

about the biggest test of all, the notorious LD50. This test, which has been used since 1927, is so named because it aims to find the lethal dose for 50 per cent of a sample of animals. In other words, the test tells you how much of a chemical, per body weight, kills half of groups of between forty and 200 animals. It is the universal death test: every chemical, every 'new improved' product is automatically tested to find its LD50 value. This merely provides the regulatory agencies with meaningless figures because while you can find a precise LD50 value for a given population of rats, or dogs, or guinea pigs, this can't provide any precise indication at all about how lethal the substance is for humans. Different species vary too much. So who needs to know how many tubes of improved toothpaste will kill half a population of beagles or rodents? But half a century of inertia is difficult to overcome, and the LD50 test causes death and suffering to about 5 million animals each year in the United States alone. So this was a really big target.

The second change caused by our re-evaluation of what we were doing was that we thought that perhaps our strategy was not going to be the best way rapidly to bring down the total amount of pain and death. Our reasoning was that the real expertise for reduction and replacement might reside in the corporations themselves rather than in the universities. The universities, after all, are interested in obtaining more money and doing more research. Perhaps that will prompt them to achieve quick successes so that they can boast of their achievements, but then again perhaps it won't. Anyway, we didn't want to be simply unpaid fundraisers for every medical school in the USA. So from this point we switched our strategy. We went to Procter and Gamble, and we told them we weren't interested in bucks; we wanted an internal plan and programme to reduce and replace the use of animals, and we wanted the plan publicized so that it could be used as a model for other companies to follow. Procter and Gamble went ahead and did just what we asked. They formulated a plan and documented it in a three-page article, 'Taking Animals out of the Labs', which appeared in their house magazine. They set up an 'Animal Science Task Force' to make recommendations on minimizing animal use and suffering in safety assessment, and they agreed to publicize any discoveries in this area so that they could be used by other companies. They also took several practical steps which significantly reduced both the numbers of animals they were using in safety testing and the severity of the pain suffered. For instance, one test which used 300 rats at a time has now been

replaced by a battery of tests which does not use live animals at all. Another test involving between 10,000 and 20,000 mice has been replaced by a test using fruit flies.

Procter and Gamble's initiative has now been followed by another major company, Smith, Kline and French, and their plan looks like becoming the industry pattern we wanted. According to industry figures, a number of the major companies have reduced by about 30 per cent the numbers of animals they have used in the past two years. That means an awful lot of animals have been spared suffering and death in laboratories. There is a whole new climate in the area, a climate which encourages the leap from the scientific barbarism of Draize tests and LD50s to the scientific elegance of cell biology.

Increasingly, the scientific press, professional meetings and research centres are focusing on non-animal methods. The Food and Drug Administration responded to our lobbying by reviewing its policy on the LD50, and it has now given a clear signal to industry that it does not require the LD50. This deprives industry of the excuse that the test must be performed because the FDA requires it. So now there is hardly anyone left who will defend the LD50. There is no opposition to overcome except apathy. The LD50 is tilting and needs just one more push to topple it for good.

Similar things are happening worldwide. For instance, West German health authorities have announced that they are reducing by 75 per cent the number of animals they require for LD50 testing. It won't be long before both the Draize test and the LD50 test are things of the past. Then the time will come to face the larger issue, that of using laboratory animals as if they were mere tools for research. The science community must become aware that you don't go around ordering 1,000 rabbits or 10,000 mice in the way you order a case of light bulbs on a Monday morning.

WHY WE WON

Basically, the strategy for all freedom fights or struggles against injustice is similar. The other side has the power, but we have justice on our side, and justice can mobilize people. We need to draw on all available energy and expertise. We need to work out our short-term goals so that we can reach people and eventually bring about fundamental change.