'I do not like the seal hunt, nor do I like sealers. However, I would rather shake the bloody but honest hand of a Newfoundland sealer than grasp the greedy and dishonest hands of those who pretend to be something they are not.'

Paul F. Watson
Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

The Welfare Legacy

What is animal rights and what is animal welfare? To understand the difference, it is necessary to view the contemporary animal rights movement against the backdrop of the traditional animal welfare movement. In the latter tradition, it is only *overt cruelty* which is opposed. The assumption that it is morally acceptable to *use* animals for our own purposes is rarely if ever called into question. Moreover, although there was a brief upsurge of radical anti-vivisection activity in England at the end of the 19th century, the mainstream animal welfare movement, as it has existed for the last 100 years, has focused almost exclusively on cruelty to dogs and cats, and to a limited extent, to wildlife, while ignoring the large-scale, institutionalized abuses of laboratory and farm animals. This tradition has persisted up to the present day; the legacy which it has left us is one of hypocrisy, conservatism, and bureaucratic inertia.

Worse yet, in the last thirty years particularly, animal protection has become *big business,* and many large national animal welfare organizations are demonstrably more concerned with ensuring their own economic growth and prosperity than with liberating animals from human oppression.

The animal rights movement, as we know it today, emerged out of fundamentally different concerns. Animal rights advocates believe that it is morally wrong, not only to *wantonly abuse,* but also to *selfishly use* other animals for their own purposes. From this perspective, subjective preferential concern or affection for a particular species is entirely irrelevant to the main issue, which is one of *justice.* Just as the rights of ethnic minorities do not depend upon our subjective likes and dislikes, so the rights of animals do not depend upon our being 'animal lovers.' Hence, the animal rights movement focuses primarily upon abuses which affect the largest numbers of animals, and objects equally to *all* forms of animal exploitation. As a liberation movement whose aim is social justice, the animal rights movement is by its very nature, activist, progressive, and conscientious in its use of financial resources.

Birth of the Movement

Despite this fundamental divergence in outlook, early animal rightists understandably looked to the established animal welfare groups for guidance in seeking an end to animal suffering and exploitation. In the early days of the movement, activists' efforts were bent toward trying to radicalize the Old Guard organizations and to enlist them in more progressive projects. Seldom was the sincerity of their concern for animals called into question, and it was widely presumed that every possible effort should be made to work with them in a spirit of cooperation and unity. In these early days, the fledgling animal rights movement had a few glorious, blazing victories which filled activists with a false sense of power and optimism.

This first stage of high hopes and naivete soon gave way to a second period of disillusionment, frustration, and anger. In this period, activists began to come to grips with the fact that victories for animals were not always so easy to achieve, particularly when the animal exploitation industries began to wake up to the fact that a movement was forming which directly threatened their livelihoods. Grass-roots activists also quickly began to feel the strain of lack of time and financial resources. Personal sacrifice began to take its toll on activists' spirits.

This second stage was the beginning of what might be called the *grass-roots struggle.* That struggle is, of course, first and foremost a struggle against the entrenched power and resources of the animal exploitation industries. But it is also an *internal* struggle, which directly affects, in the profoundest possible ways, the primary struggle against animal exploitation. The two struggles are, in fact, intimately interconnected and the success of the one will largely determine the success of the other.

The internal struggle is a struggle against ***Animal Welfare Fraud.*** In this second historical stage of the animal rights movement, activists ran up against the profoundly disconcerting reality of practices and policies by large national animal welfare organizations which directly threaten the very survival of the grass-roots movement. The naive optimism, openness and confidence in the sincerity of those who profess concern for animals began to be shattered by the sobering realization of the insidious hypocrisy, corruption, and deceit which today *cripples* the animal rights movement.

The Current State of the Movement

The single most significant feature of the animal rights movement today is the gulf between multi-million dollar national animal welfare organizations, which have a stranglehold on the pool of public funding for animal protection, and the scores of mostly local, volunteer-based grass-roots organizations who are struggling to survive in the face of the national groups' superior fund-raising capabilities and unethical practices.

The grass-roots movement, in short, is saddled with *two* struggles: the struggle against animal exploitation and the struggle against those who exploit animal exploitation for their organizations' own perceived benefit. The single greatest challenge which the animal rights movement currently faces is accordingly to document, expose, and denounce ***Animal Welfare Fraud,*** to dry up the source of funding to large national organizations, and to rechannel those resources into the grass-roots movement where they will have maximum impact for the animals.

This, in turn, is only possible if the general public comes to recognize and understand *Animal Welfare Fraud* and to perceive the serious threat which it poses to the animal rights movement.

Hypocrisy and Corruption

Many animal welfare groups are themselves directly or indirectly involved in promoting animal suffering and slaughter. Although public outcry has in some cases led to a policy of divestment, until recently many large national organizations (including anti-vivisection societies) had investments in corporations directly responsible for the perpetuation of animal suffering, such as pharmaceutical companies. Some of these organizations still retain such investments.

Other organizations condone or actively promote the slaughter of 'food' animals. While advocacy of vegetarianism is a cornerstone of the animal rights movement, virtually no national animal welfare organization has taken a clear and unequivocal stand against the eating of animals, and the vast majority of these organizations' staff are meat-eaters.

There is also the question of wastage of vital resources on extravagant salaries and other frivolous amenities. The large national organizations seem to have forgotten that this is a movement for social justice. Or rather, the grass-roots movement is a movement for social justice, while the animal welfare 'movement' is a profitable business. The current president of the Humane Society of the U.S., for example, earns almost $140,000 a year, while the former president of the Animal Protection Institute was paid over $91,000 yearly. How many grass-roots activists would such extravagant salaries hire? The grass-roots movement is crippled by lack of full-time activists, freed from the burden of making a living. How many contributors who donate money in good faith to help the animals know that their contributions are used in part to line the pockets of corporate welfare executives?

And how many contributors know that many large animal welfare groups continue to hoard vast monetary resources which lie idle while animals continue to suffer? The Massachusetts SPCA, for example, currently has assets (i.e., money *not* used to help animals) of $67,000,000. Meanwhile, virtually all grass-roots groups face a continual financial crisis in their efforts to meet the most immediately pressing needs of their campaigns.

Bandwagoning: Tricks of the Trade

The most serious way in which large animal welfare organizations undermine the animal rights movement, however, is through their unethical treatment of less wealthy, more progressive groups. As the public becomes increasingly impatient with the cautious and conservative tactics of the animal welfare organizations, these groups have begun to realize that they must try to be perceived by the public as involved in direct action, or they will start losing support and funding. Since the large groups have virtually no experience in outreach or mobilizing people for action, the easiest way of achieving this is by cashing in on the grass-roots groups' efforts. Here are some of the techniques which have been developed to 'bandwagon' with little legal risk:

Maximum Milking: One of the main tricks used is to get minimally involved in a campaign or event and then to milk that involvement for all it is worth. With professional fund-raising writers and advertising firms at their disposal, many large groups have learned how to reap maximum benefits from this technique, knowing full well that the general public is in no position to critically evaluate a group's real degree of involvement in an issue, particularly when the group is able to publish a glossy news story about it. Thus the group will delegate