and sign petitions to the same or other heads of state. In doing so they've signed away any potential control they could have instigated in their lives and ultimately legitimate middle class civil servants as the decision makers and wielders of power in society. In reply to my criticisms of this I've always been confronted by the argument that petitions are "great ways" to attract people to stalls — but for how long do we want to perpetuate such a passive response and continue conning ourselves into thinking that the bureaucrats the petitions are sent to will listen, or are even bothered at all?

21. At times you're led to wonder if all those people in the movement who go about this kind of bullshit really do care that much? A guy at a party once said to me that animal rights was the only important issue, yet he was doing the most pathetic street stalls full of petitions and liberal boycott-this-or-that leaflets. It seemed as if he'd never really thought about the practicalities of what he was saying. If he thought it was the most important issue then, what I couldn't understand was, why he was doing nothing to challenge the authority of the state, of capitalist relations, money, law etc. (whose existence is what keeps animal abuse going) but everything to reinforce these with petitions and boycotts?

22. With a lot of peoples' activity it seems that what they think they're doing for animals is preventing them from seeing how ludicrous and futile single issue politics are. If they really believe animal liberation can be achieved, then what is it that's preventing them from believing

that we can also rid the world of the police, poverty, multinational corporations, priests, teachers, judges, politicians, bosses, rich landowners, inequality etc.? The prospect of liberation of both animals and ourselves from the miserable conditions we're in does exist but demands revolutionary activity and nothing less.

Guilt-Soaked Consumption

23. When people settle for something less they become absorbed into the status quo and then of course become part of the problem. No doubt there'll be another Cruelty Free Fair in London this year. Animal Rightsters and greens can flock to gaze at the products designed and marketed for their specific tastes. There, petty businesses and charities can feel smug and content, proclaiming that they're helping to 'change the world' whilst comfortably lining their pockets at the same time. There displayed proudly, the essence of the 'free market' lies, the proclaimed ability to please all tastes. From sandwich spreads to shampoos, these companies generously offer commodities for those unable to stomach the unsavoury aspects of product production (at least in its treatment of animals). The world isn't changed but reproduced by all of this.

24. There and in health food shops all over the world you'll find people's real desires for an existence without cruelty sold back to them. It has become a huge business, catering for the conscientious shopper, one in which more and more companies are itching to join in on as they realise that one of the greatest gimmicks of all time has been created: the 'environmentally friendly/cruelty free' commodity which charms its way into the consumers heart (and burns a large hole in their pocket), enabling them to relate to the commodity on an emotional level because it's 'caring' (it even says so on the side). And if people can emotionally relate to the things they buy in the shops they're going to continue to buy them and continue to accept them as 'steps forward' into a 'better world,' just as long as they keep shopping. Happy shoppers!

25. The assimilation of protest into lifestyle has not only begun but is doing very well for business. T-shirt companies' profits are one of the most blatant signs. For those who 'Know what they believe and wear it on their sleeve', looking cool and saying I'm against this or the other is where it's at; or was. Fashion moves so fast these days; the so-called summer of love part two (a spectacle even more pathetic and absorbed than the first one, since its only focus was on buying products that gave the impression that you were a hippy chick or a groovy guy) in the late eighties is definitely over.

26. Anti-vivisection, anti-fur campaigns etc. are being eaten whole by designers and advertisers, keen to notice that ideas can make money just as easily as things. The end result is vomited out as merchandise, yet more commodities. No one in the animal rights movement seems to notice such blatant crap.

27. Of course the idea of a cruelty free product is a carefully crafted illusion. No such thing can exist — all commodities are cruel. Every single thing that can be bought, every service, every item of food, every household good, every house, road or car has been produced with the forced slavery of working class people. The predominance of middle class people who make up the animal rights movement ignore this because they tend not to have to suffer half as much in society themselves. Even if you were only interested in cruelty in regard to animals (a trait with a perplexing popularity amongst the human members of the animal rights movement), how could you avoid using animal in rubber, glues or on photographic film? This isn't mentioned to make

anyone feel bad about taking photos or whatever but merely to show that the notion of being a “true vegan” in this society is an impossible goal. We didn’t choose for it to be that way, we don’t use such things deliberately for that reason — under this economic system we simply have no control over such a thing.

28. The whole guilt thing reaches extremes when the Winter ’93 issue of The Vegan magazine recommends the “mucus/temperature” method of contraception because it’s the “only totally vegan, and otherwise ethically sound” method. Condoms apparently contain a milk protein in them — but they’re also potential lifesavers. Since we don’t all conform to The Vegan’s cosy image of non-promiscuous, heterosexual couples who never fuck during periods or anally and because we have a: desperate need for protection against sexually transmitted diseases, such guilt mongering advice is plainly stupid and dangerous these days. Ms. Sherwood, the author asks “do you really like condoms? I liken it to giving a massage to someone with a pair of gloves on.” The humanist approach to Catholicism — just what we need!

29. Instead of thinking things out, looking at the world with fresh eyes and fighting to secure a vision in which their dream could be realised, middle class individuals develop the survivalist ideology of guilt. In this, everyone is to blame, we are all to feel bad for being human.

30. This disgusting trend creates hierarchies of credibility and the whole pathetic scene becomes full of people all backstabbing each other to be more vegan than thou. The ‘joke’ of the vegan police (closet authoritarians, who deliberately and consciously check up on what people are eating, wearing or using with the intention of proving (usually joyously proclaimed) that, “It’s not vegan!”) is not so much their stupid behaviour but that no one appears to have done the decent thing and given them the battering all cops deserve. The people who get so worked up about being ‘right-on’ probably believe they’re being radical when in fact they’re nothing more than reactionary, conservative law enforcement officers, developing new rules of law. Like religious zealots who bash their cruelty free handbook bibles over their friends heads saying, “You’re not vegan enough, suffer more, the animals are.” At times I’ve come across new people to the movement eager to impress, desperate to gain a bit of credibility, doing all they can to come across as ‘sound.’ The real shame is that these lost souls are entering into a way of life not brought about through their own free thought or their own conscious decision, but in order to ‘fit in.’ If people refrain from eating meat or dairy produce because it’s seen to be the only way to appear respectable to other members of the group then their motives are a total sham and it’s no wonder that it’s such a temporary thing for so many. I don’t doubt people are genuinely appalled by what happens to animals in society, but the vegan reich’s perspective that ‘it’s not a choice you actively want to take but a sacrifice you must make,’ is obviously going to polarise into a hard-core of pseudo-religious nutters, who pride themselves on their dedicational sacrifices, and other people who are just being vegan to avoid the stigma of being ‘veggie scum.’ Either way they’ve just been seduced by borrowed attitudes.

Fashion Victims

31. If people are ‘forced’ into being vegan or whatever then they’re not thinking for themselves but on how they will appear to others. For a lot of people veganism is a fashion (especially amongst a lot of the students who jump on the animal rights bandwagon for three years then clamber off). In much the same way that masculinity, success, what kind of a hair style you’ve

got etc. is the goal to define yourself by in mainstream society, in the animal rights movement what you eat takes on an unprecedented importance. Rather than being just a dietary preference it begins to define a person's whole being and sense of self-worth. Every way we turn we're faced with the pathetic spectacle of you-are-what-you-wear-eat-replicate-regurgitate. This whole society is based on appearances. That's why it's so fake.

32. The ghettos that spring up around single issues, political groups, religions, tupperware mornings etc. do come about out of a common desire to belong, to be part of the world, to be involved in a real community. But time and again this is reduced to playing a part in the world, and corresponding to a set formula of phoney social identities. Animal rightists are by no means monopolistic holders of the crown of the false issue. The dreadlock / skinhead / wax jacket / hooded-top / baseball boots / Dr. Marten's lifestyle image is no less absurd than any other fashion and, of course, fashion isn't limited to mere exterior garments but breeds deep with the psyche. To 'fit in' it helps to adopt the same opinions, postures, attitudes and even vocabularies.

33. Every fashion is an example of people refusing to think clearly for themselves, the nature of their life and its relation to society as a whole, with them as the centre, not animal rights or any of the other identifications which mystify the very lives we're living.

34. Hardcore animal rights people turn this into a ludicrous competition for credibility points. Examples of this kind of thing go so far as to include leather free sab vans and vegan only organisations. Someone once had the amusing notion of placing some "unsound" biscuits in one of the "righteous one's" bag, just to create a ludicrous argument we could have the hilarious pleasure of watching. Others have spread unsound rumours about themselves just for a laugh. But the vegan police, spurred on by the motive of simply getting one up on someone else, tend only to preach to the converted or convertible and blame any challenges to their patronising behaviour on personality clashes or, oddly enough, insanity!

'All humans are bastards,' right Ronnie?

35. The idea that 'humans are inevitably bad' and, by their nature, abusers of animals has become quite trendy in the circles which surround the more militant sections of the animal rights movement (ie. HSA, ALF). It's a conveniently simple way to look at things and one that requires little original thought. In the pamphlet 'Going Underground for Animal Liberation' it's stated that direct action "works because it goes to the core of the problem: Animal Abuse!!" Is this really the core of the problem or just one of the pips? Of course, the problems faced by domesticated and wild animals today are caused by humans. Certainly it's humans who decide what is to be produced and how. But very importantly these humans belong to a specific class, of people who include managers, civil servants, architects, economists etc. The 'hard-line' animal rightist (generally coming from this class themselves and therefore full of guilt and self-hatred) have emotionally responded to what they see as horror and jumped to the conclusion that animal abuse is a biological trait all humans are stuck with. Discussion with these stubborn ideologists who want to blame us all, rather than their class, is about as interesting and effective as talking to a brick wall.

36. Under the hard-faced "All humans are bastards" pretence the gentle souls who hold these views seem to exist in a contradictory state of mind. As desperate for love from their fellow humans as the rest of us, yet trying to foster a hatred for the whole species (including themselves)

to live up to the simplified answer, they joke about war and natural disasters, as if, in some way, human deaths are a form of vengeance (courtesy of some 'all-seeing' God of retribution?) or a step in the right direction. They want to stop the world and get off, rather than face up to a strategy of regaining some control over its course. Which is a frightening task, if only because the odds seem so stacked against us. We have little to no control over our lives, we have been conditioned to view the world through the eyes of those that would use us as slaves, we have been taught animal abuse is inevitable, that hierarchy is natural, that inequality is just one of those things; 'that's life'; "things'll always be that way" etc. We entered into this life as pretty vulnerable, very receptive little people and at such an early and impressionable age, the class of people I've referred to pumped us full of shit we didn't ask for. And they're still pumping.

37. Ronnie Lee (known as the co-founder of the ALF and ex-ALF spokesperson spent six and a half years in prison as a result) argues that only dramatic reduction the world's human population can help the animals and the environment. We (that's me, our friends and lovers), as a species, as opposed to a global capitalist economy seen to be the cause of all the animals' problems. How exactly our Ronnie would have these dramatic cuts brought about is interestingly avoided. Would our Ron turn on the taps himself? We've seen this kind of thing before. Desperate, ill thought out solutions. As his ideas verge towards Pol Pot's and Hitler's then more and more Mr. Lee is going to be targeted for the cryptically clever fascist he is.

38. More importantly though (because in the grand scale of things Ronnie is really a very unimportant person elevated to importance by people who should've known better), the idea of human populations being too large is again one of capitalist societies myths, developed to hijack any notion of attacking where the real problem lies — with capitalist society itself. The preconditions for feeding and housing the world's population could exist right now — not only in a revolutionary context because only a world-wide revolution can destroy the class that is keeping people and animals in their present poverty. Remember that those who control the food resources and distribution are not trying to feed the world at the moment — it's far more profitable for them if half of the world's population starves to death.

39. If animal rightists always complain about high population growth in Africa and Asia as problems (all talk of population so far has always been Northern hemisphere-centric), it is because of their ignorance of the situation that exists there and ignorance of the history of poor people in their own country. An ignorance generated by the middle class people who produce the media's lies, encourage us into charity and fill up libraries with useless academic books on sociology, economics and history. Poor people need to have large families in order to survive hunger and disease (as do foxes, as any hunt sab will tell you). Up until very recently this was the case here.

40. But now the industrial and manufacturing processes of the North are being moved South, into the third world, where there is less resistance from industrial workforces (which are often migrant and made up of refugees from other countries or the harsh countryside). Whilst in the North there is a gradual transformation of economies like ours into service sector based ones (leisure, retail, bureaucracy). This results in a massive leeching of resources. The global use of land isn't determined by the needs of human populations to feed themselves (as the population reducer's arguments would suggest) but by the economic designs of states and multinational companies. Their directors, economic policy advisors, bankers and other bureaucrats have forced this scenario upon all of us. The solutions for the animals, the third world and the exploited people everywhere won't be found in the distractions of birth control, boycotting etc. because

the problems we now face can never be solved by the actions of states, whether they're disguised as smiling, caring U.N. soldiers, Gasman Ronnie or the 300,000-pound-a-year charity directors.

41. The guilt-tripping creed though just don't see this. To them 'sacrifice is the solution' and judging by the kind of people who generally get involved, such religious behaviour isn't so surprising. Animal rights is to an extent, a very British of a cult, following on a tradition which includes the Quakers, amongst others. As all cults and religions, sacrifice is all important. The benign and innocent sweet Jesus replaced with the helpless abused animals. Whilst animal suffering is very real and Jesus is not, the relationship amongst followers is not that different: midnight candlelit vigils, prayers and poems for the suffering and even a fully fledged sacrifice where some sod decided to, Vietnamese Buddhist style, douse himself in petrol and torch himself, all apparently because he couldn't handle the thought of animals dying in laboratories.

42. Suicide is not uncommon though, and in the context of the misery of daily life under capitalism, the daily war of all against all, just about anything can spark you off to decide to leave the game early or spoil it for all the rest. Judging by some of the bizarre characters I've come across in the animal rights movement, and an increasing desperation that is reflected in magazines such as Support Animal Rights Prisoners (SARP) and the Animal Liberation Front Supporter's Group (ALFSG), some Hungerford style massacre in the name of animal rights is always on the cards. Enter stage left The Justice Department, mercury tilt switches and possible state infiltration to cause a deliberate outrage? The Macdonalds massacre? Few people would shed tears over spilt vivisectors' blood but the perspective that argues such tactics as necessary to bringing about animal liberation is insulting.

Desperately seeking sympathy

43. Any demand is diluted to ensure media coverage: Pretty please reform this cruelty as we licence payers object! And with acceptable pressure groups being the preferred model, individuals compromise their (possibly or potentially radical) ideas for the greater good of that which is 'more important' than the individual — the organisation/movement — so as to become more acceptable to 'the public' (a concept that is just tailored, media creation anyway, with its myth of reasonableness). A lovely example is the HSA committee's marketing officer (how come we don't yet punch the people with up such a stupid, position in the throat?) who thought it would be a good idea for a one pound per copy pamphlet to be made, for the police, magistrates, solicitors and press (ie. the middle class) to see how reasonable hunt sabs, are. Or how about Turning Point asking its readers to write in and complain about the misrepresentation of animal rights issues on The Bill or in Australian soap operas! What do we want — animal rights! When do we want it — after Neighbours? Animal rights politics ask for absorption into the status quo, for recuperation.

44. This pandering to reformers and acceptance of the idea that the media is going to help speeds the process up nicely. Even in its most militant moments the animal rights movement loves courting with the media, a media which is (by reflecting society) happy to do an article on the horror of animal abuse whilst on the other channel do a programme abusing those advocating animal's rights. That no really coherent critique of the media in general and its relation to everyday life has appeared in the animal rights movement would be surprising if most of the people involved weren't wannabe heroes and stars themselves. Possible exceptions being good

bits in 'Going Underground' and the 'As long as there are slaughterhouses...' pamphlet, however at the same time as denouncing the media the latter was full of press cuttings to illustrate attacks — such contradiction demonstrates a confused perspective of what is the goal and the means of achieving that.

45. There is a very real desire to get involved in history making stuff. It's an aspiration the leech-like media feed on; they are doing, they are saying etc. To an extent by getting involved in animal rights stuff and seeing yourself or your merits on the news satisfies that urge. But it has little meaning — if anything, it distracts from history and its creation. The media is happy enough to cover anything, if it'll have mileage due to its difference/novelty value. They'll even cover violent and destructive actions if they can mould the moral of the story round to their perspective. Which is not to say that people don't see through this, just that the coverage means precious little.

46. The press will build you up and if you don't conform to what they want (ie. easily recuperated, legal, single issue campaigning) they'll knock you down and in both cases it's selling papers or TV time for them. Press articles and documentaries about animal rights? Just because it's in the papers or on TV, something seems to be happening (this is seen as a success) but where do you fit in (you're not on TV), what does it inspire in you, the spectator? It is not empowering, the media is not action.

47. Everybody knows that media blackouts of activity by individuals who do stuff as the ALF, or various sabbing stories exist. In essence, these acts do implicitly carry with them a potential which unsettles those in power, but only implicitly. Any criminal activity is to an extent rebellious which is why news editors creatively filter stories. At times news will emerge of resistance, dressed with condemnations and specialist criticisms whilst in more sensitive times such stories will be suppressed to avoid 'copycats'. This is as relevant to muggings as it is to ALF actions.

48. What makes the 'crimes' of the ALF etc. distinct is that they are carried out, in the majority of cases, with the idea of media publicity being part of the result. Certainly satisfaction is guaranteed for activists when they can read or watch a report of what they've been up to. It's not the kind of thing you can brag about down in the pub without ending up inside really fast so having a private laugh at the press reaction tends to be the substitute. But from a political point of view it is almost as if media coverage justifies the actions. The ALF press officer moans if actions aren't covered and whines because he lists them in diary form, implying that they're somehow incomplete if they're not reported in the papers, on telly and explained by a specialist. The press officers (HSA, ALF), apparently explain to the media why actions have happened. Idealistically the aim of this must be to get more people to act against animal abuse. Ironically the result is nothing but condemnation and a blanket refusal to publish or broadcast the reasons why such actions have taken place. Look through the papers yourself if you don't believe this to be the case...

49. Then of course they're forced to apologise when something 'untoward' happens. The HSA's non-violent stance was shattered by Brixton sabs' violent attacks on huntsmen and a mass attack at a national hit in Essex. All the usual 'sorries' come out about violent provocation by the hunt or police. As if some rich, privileged tosser hunting a wild animal wasn't provocation enough to drag them off their horse and give them a good kicking? 'Hoodwinking the public' it's been termed by the Press officers themselves — giving the airs of respectability. Which just goes to show that all the media print is lies, from whichever side pushes them. There should be nothing secret or dishonest about our activity; if it's violent it's violent.

50. The situation with the use of arson by the ALF further demonstrates this, with it always down-played in propaganda (eg. *Animal Liberation The Movie*) despite it being the most damaging tactic. The destruction of Dingles department store was blamed by John Curtin (an ex-activist acting as a spokesperson) on faulty sprinklers in the store. What was a beautiful act, the destruction of a vast commodity peddling nightmare, was said to be a mistake and the damage only intended for the stock and not the building. The activists who did it probably had their dreams come true when they saw the whole building gutted by flames, but the public were apologetically told 'oops a daisy blame Dingles not us' (thankfully at least one magazine did come out humorously called *Business As Usual* which featured the torched Dingles on the cover in a no apologies fashion).

51. More recently some people, who got off prison sentences for possessing incendiary devices due to a technicality, decided to tell the press that their intended target was a notorious farmer called French who has a criminal record for cruelty. To anyone with a bit of suss this was, not only unnecessarily revealing a potential legal defence, but was also a lie, and it was sad to see people pander to some notion of media induced respectability (the press has done numerous articles on French, condemning him). Did French deserve property torched more than say, a meat processor? Or was this pathetically dishonest 'disclosure' done in the vain hope of getting some kind of sympathy?

52. *Desperately Seeking Sympathy* might have been a good title for another recent spectacle – the documentary complaining about police harassment of animal rights campaigners. It was hard to watch, especially the whining that 'the police don't understand us 'cos we're different to them that's why they hassle us'. Although no-one was actually saying it, the impression given was that people actually wanted the police to like them, to be nice to them!

53. One minute campaigners will be shouting out or even acting on their lack of faith in the law, then the next minute they'll be giving out leaflets calling for "Justice (through the courts in a private prosecution – that's justice?) for Mike Hill" or demanding an 'honest' inquest over Tom Worby's death (Mike and Tom were hunt sabs killed by hunters), the prosecution of hunt thugs or vivisectioners eg. *Quorn Fox Hunts* throwing a live fox to hounds and the Royal College of Surgeons' prosecution – steps forward or just validating hunting etiquette and vivisection laws? One of the most frustrating things I found in the animal rights movement was the eagerness of people to enter into a dialogue with power (the power of information) and as a result sell out any potentially radical edge to their ideas. Revealingly it was always the leaders of the informal hierarchies who wanted to do the negotiating, like trade unionists dictating the conditions of the struggle, eg. The HSA committee went to speak to the Home Office about their plans for dealing with hunt sabs. Everywhere you turn in the animal rights movement, middle class culture is reflected, liberals holding onto their power as 'important' people, further removing themselves from 'the base', further crawling up the career peg of credibility authority.

54. Remember the single issue is the only perspective, therefore how you organise, whether or not you are subservient to a directive, national organisation or the ideas of dominant personalities in the group, whether there is hierarchy, whether you are aligning yourself with-fascists – becomes unimportant – as long as 'something' is being done 'for 'the animals'. It's a kind of emotional blackmail – "why bicker about hierarchy when animals are dying?"

55. It tends to go without saying but there is every reason to combat hierarchy when it rears its ugly head because hierarchy is precisely the trait which keeps humans in a dominating position over animals. The concept of speciesism, like racism and sexism, is nothing other than a specific

application of authoritative power. If it were approached as such then perhaps, perhaps, the animal rights movement wouldn't be so full of the liberal / fascist nonsense it is today.

Up shit's clique without a paddle

56. The tyranny of the clique, so common in animal rights circles, is perhaps one of the biggest contributors to the wishy-washy analysis the whole movement peddles. There, in the suffocating atmosphere of group politics, the bizarre divisions are clearly visible — the self-righteous organisers, whose articulate egos dominate the group and below them grovel the spineless clique, who'll idolise and swallow any arrogant boast.

57. It's a microcosm of something much larger, bigger even than the left wing, anarchists and trade unions, put together, who in somewhat different, but no less debilitating ways, are, struck with the same crisis.

58. This situation is brought to fever pitch when the sexual divisions of credibility are brought into focus. Some people like to think that women who are involved in political groupings like animal rights are somehow liberated but unfortunately the deep separation between women and men doesn't just disappear as soon as people get involved in politics' 'Brendan McNally (writing in Arkangel magazine) once demonstrated his historical 'understanding' of women's struggles by suggesting that "the 'suffragette' movement, whose tactics ... included arson, criminal damage and sometimes violent assault", somehow gained a victory for women! Incredibly, the article was called "Who Are They Kidding"! As if being granted the right to vote so that you can choose your oppressor (like Shirley Williams or even Margaret Thatcher) is a victory?

59. The sexist behaviour of men out sabbing was discussed in a guilt, soaked pamphlet called 'Hunt Sabbing and Men' (which did at least raise the issue) but, whether it's the macho posturing with the big sticks and big boots or the slimy inference that because you're a sab, a bloke who cares about animals, then you're alright, somehow different — it hasn't gone away. Sure enough men in animal rights groups have been challenged in their attitude and behaviour, particularly by strong and assertive women but the division is still there. Some of the worst and most active latches are those who go sabbing. Few women are given the chance to get their feet (in what is, after all, a new and often frightening experience for anyone) before there are men crawling all around them, trying to be the most knowledgeable, most vegan, most 'I'm so radical and ALF' in order to attract their attention and hopefully get a fuck and a comforting relationship out of it because they have something in common. The situation is all pretty competitive with petty backstabbing a la vegan police also used as a way to eliminate opposition through ridicule. Perhaps the blokes wouldn't make such arseholes of themselves if acting that way didn't get results? A friend once pointed out that in one sab group they were involved in, none of the women had boyfriends who weren't sabs or ex-sabs. Quite simply the male sabs wouldn't like it. She expressed how fed up she was with this: "If they expected me to get involved in that incestuous and boring way of life then thanks lads but no thanks. I'll fuck who I want."

60. Despite a lot of animal rights groups' claims to be free from hierarchy it has sneaked its way back in through the door of credibility or never really went away. Individuals in high status positions (ie. those who've been sabbing the longest, say the most 'radical' things, look after all the files, care for the most animals, have done time for an ALF offence etc.) will have their views accepted because they are understood to have access to some overview that the majority lacks.

It's a reflection of the rest of our specialisation-based society, where the totality is made, to seem, through the saturation with trivia, an impossibility to grasp. Here the nitty gritty takes on the utmost importance. Those who know all about hunt sabbing tactics, all about the Lethal Dose 50 test or whatever — the animal rights specialists — become the elite, the officer class. There are those who know and those who are known for being well known. In a sense, it's even more nauseous than the more obvious power of parents, teachers or cops, as it comes dressed up in the clothes of, libertarian politics. But authority is authority, whether psychological and informal or blatant order giving,

61. Of course there have been and still are a lot of good people in the movement who are trying to eliminate or minimise hierarchy as much as possible. It would be wrong to be merely critical and belittle their attempts simply because they have evidently not worked. But why hasn't it worked? Could it be due to a perspective, that views the issue of animal rights to be 'all-important', that will argue that in order to achieve animal liberation then efficiency is required and will, to achieve this, adopt the objectives, methods, philosophy and patterns of organisation of the very society which abuses animals?

62. As soon as any movement around a specific cause develops committees, officers, group contacts etc, it starts to develop a division of status and its campaigners begin to behave like governments. As long as the issue is seen to be animal rights then hierarchical tendencies will crop up and be tolerated. As long as individuals refuse to think about what exactly hierarchy is, and recognise that hierarchy is the crucial king-pin holding all of us, and animals into the roles of the oppressed, then the well-meaning efforts of libertarian liberationists will continually be in vain.

63. It must be remembered that the animal rights movement exists within capitalist society. Its members enter into it preconditioned and, since most come from the middle class (whose class function is to organise and manage hierarchical organisations), then it's hardly surprising that divisive, informal hierarchies develop. Who you know is where status lies. Come demos or big sabs, all the 'names' gather together to greet each other and natter on, leaving the rest feeling as if they're missing out on something, don't belong or worse, are useless and just there as cannon fodder for the pigs or heavies. The author of this writing doesn't claim to have been untainted by this sickening behaviour but at least had recognition of what was going on and took the sensible move to get the fuck out of this scene.

What's class got to do with it?

64. Ten minutes clear thought on the problem of the animal rights movement would lead anyone but the middle class, to see that it lies in the fact that the middle class dominate it (just like the society we live in). Whenever the concept of class is raised (which is very rare) it is either treated as an inconsequential triviality, dismissed on the grounds that we have to unite-and-fight the animal abusers or sadly nodded about by those who, erroneously, feel guilty about being middle class. The problem doesn't lie with the fact that a lot of people were born middle class (no one can help or should feel bad about, being born), but that such people tend to reflect the attitudes and function of their class in their behaviour, rather than recognising the problems with this and attempt to do something practical about it.

65. Despite seeing this society's mass murder of animals as horrific, most animal rights activists remain passive, practically and theoretically, in the face of the daily violence inflicted upon everyone. The violence of the roads and the thousands who die on them every year, the 'accidents' in the factories, down the mines and on the building sites are only the obvious, yet are significantly ignored. Class society kills in thousands of far more insidious ways, through the drugs (legal and illegal) we use to anaesthetise away the boredom and pain, rotting in the living death of prison cells, through the stress of work, travelling and shopping for the goods we are enticed to buy but know we can't afford. Such stress is readily acknowledged, even by the so-called experts and specialists (as if we didn't already know) as being the major cause of death today.

66. The animal rights movement, like a religion complete with its Christs; and apostles, offers not just the illusion of a 'sussed' and 'radical' organisation, but also a sense of belonging. In this way it attracts the lonely and disenchanted sectors of the middle class — the bohemians, dropouts, students and rebels. These people, despite their class privileges, probably would prefer a classless society. But their potential anger and contributions to the class struggle are stifled and muted. Far from challenging the nature of an individual's oppression within society, the animal rights movement feeds off it. The alienated (who better to absorb and impress?) are directed into a meaningless struggle that fails to alleviate the circumstances that created the loneliness and further fosters their self-hatred as humans.

67. And this of course suits the middle class careerists because what the lonely are dragged into, is a 'community' based on informal hierarchies and credibility. The BUAV, Has, NAVS etc. committees are desperate to present themselves as 'normal' campaigning activists, volunteering from the goodness of their hearts to do the work involved in running a national organisation. Despite their self-righteous do-gooding they tend not to be the sort of people who'll chip in and help clean the sewers after a revolution but the kind of folk who recognise their class interests and award themselves wages and company cars in the here and now.

68. All of the moralisms about vegan diets and health, whilst probably accurate as arguments, are presented as such arrogant, self-justifying sermons, that it's no wonder that, faced with hundreds of other pressures, most ignore it, settling for the alluring seduction of mainstream commodity comforts. Who can afford the stuff they sell in health food shops? The only reasonable thing to do in them is steal. Which sensibly, a lot of animal rights folks, to their credit, do. But rarely is such practical activity turned into an understanding or critique of the shitty scum who peddle The Vegan magazine etc. which advocates these extortionate goodies.

69. In reality the situation is that most people can't afford health foods, can't afford the time or energy to take regular exercise. It's easy to recommend these things, but hard to put into practice if you've got an energy sapping, mind numbing job and/or a couple of kids at your knees nagging you to take them into McDonalds which robs you blind as well. Certainly society offers choice, but importantly for a lot of working class people this is just the illusion of choice. For the middle classes, in their blind indifference to the daily suffering and hurt of this society (reinforced neatly by the middle class dominated media and politicians) it is easy to exercise the privilege of economic and cultural choice and attempt to boycott a specific part of the hurt — animal cruelty (even though that is an impossible goal within this society).

70. For working class people, mere survival is priority number one. Everyone is fighting so hard to get by that there tends not to be time to get involved in the struggle for someone else's rights — particularly when your own situation is such a struggle in itself. Leisure time, which tends to be as much of a drag as work these days, has got to be a time to relax as much as possible

or an opportunity to blow out some brain cells in an attempt to forget that Monday morning is just round the weekend's corner and it'll be back to work or the dull routine of household chores... The absence of an "exciting" career means that it is very important to forget about work when you're not there. It's a time to avoid struggle, a time to undertake a bit of pleasure down the pub, between the sheets, on the garden or allotment or with the kids etc.

71. Despite the fact that many middle class animal rights people live in run-down working class areas and live on the dole or low wages they can never experience what it is like to be working class. In almost all cases they can escape whenever they want to. Their well-off parents, relatives and friends; from home or university will help out with references, money, housing etc. The middle class can always rely on this cushion whereas working class people have no escape — they don't choose to live in run-down areas. Since middle class people cannot experience what it is like to be working class this may explain why they ignore the domination their class has over the working class and the suffering they cause. Animals on the other hand have cute faces that appeal to sentimentality.

72. Walk down any street and you can see from the frowns and burnt-out faces that most working class people are just too drained to charitably ooze with a compassion the middle class finds easy. If you're not born and brought up with the privilege of a steady flow of money that'll afford good food, a nice house, books at home to help you get by in school (an education system that is already set up to wean factory fodder from university pulp), plenty of games, nice supply of clothes — all these things that create opportunities — then you'll save your compassion for those around you where love is often the only respite from suffering. Put simply the class struggle is, for most people, the most important struggle.

73. It is a class divided society that creates the preconditions, for multinational companies to thrive (whether they be pharmaceutical, agricultural, entertainment based or mom likely all and more). Without a class-based society such exploitation, simply could not exist. Without the involuntary participation of the working class and the management of that by the middle classes then this fragile class society would be unable to survive and reproduce itself.

74. Into this reality add the following banality: West London ALF decided to target Vauxhall motors because parent company General Motors use animals in their car crash tests. You had to laugh to keep from crying about how far out some individual perspective has become. Seriously, So What? Did they seriously expect any of us to get any more worked up about test animals than the thousands who will die when this, the car, the ultimate commodity hits the streets? Is this the only aspect of car production that they have a problem with and will spur them into action? Those who lost their lives on the roads last night weren't involved in any test, the workers dying slowly in the car plant, down the iron ore mines, on the oil rigs, bored to death at the service stations, killing themselves in a hair raising chase with the cops round an estate in a stolen Astra or blown to pieces in the wars fought for crude oil supplies, are they part of the revenge equation? General Motors issued a statement saying they no longer use test animals. Does this make everything alright now, all of a sudden? Is this company, who've been buying up rainforest land for the past decade or so for cattle ranching, okay now? Bollocks is it. What a truly fucked up perspective these people must have.

75. The solutions to the crisis imposed upon as all by this society are not in the things that we use, buy, eat or even steal but in the relationships between people and our relation to and participation in the destruction of the class system.

Animated liberals

76. Of course, many animal rights activists are involved in acts of destruction, through the convenient label of the Animal Liberation Front. Such blatant attacks on the property of animal abusers and disregard for the law is easily admired. The seemingly autonomous nature of the cells that wreak the damage or liberate the animals and the often ingenious nature of their activities affords, the ALF an almost folklorish respect.

77. Without wishing to heap too much praise onto their tip of illegalism, for the individual, the cloak and dagger nature of ALF actions — the excitement, taking risks, breaking the chains of passivity and legal subservience can be a liberating experience in itself. In most cases people are actually acting from their own desires, using their imagination and most importantly, they are rejecting the formal negotiations of campaigning politics.

78. However there are many quite extreme pitfalls linked with the ALF, not least of which is the nature of the name and what that means in practice. The state would like to believe that there is a national organisation run along hierarchical lines which directs the actions. But this is obviously just wishful thinking on the part of bureaucrats who have difficulty in dealing with concepts of organisation more vague and loose than the sterility of authority. Never the less, the described autonomous cells structure, acting under a front, does not exist in practice to the extent more theoretical minds would like. Instead there sometimes exist networks of informal acquaintances, people who know each other as “being up to no good”. This is important here, not for tactical reasons but that, here, in the supposed radical heart of the militant animal rights movement, dwells the same offensive clique of credibility hierarchies that infests virtually every political movement going. Probably because most activists are also foolishly involved in other animal rights stuff.

79. I’ve been to meetings where it’s so obvious who’s up to what, just by seeing who is wearing the ALF T-shirts or who gangs together afterwards to chat about something privately. Such behaviour is stupid for people who theoretically should be trying to avoid police suspicion and surveillance, but the deep-rooted desires to be seen as an activist, a militant, a hero, outweigh this. It’s reinforced by the whole movements’ adoring admiration for the courageous souls who go out and do the trashing or whatever. Healthy respect and hero-worshipping tread a fine line. The Supporters Group newsletter featured a roll of honour for ‘prisoners of war’, (sic) ie. those who’ve done a bit of time for ALF offences — oh what martyrdom! Pass the sick bag please. There is precious little difference between the guy getting all, the gals ‘cos he’s the fastest racing car driver and the totally enthusiastic animal activist with their air of being ‘dodgy’ who seems to get to screw around like no-one’s business. Having an ALF conviction behind you is going to get you credibility, respect, even laid. You are a star, a name — despite the, fact that nothing that’s done, under the banner of the ALF, is really that special or could only be done exclusively by them. There is no monopoly on courage. We don’t need any more heroes.

80. It is easy to relate emotionally to the angry desire to destroy everything connected to animal abuse (let’s face it, nearly everything is) and the insane economic market that perpetuates the cruelty. But this is the crucial moment when analysis is important because the task ahead of us is not easy by any means. To view the struggle from “nature’s” perspective, by fighting for something else (the animals, the environment, the blacks, wimmin — choose your poison) brings with it the avoidance of having to realise and face up to the difficult fact that we have to start with ourselves to realise the solution. The heart of the state is within us and the relationships

between us. That may include all the fears which prevent people from stepping out of line, and perhaps by breaking the law people are as liberated as the lucky animals. It's up to the individual involved to decide for themselves.

81. Over the years the literature put out surrounding the ALF has got a lot more bitter and twisted. Up to the mid-eighties there was still a sense of humour involved to an extent. Nowadays, "It's a war" and there is a gloomy cloud of seriousness that hangs menacingly over the whole issue. Perhaps that's why (or because of) the people who tend to get involved in the criminal side of things these days tend to be those who've swallowed the guilt tripping, 'there-is-only-one-thing-that-counts' ideology as spouted by Lee and Co. It's a total scream, a right laugh going out and trashing a window or even torching a lorry but that's forgotten when people get to writing about the subject it seems. Sure enough the risks are now huge and having so many friends now in the nick can take the sparkle off one's perspective, but the dreary tones of SARP's 'Do-or-die — you're worthless unless you go out and smash windows' patter inspires little but guilt and fear. Again, what use is it if individuals are acting out of serious duty rather than desire and pleasure? Just as you can eat nice food being a vegan and not undertake such a diet out of guilt, you can partake in actions out of free choice and for fun, instead of the compulsory 'ordering' you read of in the ALFSG and SARP.

82. SARP, before its' self-destruction, ended up with an angle so hard-core that you'd have to accept that the struggle is going to be an unhappy one, that you're going to have to "die for it" even. This characteristically serious attitude (kind of common in the greyness of middle class culture) denies the fact that a lot of what makes direct action worth doing goes beyond the cause and effect simplicity of doing a bit of economic sabotage. It can often boil down to the seeking of a thrill, just a bit of sheer risk taking and adventure to spice up our dreary existences. Personally, the criminal activity side of animal rights was convenient, as the preconditions for militancy and sabotage (no small undertaking for a lot of people) were already in place — with instruction booklets on breaking into buildings, building incendiary devices, leaving no forensics etc., relatively easy to get ones hands onto. Whether or not what was being done was having any real effect — other than raising insurance premiums and, importantly, saving a good few lives — to an extent didn't really matter. The hatred and frustration and near terminal boredom had an outlet. The insane conditions you'd find yourself in, the bonds that develop, the mad scrapes with the law, the comical mistakes and clumsiness made it worthwhile alone for my life — the animals aside.

83. Somebody once said to me in a rarely lucid moment that perhaps those of us doing all this damage etc. just wanted to be heroes. A lot of people have become heroes and the press officer even says, "The ALF are the real heroes of the animal rights movement." And of course heroes do things for others, never themselves — they gave so much, selflessly risked so much. Perhaps it would be harsh to criticise people for that, we're all under a lot of pressure but a recognition of it would go far. I know I acted out of hate, not tactically. If I had difficulty in dealing with society or my personal life, then going out and smashing up some butcher's windows or slashing some tyres became a way of dealing with it. It's as easy to persuade people about the necessity of action as it is to repress the real reasons why you're doing it if I couldn't relate to those around me that I loved, couldn't express that love openly and honestly because I had problems in facing up to how fucked up I am, then acts of aggression and damage — pushing hunters around, being abusive on pickets, marches or whatever — became a method for coping, a sort of way to get back at the world that angered me so much, whilst never having to look at myself or question

what I was doing, why I was doing it, why I was ignoring the development of hierarchies and competition amongst us. Few people will question the militant.

84. Maybe it's that reasoning which has in part led to some of the most bizarre and stupid actions going on in the name of animal liberation. I remember reading in an SG way back in the mid-eighties about the concept of targeting Fish and Chip shops as the only thing they sold that were vegan was spuds — again the holier than thou logic coming to the fore. Sadly this became a reality in the early nineties when, especially in Manchester, chemists, cafes, chippies, charity shops etc. had their windows catapulted. This isn't sad because I have any sympathies with such places but sad because single-mindedness had blinded people to all of the other more drastically exploitative places surrounding them (banks, supermarkets, cop shops, all shops, political party and newspaper offices, etc.). By ignoring the totality of the commodity economy the struggle is fought only against the particular enemy. During riots the tendency is for everything commercial to be attacked by rioters because of a clear understanding, that develops in such situations that everything commercial is attacking them on a daily basis.

85. It will be argued in their defence that the massive police operations mounted to catch ALF activists demonstrates just how effective they are, in provoking such a reaction from the authorities. Certainly the techniques and resources used by the law, at all levels, to imprison individuals and serve as warning to others are staggering but, at the same time, are perplexing. No one with their head screwed on can seriously say that animal liberation is just around the corner and, despite all of the attacks by the ALF, it hasn't been brought much closer by clandestine activity. So why does the state worry so much about them? Certainly representatives of business interests, having lunch with the Home Secretary, will explain how they're getting pissed off about high insurance costs (At the moment in London after the IRA's City Bomb, insurance premiums have rocketed sky high and a 'terrorism levy' may be applied to recoup the poor insurer's losses. It is already common knowledge that animal abusers have to demonstrate their security precautions such as toughened glass or shutters in order to get insurance) but in itself this is a shallow explanation. What is probably more worrying to the state, which has little in the way of effective opposition, is the notion of a generalised opposition developing from a breakdown in respect for the law and increasingly widespread sabotage infesting all areas of consumption and production (which the ALF are just a hint of, but a potential is there.) Of course, we are far from this situation and it's doubtful whether this in itself would necessarily rupture the state's bubble, but actions against the ALF by the police, not seen in isolation but alongside those against the IRA and an overall increase in surveillance (physically, with sophisticated cameras appearing everywhere and covertly, with bugging, telephone tapping etc. rife now that the threat of Russian spies has gone) may be a desperate attempt to nip it all in the bud before things get out of control.

86. All that said, even when this country did have an, armed action group operating clandestinely and with a 'revolutionary' perspective, acting in collaboration with ongoing struggles in industry, we were still no nearer to revolutionary change. For all of their broad-based actions the Angry Brigade (an armed action group, labelled as terrorists, who carried out a series of bombings and, shootings in the early seventies) still failed to spark off a proletarian uprising. This wasn't due to any lack of trying on their part or because of clever detective work which led to the big trials but because, by its nature, such activity couldn't hope to bring about the massive change that is so desperately needed, but seem so elusive. It is simply not that easy.

Thinking for ourselves

87. Building communities, bridging the gaps and healing the wounds amongst us, dealing with our own alienation and conditioning is a very hard and unromantic task, which has no room for heroes or martyrs. We have all been brought up to be building blocks for the state. Challenging that, the state within us and reinventing our everyday lives is the only possible foundation upon which demolition of the state and current social relations can be achieved. We need this foundation firmly built before the old world can be toppled with the assurance that we're not going to be bought off, recuperated or hijacked by reformists and would-be leaders. Generating a self managed society with a meaningful class consciousness which can counter the dominant class and their 'systems' until such time as we are strong enough to destroy them, is far easier said than done. Chucking a brick through a pane of glass or building an incendiary device is piss easy in comparison.

88. Despite all of the positive kicks and refusals that go with ALF actions, those people whose identity is based on their opposition to the world as it is have a vested interest 'in the maintenance of the status quo. Armed with their 'political personalities', militants in any sphere who take on the role of being an activist tend to become attached to 'their issue' in such a way that they'd prefer things to stay as they are, so they can continue to reap in the accolades that go with being 'against the system.' To change the world it is necessary to abandon the character traits that aid survival in capitalist society and learn to recognise when we are really breaking free.

89. Animal liberation, as it is spouted by all the various groups and national societies, isn't your liberation — it is merely an ideal very few people have genuinely considered from a total perspective and from a practical reality. Animal Lib, as it is set down anywhere in the movement, from Singer's book to the SG, is not human liberation. Human liberation is the active creation of a classless society. Some kind of animal liberation may (or may not) be a part of that. It is not the means to that end but it's hard to conceive of a society based upon freedom continuously reproducing hierarchical domination over another species and not expect that to become reflected in other areas. Therefore it is of importance that once a classless society is built, it doesn't needlessly reproduce exploitation of animals. Animal abuse is needless and detrimental to ourselves and our relation to life. Challenging the nature of our relationships to animals in the here and now is important, but, as a singular activity, it is meaningless (becoming green consumerism) and as a weapon of vegan police intolerance, is in itself authoritarian.

90. Animal liberation is utterly impossible, within capitalist society — discomforting but essential to wise up to this fact. Building your identity around these things, abstract goals and preciously clinging to any status they'll give you is not going to make you any freer. However, some of the practical ideas such as Veganism, organic self-sufficiency, permaculture, sabotage etc. do demonstrate qualitatively different forms of self-organisation. They are not "the revolution", and are all thriving nicely under capitalism, within safe middle class spheres of influence. But that does not necessarily invalidate them as potential tactical applications for a revolutionary movement.

91. What is perhaps most personally disheartening is the fact that the idea of animal liberation has become to many people incomprehensible — not because of fundamental difficulties with the ideas, but because they are 'put off' by the behaviour of the movement surrounding those ideas. This precious movement still refuses to approach the ideas in context and in a down-to-earth manner. It thrusts out its intolerance and remains little more than a cliché. In some senses it's

no wonder it receives so much ridicule.

92. By now a lot of people will be thinking to themselves or be busy running round, asking all their friends, “Who the fuck wrote this?” It would be so much easier for some people if they knew who’d written it, so that off-the-peg condemnations could fit nicely: “Oh well, they said so and so at that meeting”; “They were never that dedicated”; “Weird, I always thought they were alright,” or “I always knew they’d drop out.” All the gossip, defensive condemnations, cliquy trappings of ‘I know them,’ the end of friendships because of these opinions — all that running at the mouth to neatly dodge the fears. Who has written this really is the most unimportant thing about this book. It is anonymous because names have come to mean too much, have become hierarchies in themselves, carry serious clout and hinder honest understanding without prejudice. If you think for yourself, see how these memories and observations tie in with your own experiences and perhaps allow yourself to examine how you honestly feel, free from the pressures to conform to a group line. Maybe then its detached ramblings haven’t been in vain. The ALFSG will have their thing to say about this, as will the BUAV — they’ll feel threatened and they’ll release their ‘prepared’ reactions.

93. Revolutionary activity has been mentioned a lot in this book but unfortunately there are no guidelines I can simply jot down for you to undertake so that, hey presto, tomorrow morning, we can wake up in a free world. I don’t have the answers, a programme for you to follow or ‘the truth’ for you to believe in and loge yourself in again. Since birth we have been giving ourselves up to others, caving in to social and peer pressure, giving orders, taking orders, and failing prey to subservience, to ‘those who know better’ and those who say they know what we want and ‘what must be done’. There are many ways in which we can intervene against capitalism: the sabotage activities of ‘bad’ workers and certain animal activists, leaflets, babysitting, graffiti, stealing from commercial premises or rich people, wall posters, helping people out where we live, attacking coppers, direct conversation as well as any activity done in helping out animals. However these are not offered for you to take up as a duty, as such recommendation has the same tone as calls for you to write to your MP or sign a petition. Revolutionary activity tends to come about when the time is right and most often it’s carried out by people who’d never previously called themselves revolutionaries. This is probably due to the fact that when the shit hits the fan, people who have the least to lose and the most to gain from the destruction of all hierarchical relations seek a way out. Their psychological preparation is due to them being forced to live their lives under slavery conditions in which few of their desires are ever realised. In that sense the seeds of this society’s destruction are already sown. But for the people who have had a view of the world imposed upon them in the guise of the ideology of animal liberation, those who have been caught up in the net of movements, and middle class people who feel so uncomfortable about their privileges being due to the suppression and exploitation of working class people — an honest way out of their situation is a lot less straight forward. Whilst their theoretical leaders argue that liberation is going to come about through either more petitions or more incendiary devices, this collection of thoughts is offered to expose what has been repressed by the animal rights movement (the same critique could apply to any of the movements of the Left — anarchism, anti-fascism, anti-sexism etc).

94. Feelings of inferiority have been fostered in us by the middle class from the first day we went to school. Ideologists are still fostering them by asking that we sacrifice ourselves for the cause. Once we develop a class consciousness about who is dominating us (and also the animals) we are in a better position to recognise ideologies for what they are — diversions and blockages

on the road to genuine, freedom. Once we rid ourselves of ideologies we'll feel free to do what we want, using our lives as they are now and as we want them to be as the centre of our thinking and the base of our desires. Perhaps then the isolated, ingrained perspective of issues will wane and the prospect of a movement of free-thinking individuals will emerge in potential. Maybe an honest understanding of this society will develop and people will be, able to ready themselves for the moment we are able to strike against the dominating middle class.

95. By liberating ourselves, from the oppressive chains of causes, identities and ideology of group politics, we may stop walking round towns looking for animal abuse and instead aim for how to rid ourselves of the behaviour which currently reproduces the state and class divided society in our own activity.

Afterword

Since the first edition of this pamphlet was printed, there have been massive protests against the export of calves to mainland Europe from Britain for the veal trade. One protester actually died during the demos which were often violent towards the police who attempted to ensure that the whole dairy industry (so reliant on the sale of veal to keep cattle pregnant and therefore lactating) didn't suffer too much. We even had the 'political process' exposed with the agricultural minister's own farm sending cattle transporters down to the South Coast. For a while it seemed as if war was being fought over animals and no one can deny the protests were large, often involving large percentages of the local populations of the small port villages.

Animal rights was headline news night after night and oh how I laughed to see the bobbies getting battered by the weird alliance of pissed off locals and animal rights protesters. Certainly these were the biggest animal rights protests to date and this issue did capture a lot of people's attention and sympathy. The media was very clever in choosing mostly pacifist, middle class protesters to voice an opinion and these interviews — alongside the spectacle of powerless people crying as the trucks rolled past them — presented the most alienating image of the demonstrators. I found it hard to identify with any of this and I eat a vegan diet. I did identify with the outlet of anger but maybe that's a personal thing. It was certainly ironic to see such events crop up only a year after this thing went to the printers.

What the events at Brightlingsea and the other ports showed was the great sympathy that exists in a lot of people for compassion — surely very few people actually agreed with the trucks full of big-eyed cattle being sent to their slaughter. The animal rights movement will have been pleased by a certain increase in membership — “maybe some people will have seen, through the dairy industry etc...”

But we need so much more than that to end such practices. Anyone naive enough to believe that the Minister of Agriculture will allow a bill to go through Parliament to stop his own farm profiting is going to be cruising for a life of repressed defeat or burnout. 'Such illusions have to be destroyed and any talk about the situation has to go well beyond mere animal 'rights'.. No doubt the people of the southern port towns had their own agendas, but maybe they chose to unite with animal rights protesters (despite their already bad reputation) because of a resistance to trade. This is where connections are going to be made, this is where understanding of other's struggles are going to be realised and a more general picture emerge. Trade fucks everyone over except those that manage it and profit from it. It fucks the poor sods driving the lorries or loading

the crates, they're merely surviving. It fucks up the environment; the local communities which have the lorries rumbling through them and it's also the big alibi which justifies all of the evils of the system — losing your job, cuts in benefits, more intense exploitation — all these are done in the name of "keeping Britain competitive". Once connections are made and a picture of how class society works then, maybe, something approaching a decent critique that we can all relate to will emerge.

Despite saying this I know that such an opposition to the class system will not come from the struggle around animal rights I was once involved in. It will come from the people who really do have nothing to lose; who don't get on the telly, who don't have social circles built around 'causes' and the sense of moral pride that they foster. I knew this already, I guess, but I had to write about it in this pamphlet to get it out of my system. The reactions to it were amusing at times ...

"... the vehemence and humour are at times in danger of taking over what the pamphlet is trying to say. The author even writes their own criticism that s/he expects to come from the milieu." — from a review in *Communist Headache*

Maybe so, but I was right. Immediately people wanted to know who was responsible. One unanticipated but telling reaction was that some hunt sabs thought the police had written this pamphlet. This highlights the gross self-importance and isolation that exists within the movement. It is obviously inconceivable to some that criticism could come from within. This same reaction also occurred when some people included anti-police articles in the hunt sab mag *Howl*. Immediately the committee scream, "secret state infiltration!" and actually accuse people of being such. They couldn't be further from reality if they tried.

Obviously the state has used tactics like this, but I cannot help but believe that people who react in such a way are lying to themselves. Such criticisms of the movement tend to come from those who were the most involved — who get disillusioned. The attempt to generate some level of class consciousness and understanding of the role of the police through articles in *Howl* came from people I know to be very sincere and genuine, who themselves have far more to fear from the police than the members of the HSA committee ever will. They can deny it to themselves but deep down the committee know that their real motive is a career in liberalism.

Somebody said that I obviously knew nothing about the animal rights movement. Amazing! How this person blinds themselves is beyond me. I was involved in local animal rights groups, hunt sab groups, rehomed animals, set up an ALF cell and caused literally millions of pounds worth of damage, helped out prisoners etc. etc. I know it real well, as anyone with a bit of suss would realise reading the pamphlet.

Unfortunately suss is in short supply in some circles ...

Take a situation fairly recently where a squatted building was decreed a target for attack because the inhabitants used rat traps. A letter detailing the location of this squat was printed in the, oh so secret, ALFSG magazine giving a lot of information about the place, even including what night it held its parties. This squat, okay — it was nothing amazing, but it was used for anti-fascist meetings, anarchist video showings, social nights, and that. People's security was jeopardised to the police and one local animal rightist even went so far as to say the place should be petrol bombed, whether his 'friends' were inside or not. What a prick (with no apologies for the vehemence). Another perfect example of how a system of set ideas controls people's rational thoughts — turning them from compassionate individuals into inflexible, programmed robots. At this point everything has failed. Animal rights is full of lunatics.

I still, very much believe in the motivations that first brought me into the animal rights movement. I remain as true to them today. I too despise the ridiculing of compassion that comes from the media, The purpose of this book was to highlight what a lot of people in the animal rights movement itself feel: the politics are shite. It was born of discussion and heated arguments. There was a lot of positive feedback and agreement with what is written in here. It may also explain, to those perplexed by why so many people drop out, some of the frustrations created by fanatical stupidity and fucked up perspectives.

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Animal Liberation: Devastate to Liberate, or Devastatingly Liberal?

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