

A BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE

- Try to understand the public's current thinking and where it could be encouraged to go tomorrow. Above all, keep in touch with reality.
- Prioritize, set goals that are achievable, and bring about meaningful change one step at a time. Raising awareness is not enough.
- Establish credible sources of information and documentation. Never assume anything. Check everything out at the source.
- Never deceive the media or the public. Maintain credibility. Don't exaggerate. Don't hype the issue.
- Select a target on the basis of vulnerabilities, the numbers of animals involved, the intensity of suffering and the opportunities for change.
- Develop a campaign blueprint that is realistic, practical and doable.
- Seek dialogue. Attempt to work together to solve problems. Position issues as problems with solutions, not as wars without prisoners. This approach is best achieved by presenting realistic alternatives.
- Be ready for confrontation if your target remains unresponsive; if accepted channels don't work, place your adversary on the defensive by preparing an escalating public-awareness campaign.

—Henry Spira

and who's the bad guy. You don't personalize things when you try to create change, and at all costs you avoid having the self-righteous attitude that 'we're the only moral people.' "

THESE SOFT WORDS come from a man of intimidating stature. His bulk reflects his early days in the Merchant Marine, when he worked to root out corruption in the local maritime union. His hair is a shaggy gray mane that would make a buttoned-down Washington lobbyist cringe, but it seems fitting for a man who worked for decades in civil-rights groups. His rapid-fire New York City speech is peppered with plenty of slang—a relic, perhaps, of teaching English to inner-city high school students for 22 years.

Today his spacious but spartan 12th-floor Manhattan apartment is home to Spira and his cat Nina as well as headquarters for Animal Rights International. He has ringed most of his rooms with 10-foot-high bookshelves that are crammed with thousands of files on animal issues. The shelves double as a feline jungle gym, and Nina periodically dives

from the top shelves onto whatever is available to make the loudest crash.

Spira's involvement with animals began in 1975, when he reluctantly accepted a cat from an acquaintance who wanted to give up the animal. Soon Spira became "uncomfortable playing with one [animal] and sticking a knife and fork into another." The year he became a vegetarian, he also happened upon Peter Singer's 1973 *New York Review of Books* article on animal rights (which Singer expanded into his landmark 1975 book *Animal Liberation*).

Singer's compelling argument influenced Spira to get involved in the then-fledgling animal-rights movement. Spira says his shift of focus from human rights to animal rights came from his growing awareness that "in the hierarchy of exploitation and domination, it's really the nonhuman animals who are on the bottom of the whole pile." He decided that the successful tactics for fighting human injustice could be used equally well to fight what he views as injustice to animals.

Spira didn't need to look far to find instances of animal abuse. Four blocks from his apartment, at the American Mu-

seum of Natural History, a long-term experiment was underway in which cats were blinded and deafened by having parts of their brains removed, and then monitored for changes in their mating habits. To gather ammunition, Spira spoke to several respected scientists who called the tests scientifically worthless. Armed with criticism from the scientific community, Spira met with the museum's scientists and representatives to ask them to stop the tests.

The tests continued, but so did Spira. He engineered a campaign to rally public opinion against the museum. Every weekend for 18 months, Spira and his supporters protested in front of the august New York institution. As a result, the museum received hundreds of membership cancellations, as well as unflattering exposure in *Science* and *Newsweek* magazines. In 1976, the National Institutes of Health withheld funding, and the experiments were halted.

Spira's victory saved only a few dozen cats, but it set a precedent: Public outrage had stopped animal experimentation. "Animal experimenters were regarded as a priesthood," Spira recalls.

THE THREE R's

Henry Spira embraces the "3R" approach to animal issues: Replace, Reduce and Refine:

REPLACE means to do away with the source of the abuse. It suggests eating beans instead of chickens or using in-vitro tests instead of animals in the lab.

REDUCE signifies eating fewer chickens and more beans or reducing the number of animals used in lab tests.

REFINE suggests that if you can't change the number of animals affected, at least recognize that they are living creatures with feelings and do whatever is possible to minimize their pain.