# Keep Fighting

## Three Interviews with Britain's Animal Liberation Front Press Officers




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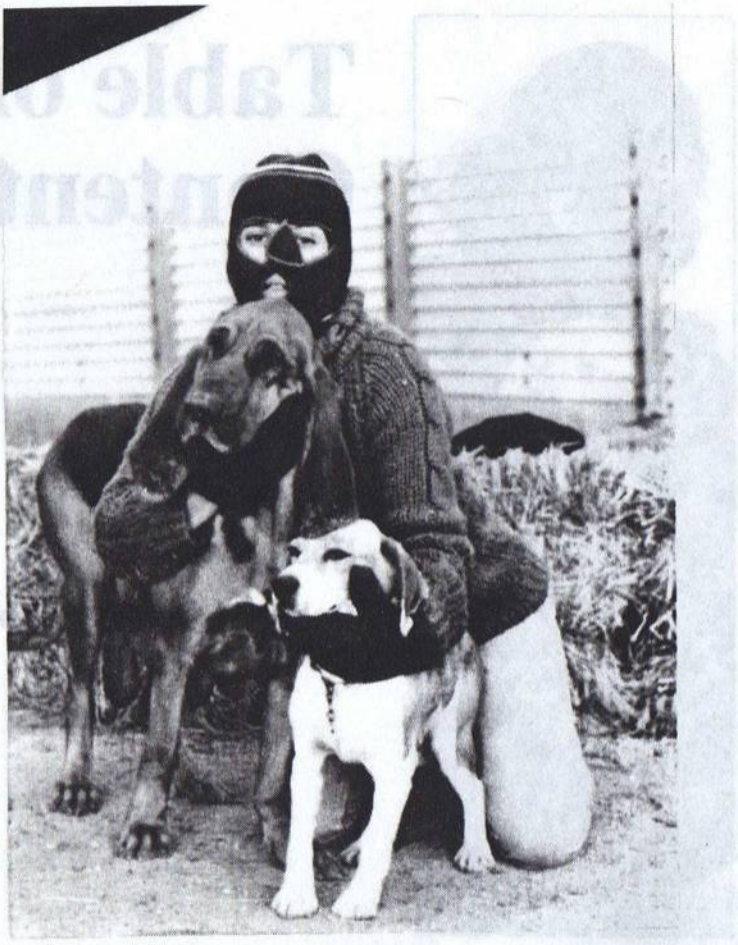
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**Disclaimer:**
This book is not intended to encourage people to take illegal actions against animal abusers.



Two of the 24 dogs the ALF liberated from the City of Hope medical center in Duarte, California. The ALF also rescued 12 cats, 28 mice, 18 rats, and 12 rabbits and obtained photographic evidence of severe violations of the Animal Welfare Act which resulted in the City of Hope receiving an $11,000 fine. *PETA*

# Introduction

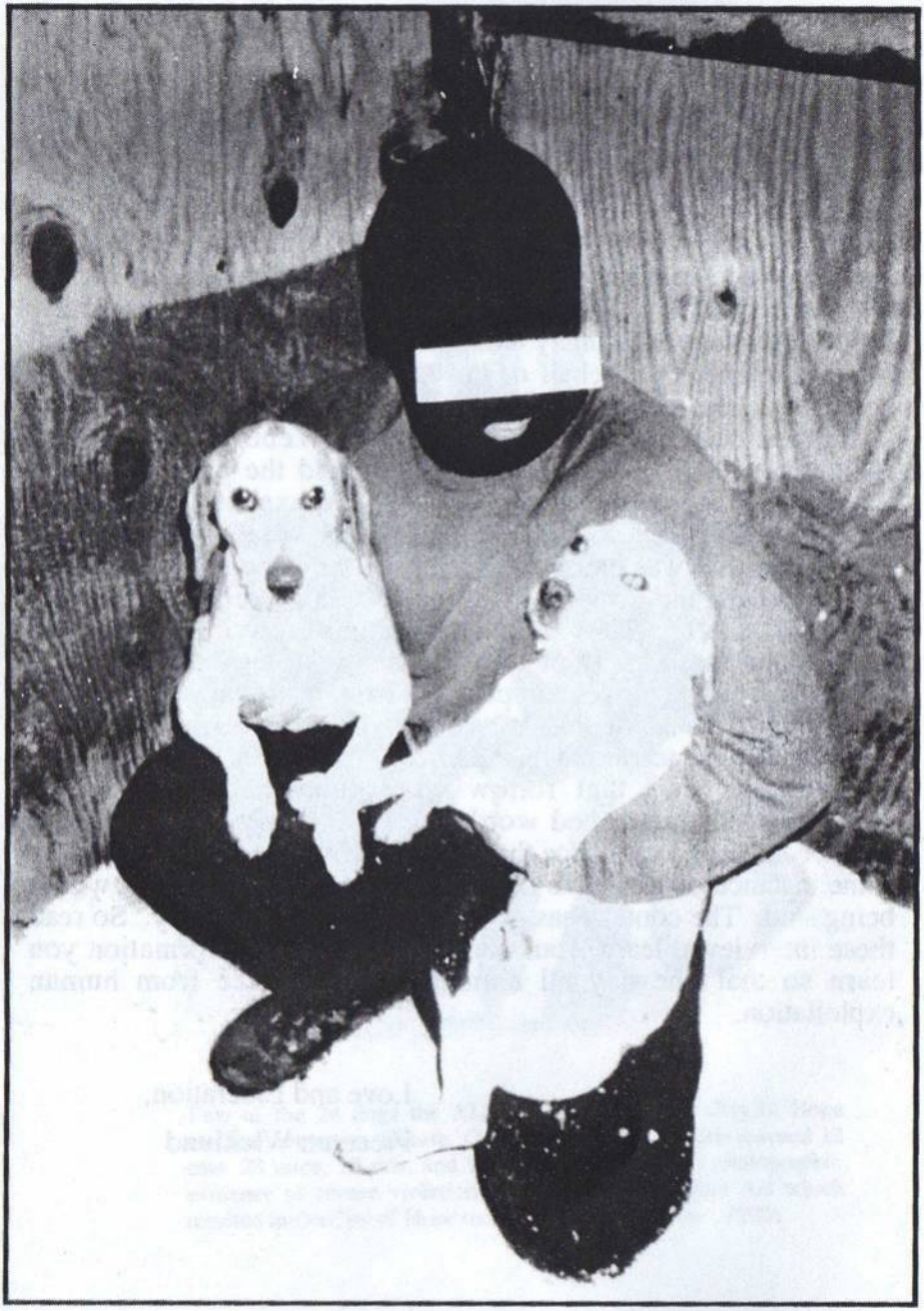
The Animal Liberation Front is the animals' true guardian angel. By breaking into vivisection labs, fur farms, factory farms and breeders, the ALF document cruelty and neglect, damage the devices of torture, and whisk animals away from suffering and neglect to freedom and better lives. Unfortunately, our corrupt society considers these compassionate and courageous acts illegal, which forces ALF activists to hide behind ski-masks of anonymity. So through the years, many animal rights supporters have stepped forward to speak on behalf of the ALF so their message could be heard, and their reputation defended.

Ronnie Lee, Robin Lane, and Robin Webb are three such individuals. All of them, at one time, held the position of the British ALF Press Officer who's job it is to explain to the media why the ALF takes non-violent, yet illegal, direct action to stop animal abuse. I was lucky enough to interview these three activists while studying the British Animal Liberation movement during the summer of '91. They are all longtime activists who have participated in a variety of campaigns -- both legal and illegal -- and have seen the movement progress from its infancy to what it is today. There is a lot that we as activists can learn from their experiences and accomplishments.

The interviews that follow were conducted face-to-face, recorded, and transcribed word for word. Only minor changes have been made to enhance the readability of the interviews and, in some instances, notes have been added in brackets to clarify what's being said. The content has not been changed in any way. So read these interviews, learn from them, and apply the information you learn so that one day all animals will live free from human exploitation.

Love and Liberation,

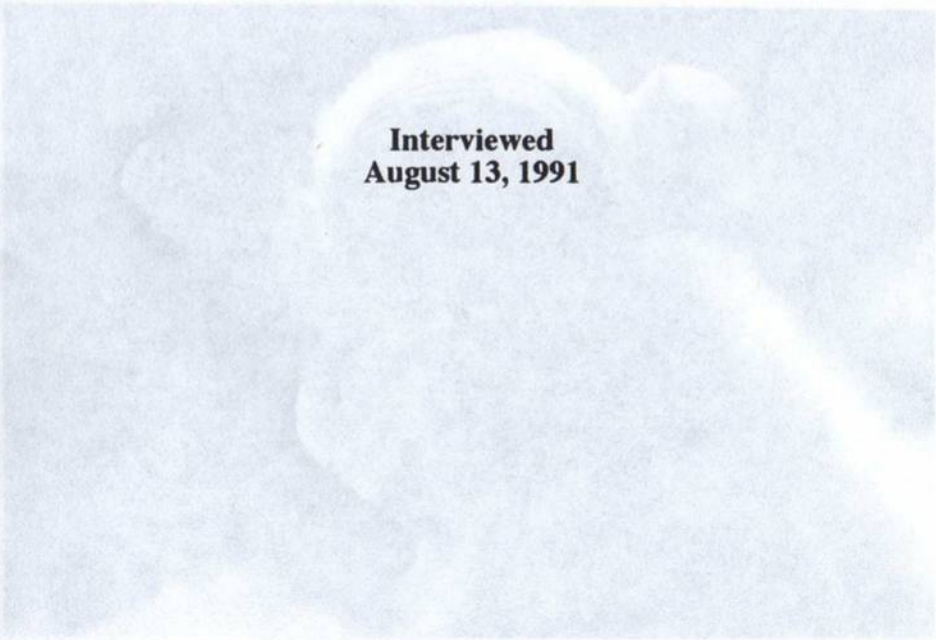
Freeman Wicklund



A Cheshire Beagle Kennel had ten less occupants after a visit by the Animal Liberation Front in August of 1993. *ALF SG*

# RONNIE LEE

## Founder of the Animal Liberation Front & the ALF Press Office



**Interviewed**
**August 13, 1991**



The Animal Liberation Front rescued this five week old stump-tailed macaque named Britches along with 466 cats, pigeons, gerbils, mice, rabbits, opossums, and rats at the University of California, Riverside. Vivisectors had sewn Britches eyes shut, taped a sonar device to his head, and kept him isolated in a tiny, filthy cage. *PETA*



Here is Britches after the ALF gave him veterinary attention, decent housing and lots of love. He is now living with other primates in a sanctuary where he will never be tortured by vivisectors again. *PETA*

**When and how did you get involved with animal issues?**

It all started off with me becoming a vegetarian which was when I was 19, and that would be way back in 1970. How it started was I knew a guy who was a vegetarian, he was a friend of my sisters, and in fact he became my brother-in-law eventually. He was a vegetarian and also a very good athlete.

This was the first time I had ever known anyone who was vegetarian and I started thinking about it because at the time I was a very big meat eater, and I was thinking, "well here's this guy, he's a vegetarian, he can live o.k. in fact, he's extremely fit." The more I thought about it, the more I felt that I had to become a vegetarian too, there was no excuse for me to eat meat.

I started off as a vegetarian. That's all I was for about two years. I just carried on with my ordinary life, but I was a vegetarian.

Then there came a time when I went into a health food shop and there was a copy of *The Vegetarian* magazine, so I bought that, looked through it and there were lots of adverts for different animal welfare societies. I read those, and what they were saying regarding what happens to the animals I found quite horrifying. I sent away for all their literature, and when that came back I was even more horrified. That's really when I learned what happened to the animals. Up to then I knew that animals were killed for food, but I didn't really know about vivisection, factory farming, hunting, etc. When I did know, I became involved in the animal rights movement straight away.

There wasn't really an animal rights movement in those days, more of an animal protection movement. The concept of animal rights was only just arising then in the early seventies.

**How has the movement effected society?**

I think things have changed in two ways: first of all in terms of the opposition to animal abuse. In the early days, the early seventies, when I was first involved the only radical organization was the Hunt Saboteurs Association, and HSA started in the early sixties against bloodsports. In terms of opposition to other forms of animal abuse, the organizations involved weren't very radical at all. They were national organizations mainly based in London, and their only approach to the problem was to lobby parliament, and their members were used as a source of funds. That gradually began to change. More radical people became involved in those organizations and got into positions of power and those organizations changed and became more radical.

Direct action in terms of the Band of Mercy -- later known as the Animal Liberation Front -- sprang up in the early seventies, and a bit later a whole network of local animal rights groups began to

be formed. So from a situation in the early seventies where -- apart from the Hunt Saboteurs -- the only other organizations were the national organizations that were very traditional in their outlook and not very radical at all. That's changed to the situation now where you still have national organizations - they're more effective than they were in the early days, although they're still not particularly radical, and a whole network of local animal rights groups, some which are very radical, and the ALF carrying out direct action. The Hunt Saboteurs is stronger now than it was in the early seventies. The situation as far as campaigning for animal rights has improved a great deal in the last twenty years.

The other point is how the situation has changed regarding animal abuse. There has been a great deal of change in terms of campaigns against animal abuse. If I go through the different areas of the animal persecution industry I can point out how things have improved.

Take the meat industry. First of all, there has been a vast increase in the number of people who are vegetarians and vegans. I think there must be four or five percent of the population of Britain who are vegetarians, and that's a vast improvement from the early seventies, where there was probably less than one percent. So there is a big change there.

The rising number of vegans is really quite phenomenal. I remember when I first became vegan in 1972 there were hardly any other vegans around, and you would have to go thirty or forty miles before you met another vegan. But that isn't the situation now, tens of thousands of people are vegan now.

With factory farming itself, there have been some improvements. For instance, veal crates have been banned for calves, and they are being kept free range now. But all of that is relatively small when compared to the vast amount of factory farming.

Going on to vivisection, in the early seventies when I first became involved there were about six and one half million experiments being performed on animals every year according to official figures. The number now is about half of that.

Hunting and bloodsports. Hunts are in a great deal more trouble now than they were in the early seventies. Lots of local authorities have banned hunts from going across their land, and that's had quite an effect on them as it restricts their hunting territory. A lot of hunts are in severe financial difficulty.

The fur trade. I think the fur trade is probably the area of animal abuse which has been hardest hit by animal rights campaigning. Compared with eight or nine years ago, there are very few fur shops around now. Apart from the possible exception of Selfridges in London, no department store has a fur department. At one time,

there were several department stores in London and in virtually every large town in Britain there would be at least one department store which had a fur department, and that is all gone now. There are very few fur shops left. There are still a few in the west end of London which is like the stronghold of the fur trade in Britain. In most other towns, there are no fur shops at all. They've all gone because of campaigning. And then really what has gotten rid of the fur trade or reduced it so much in this country is there has been a joint effort between lawful campaigning, national anti-fur organizations and local animal rights groups campaigning within the law, and the activities of the ALF.

Going back to bloodsports again, angling has really now become a target for protest and disruption. The Campaign for the Abolition of Angling has carried out quite a few disruptions of fishing matches and that's something that was completely unheard of twenty years ago. There was no opposition to angling at all.

There are probably other areas where things have improved. There have been lots of small victories against animal abuse.

Circuses. A lot of local authorities have banned circuses with performing animals from their land.

Things have really changed a great deal in the last twenty years. There is still a tremendous amount left to do, but I think if twenty years ago someone would have told me that the situation would be like it is today in twenty years time, I may have found that quite hard to believe, because things were really so bad in those days that animal abuse was actually getting worse on virtually every front. Now there has been an improvement on every front, in some cases a vast improvement, as with the fur trade.

In the early seventies and before that, the public were not aware of animal rights at all. Now everyone knows about animal rights, not everyone understands it and not everyone would agree with it because of misunderstandings, but everyone has heard of it. Everyone has heard of it these days, they know immediately something about what animal rights stand for. Twenty years ago they wouldn't know what you were talking about. The public are a lot more aware.

There is a lot more sympathy from the public now than there used to be mainly because people are more aware of things going on because of animal rights campaigning.

**Please explain your police record.**

The history of my prison record started in the early seventies. What happened was that when I had received all of the information from the animal protection societies, I joined a load of these societies and I started looking through what they 'd been doing, and it

seemed to me that they had been doing the same sort of thing for the last century -- the odd peaceful protest, but mainly writing letters to MPs, petitions and things like that, and it hadn't achieved anything, in fact in most areas the situation was getting worse -- factory farming, vivisection, the fur trade was as bad as ever, hunting was as bad as ever. They'd really had no impact on animal abuse. So I thought well, something else must be needed in order to make an impact and to change things.

My involvement in radical activity really began when I saw on the television news some shots of the Hunt Saboteurs in action up in the midlands somewhere and they were being attacked by members of the hunt, being whipped by these hunters on horseback and it made me feel very angry. I thought, "right, I've got to help those people." So I became involved with the Hunt Saboteurs. But very soon I began to see ways in which what the Hunt Saboteurs were doing wasn't going far enough.

What really got me into even more radical direct action was cub hunting. The hunt are training young foxhounds to get the taste of blood, and they also try and get rid of young foxes who aren't going to give them a good hunt. They send a load of foxhounds into the woods and they surround the woods with riders and people on foot who make a lot of noise. Some of the foxes will bolt for it, but the ones that are frightened and stay in the woods, they just get killed by the hounds. The hounds just set upon these foxes and tear them apart.

We went to one or two of these events with other Hunt Saboteurs and there was really nothing we could do. There was really no way of intervening, there wasn't a chase where we could intervene and lay a false scent or spray something to cover the foxes scent, it wasn't like that. They were just all in the wood, killing these foxes, with all of these hunt thugs surrounding them and there was nothing we could do. So I thought that obviously it can't be done this way, and then I came up with the idea of just going to the hunt kennels the night before the hunt and damaging their vehicles so that they just couldn't go in the first place. A few of us got together when we started doing that, and that would have been in '72.

The following year we heard about a laboratory being built near Milton Keynes by a German firm Hoesch Pharmaceuticals. They were due to do radiation experiments there on animals. There had been some local opposition from the local anti-vivisection societies. So we actually made two attempts to burn the place down, and it didn't get burned down, but quite a lot of damage was done to it. There was nobody in it, it was an empty building that was being built.

We also destroyed a boat that was used for seal hunting, upon the wash which is in East Anglia. After that, that particular seal hunt has never taken place since because of the fuss that was made with the boat being burnt and everything. The government has never since given licences for those seals to be killed. So that was good. That was a very early success.

Then we switched to mainly attacking vehicles belonging to firms that supply animals to laboratories -- breeders and suppliers.

Then in '74 two of us got caught, at a laboratory. We were seen by security, the police surrounded the place and we were caught. After about a week we were released on bail. That's myself and a guy called Cliff Goodman. Then when we came up for our court case in '75 we were each sentenced to three years in prison. Out of those three years, we both did a year because we got parole which meant that we only had to do a third of the sentence. So we were out of prison after a year. That was the Band of Mercy who did those actions.

While we were in prison I began to feel that that might be the end of that type of direct action. The other people who were involved with us didn't really carry on doing stuff after we got put in prison, and nobody else seemed to be doing it except for one guy who rescued some beagles from ICI laboratories up in Cheshire. But that was just the rescue of dogs, there wasn't any damage. So I began to think that this was the end of it, the prison sentence might put people off.

When I came out of prison I was very pleasantly surprised to find lots of other people who actually wanted to do this. From our example they were really interested in getting involved with that kind of action. Then we changed the name to the Animal Liberation Front because the Band of Mercy didn't mention animals and sounded rather religious. So we wanted something which said what we were about, which was animal liberation, so we called it the Animal Liberation Front and we started again.

But more people were involved this time. In the Band of Mercy there were only about six of us, but when the Band of Mercy changed to the ALF then more people became involved, there were probably about 30 people who were involved initially and that gradually increased. People began to do the same sort of thing. At first I wasn't involved in actions, but I did get involved again. I just had to get involved again, I couldn't keep away from it.

I was eventually caught with some mice that had been taken on a raid on a place that supplied mice to laboratories. It was a place in Surrey, in the South London area. I got done for breaking into the place, taking the mice, and causing damage, and for that I got

twelve months imprisonment of which I did eight months. I got put into prison for that in '77. I was out in April '78.

Then I sort of withdrew from direct action and started dealing with the media because there was increased media attention on the ALF. Because I was the most known activist, having been to prison twice, the media kept contacting me when ALF actions happened. The media kept contacting me and asking me "why have people done this?" and I would give an explanation. It became virtually a full time job. I was unemployed and so this was a voluntary job as the ALF Press Officer. It just became more and more full-time until in the end I was doing it all the time. Then we ended up having to get an office because there was so much work to do. That carried on until 1986.

In 1986 I was arrested on conspiracy charges. Mainly what the charges were about is that through articles I had published in connection with the ALF Press Office and in connection with the ALF Supporters Group, the prosecution actually said that I was encouraging people to cause damage to places connected with animal abuse. At the end of the trial I was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Out of that ten years, I served two-thirds of that, so that is six years eight months. So I came out of prison in November '92.

**Do you regret any of your actions that winded you in prison?**

I don't regret what I did. I do regret not being more careful. If I had been more careful as the ALF Press Officer, and if I had written things in a different way, because nearly all of the evidence against me in that case was from things that I had written and from things that I published. If I had done that in a different way then they would not have been able to prosecute me and so I would not of ended up with ten years in prison. So, yeah, I do regret not being more careful. There were times when I was caught, the time with the mice, and the time when we were caught in that laboratory the first time I was put in prison, and if I had been more careful on both those occasions then I wouldn't be caught. But it is easy to say that in hindsight of course. But I don't actually regret being involved in the ALF or direct action at all, no, I certainly do not.

**How did you make your time in prison useful?**

From the moment I knew I was going to get a long prison sentence two things came into my mind. I thought right, if they are going to steal six or seven years of my life, then I am going to try and get that back or get as much of it back as I can and I thought the way to do that is to get really fit and stay really fit so that it would prolong my life. I wasn't tremendously unfit before I went

into prison, but I didn't really take much exercise and I used to smoke a small amount. So shortly after I was put in prison I stopped smoking and started taking exercise, and getting myself really fit, and that carried on throughout my prison sentence and I still try to keep it up now.

That was one thing that I resolved, the other thing that I resolved was that I would carry on and try and still do my best for animal rights and still carry on fighting for animal rights while I was in prison and still carry on the fight for animal liberation. Obviously while in prison I couldn't do the same things on the inside, as on the outside. I mean, I couldn't do direct action because I was confined in an inclosed place.

One of the worst things about prison is the lack of contact with people on the outside. It was very difficult to organize things, so things that I did had to be things that basically I could do on my own. There were two main things that I did in prison to further animal liberation. One was that I helped to set up the magazine Arkangel, together with a friend of mine Vivien Smith. She was put in prison during our trial. She had four years and she got out after about 16 months on parole. After she got out she came and visited me and we started Arkangel. So that was one thing.

The other thing was that I learned several foreign languages with the idea of using those to help the animal rights movement abroad after I got out. I am actually doing that now. I am involved in a project called Arkangel International which is involved in the process of setting up a network of local animal rights groups in other countries. So I tried to use my time as best I could to help animals.

**The police have always labelled you one of the "leaders" of the ALF and were hoping that your third arrest and ten year prison sentence would shut the ALF down for good. What happened after your third arrest in terms of ALF activities?**

First of all, the police didn't go out of there way to arrest me. It was by chance that they arrested me. Some people were arrested in Sheffield and unfortunately some of them talked to the police and told the police things about me which caused them to come and arrest me. When they arrested me they found a lot of documents in the ALF Press Office that I had been responsible for writing and publishing, and it was on the basis of that that I was convicted. So I was really only arrested as a spin-off of the police arresting other people.

I think that once they realized that they had this case against me they got quite excited, and when I was actually put in prison I think the police did feel that it would be some sort of death blow to the

ALF. But what they failed to understand was that I was not involved with organizing ALF activities. Yeah, I was encouraging people to do things, but I wasn't involved in organizing things. By getting rid of me it didn't actually destroy any sort of organizational capability that the ALF had because there is no one person that organizes what the ALF does. It is very autonomous. So it didn't effect the actions of the ALF in any way.

There was a lull in activity because quite a few activists were sentenced in our trial as well, and of course they were out of action then. But things gradually picked up again, and towards the late Eighties there was a large amount of ALF activity going on.

**What do you see as the way forward for the animal rights movement?**

I am not involved with the illegal side -- although I am very sympathetic with the ALF -- but I am not actually involved in that sort of campaigning anymore. But I am involved in the lawful side of campaigning and I do feel that there is a tremendous amount that can be done with that.

I think a lot of changes are needed. The type of campaigning that has been going on hasn't been particularly effective -- marches and demonstrations outside of laboratories and other animal abuse establishments haven't been very effective. There are two ways in which the movement has to become more effective and more efficient.

First of all in terms of targeting the places that we are going to go for. If you try to campaign against too many places then what happens is not enough pressure gets brought on any one of them to actually force change or to actually force the place to close. Animal abuse establishments really only close down after a concerted campaign and after pressure has been built up against them by repeated activities.

The other thing is that it is important that the chosen targets are places where some sort of victory can be achieved in the fairly near future. If you choose targets that are difficult, it's going to be so long before any victory is obtained that the people involved in the campaign will become despondent and a lot of them will drop out.

I would say that an example of a very easy, winnable campaign would be a campaign against a local fur shop. Now, if you get enough pickets outside that fur shop, and deter enough people from going into the shop or persuade enough people, that fur shop is going to close because they are no longer going to make a profit. So that is quite easy for a local group to do.

On the other hand, something like closing down a meat factory would be very, very difficult because the public's demand for meat

is still very high. Doing demonstrations outside a meat factory isn't going to close it, because that type of animal abuse still has so much income and support from the public.

To get rid of the fur trade, what's needed is campaigning. To make inroads into the meat trade, what we need is education to persuade more people to become vegetarians and vegans. So you approach each target differently according to the situation of that particular place.

Another example of where a successful local campaign could be mounted would be against vivisection. Even against a big vivisection laboratory. If you campaign against vivisection at a particular establishment using a type of campaign that puts attention on individual vivisectors, like harassing them personally, going outside their homes and disrupting their personal life, then you are going to stop those people, eventually you are going to stop those vivisectors from vivisecting because they just won't be able to take the pressure anymore.

You are going to have to target a lot of individual vivisectors before you close the lab, but all the time you are achieving these small victories of vivisectors who stop doing it, you are cutting down the number of vivisectors, you're making it very uncomfortable for anyone to vivisect in that place. So your getting all those little victories along the way to the big victory and that encourages people. It is very important for the movement to have victories and it is very important to carry out the type of campaigning that yields victories.

So I have told a little bit about targeting. The other thing regarding targeting is frequency of actions. Sometimes people seem to carry out activities for their own personal conscience or for almost a semi-religious reason of "bearing witness" against something, rather than to actually put pressure to close the place.

For instance, there have been quite a few cases where people hold one demonstration a year outside a particular establishment. Now that really does no good at all because one demonstration a year outside of the gates of a lab is not going to close the lab down. If anything, the vivisectors are just going to laugh at it. Ok, you might make a few people become anti-vivisectionists if it gets publicity. But the question really isn't "are these things totally ineffective?" because nothing is totally ineffective, everything you do in furtherance of animal rights has some positive effect, but the question is "how can we use the limited resources that we have in the animal rights movement in the most effective way?"

Demonstrating outside of a laboratory once a year is not the most effective way of campaigning and using the energy and time of the people involved. So I think frequency of campaigning

against a particular place is important.

Basically with targeting, there are two things: you have to choose places where you have a good chance of victory, and secondly you have to put constant pressure on the place; frequent pressure to force the place to close or to force the place to change.

Secondly, the types of campaigning methods you use have to be the type of campaigning methods that exert the maximum pressure. Demonstrating outside of a vivisection laboratory does not exert maximum pressure on that place. You exert far more pressure by going outside vivisector's homes. Because the difference between going outside a home and a place of work is tremendous in terms of the effects it has on the people that work there, and I am trying to encourage local groups to concentrate more on individual vivisectors rather than on the establishments where they work.

The same thing can be used in other types of campaigning, not just vivisection. The fur trade for instance, I've spoken about the way to close down a fur shop is to picket the place to cut down the profits, but there is no reason why people shouldn't actually picket the home of the fur shop proprietor to actually put personal pressure on them. That's a really good addition to pickets outside the shop. So that is something I am really working on a lot now in association with the Animal Rights Coalition, to try and get local groups to campaign more efficiently and more effectively.

**What will the role of the ALF be in the future of the animal rights movement?**

It's hard for me to talk about the future regarding the ALF for legal reasons, but what I can do is talk about what the ALF has achieved in the past and possibly the mistakes the ALF has made. I think in terms of past achievements, the biggest achievement of all has been the demise of the fur trade, or virtual destruction of the fur trade. The ALF was very effective in getting rid of that in terms of actions against individual fur shops and department stores that had fur departments in them. Damage from the ALF really did have a big effect on closing those shops and departments down.

In terms of publicity achieved by the ALF, it really stirred things up, and created a lot of publicity in the newspapers and mass media. I think that also brought a lot more people into the animal rights movement.

The publicity that is caused by ALF actions isn't always good publicity and the media often rant and rave about these "maniacs" and "lunatics," but from the animal abusers point of view, they would rather these activities were not publicized at all. They would rather just carrying on doing it while no one knows about it, and no one thinks about it. So even if the people who take actions

are termed "lunatics" and other insults given to them by the media, that still doesn't mean that that helps the animal abusers because their activities are still being exposed. Light is still being cast on what they are doing and they don't want that.

As far as where the ALF has gone wrong in the past, I think that it has really made the same sort of mistake that the rest of the movement has made in terms of the concentration of its campaign. The ALF really has adopted an approach which has been too scatter-gun, it's kind of hit out in all directions against different types of animal abusers, which I wouldn't say has been totally ineffective, but has, I feel, not been the most efficient way the ALF activist's could have operated.

There have been a lot of ALF actions against the meat industry, and ok, that has probably damaged the meat industry to a certain extent. But had those actions been carried out against weaker targets of animal abuse, then I think that more could have been achieved in those places actually closing down.

For instance, at one time there was a very large number of attacks against meat transporters, and the damage caused ran into millions and millions of pounds. But had those attacks been carried out on lorries that were used to transport animal abroad, that trade would be virtually destroyed now because of ALF activities against those targets.

That is an example not of what I would call bad targeting, because I can understand why the ALF considers any form of animal abuse as being a legitimate target., I think it is an example of not using resources, and people's time and energy as effectively and efficiently as possible. But it is the same mistake that the rest of the movement has made.

**Why do you not take drugs, smoke, or drink?**

Well I think it is all part of me trying to stay as fit as possible. I think drink and drugs harms your health in the same way as smoking. Everybody knows how harmful smoking is, but I believe drinking and drugs are harmful too. Certainly drinking in excess can be very harmful. I think that is one reason, the overall concern for my own health.

Connected with that is my concern for the animals and my wish to be as effective as possible for what I do for the animals. I feel that if I do things to damage my health that that will limit what I can actually do for animal liberation.

**Is there a link between the environmental and animal rights movement?**

I think that environmental protection is very much a part of ani-

mal rights because what we've got to remember is that the environment is habitat for animals. Perhaps the largest scale animal abuse that has ever taken place and is still taking place is the actual destruction of the homeland for animals by the spread of the human species and harmful technology that is employed by the human species. I think that's been more responsible for more death and suffering of animals than anything else, yet the animal rights movement doesn't really do too much about that.

The movement attacks things like vivisection and the fur trade and factory farming, but not a lot of attention is actually paid to the destruction of the environment, and I think it is every bit as important. We need to campaign against environmental destruction, but from an animal-rights-point-of-view, because most environmentalists are concerned about the environment from the point of human beings. You get environmentalists going on about endangered species. They're not concerned about those species disappearing because they're concerned about the welfare of those individual animals, they are concerned about it from the point of people. "O dear! Wouldn't it be horrible when we can't see whales anymore, or we can't see black rhinos or elephants anymore!" That is really what is going through their head, whereas from an animal rights point of view it is wrong for these animals to be killed or put down because it is wrong for any animal to be killed or to be made to suffer.

**Have you ever been involved in any environmental campaigns for the animals?**

Yes, at one time we damaged some buildings and equipment that were going to be used to build a motorway through a wildlife area. It's been things like that where wildlife habitats were going to be destroyed through construction.

**What else should legal campaigners know about?**

A problem that can arise after people have been involved for a while is that they get stale. They're campaigning, they're doing the same thing day in and day out or week in and week out, and if they don't see things moving, if they don't see things changing or improving, they're inclined to get fed up and think that they are not having an effect and maybe drop out.

I think two things need to be said about that. First of all, I feel certain that methods of animal rights campaigning are going to become more effective so we are going to get more victories, so people have that to encourage them. Also, a lot of campaigns do demand constant plugging away. They don't yield instant victories. But if you keep on hammering away, then you do get a victory in

the end.

There are quite a few examples of that. For instance, there was a street market in London called Club Row and it was open every Sunday and they sold animals in very, very bad condition, mostly puppies and kittens. That was picketed for about two years. People went and picketed it every Sunday and in the end it closed, yet it took all that time. Say after a year someone had turned around and said, "look, we've been doing this for a year and we haven't achieved anything" it would have been a mistake to think that the campaign couldn't have been won, because a year later it was won.

Some things need that determined and continual effort. I think really a good slogan for animal rights campaigning is to "keep plugging away." Because you do get people who sort of come into animal rights at 100 miles per hour, and think they can change the world overnight, and try to do everything at once, and when they realize they can't, they drop out and fade away. It's far better for people to have a more realistic attitude and to understand that things do take some time to achieve and that constant pressure is needed to achieve them. Tenacity: people have got to hang in there and just keep fighting, and just not let go.

That's important from a psychological point of view. If animal abusers realize that if they can hold out for a certain time the animal rights campaigners will go away, then that is what they will do. So every time an animal rights campaign is dropped, that not only allows that person or that establishment to keep on abusing animals, but it also sends a message out to all animal abusers. That message being that if you hang out long enough, then the animal rights people will give in. That encourages them to hang on. If we created a situation where we never give up -- that once we started a campaign, we carry on to the bitter end, and we never stop -- once that message gets to animal abusers, as soon as an animal abuser is targeted, or an establishment is targeted these people will think: "Shit! These people are here now and they are never going to go away. It might be better to cut our losses and stop now, rather than to have to suffer all this for years and years to come."

**How have you stayed motivated over the years?**

I think that it is anger that drives me on. The abuse of animals makes me extremely angry ... *extremely angry*. It's really energy derived from that anger that is the driving force within me, and that makes me continue campaigning.

I haven't always campaigned in the same way. I started off being involved with animal protection organizations, then I worked with the Hunt Saboteurs, then I became involved with more radical direct action with the Band of Mercy and the ALF. Then I retired

from actions to become the ALF Press Officer. Now I'm involved with local animal rights groups, trying to get local animal rights groups to campaign more effectively, and also trying to set up local networks abroad.

So where I have been in animal rights has changed over the years, but I am still just as determined as ever. I still try to put as much effort into it as possible. That's the important thing, people don't always have to do the same thing as long as they are in there somewhere doing something for animals. Animal Liberation is going to be achieved by a wide range of activities. There is no one road to animal liberation. Lots of different types of campaigning are needed, and it is important that people are involved in all of those.

**What are your thoughts on the police officers' relationship to animal rights?**

I think they are biased against animal rights because of the fact that the people that actually control the police, the really high up people that control the police are biased against animal rights, because they're the people who mix with the bosses of the animal abuse industries. I mean it's big business and big money, and at the top, all of these people mix together. So the police force is biased against animal rights because it is getting orders from the top to actually be biased against animal rights.

You can see that in the way the police operate. When an animal rights action takes place the police will put far more energy into catching the people who are involved than if it were an ordinary crime. So the fact that it is animal rights actually makes them try harder. Whether the actual individual policeman wants to try harder, they are probably not bothered, but the orders that come from above tell them to try harder because ultimately those orders are influenced by the animal abuse industry itself.

As far as laws that have been past, by and large they have really been ineffective. In practice nothing has been changed. We still hold demonstrations, we still have pickets, we still go and sabotage the hunts. The law of public order has been changed and sort of tidied up in a way. I can't see that has in any way changed animal rights campaigning. People are still doing the same things they did ten or fifteen years ago.

**Do you think the new public order laws were an attempt to crush animal rights campaigning?**

I think so, yeah. I think a lot of hunts are disappointed. They thought the new laws would give the police more power to arrest Hunt Saboteurs, and that hasn't really happened. Now they are try-

ing to get more laws passed to stop hunt sabotage. So yeah, I do think that they were hoping that more would come of it.

**What happens when the day comes where even legal campaigning becomes illegal?**

I think that from the point of view of the animal abusers, that could be very dangerous for them, because although that sort of legislation would stop some people from campaigning, it will cause the other people to look around for other ways of taking effective action against animal abuse, and it could well be illegal action, and it could turn out that illegal action is more effective than the lawful action. So it could actually be very dangerous for the animal abusers in terms of their own safety and that of their businesses to promote such a law.

After all, the reason we started the Band of Mercy in the first place was because we came upon a type of animal abuse where lawful action wasn't effective, so we started doing direct action. So if they block off all avenues so that the only one that is left is to break the law, then there are people who are going to go down that road, and they may be people who otherwise wouldn't of gone down that road.

**What advice do you have for activists?**

I think that it is very important that people stay positive. We are up against a vast edifice of animal abuse, but spending a lot of time worrying and moaning and getting upset about that isn't going to achieved anything. I think someone said that "If you bang your head against a brick wall enough times, the brick wall will fall down." That might be a good saying for the animal rights movement. I think we can achieve things.

Much has been achieved in the last twenty years since I came into the movement. Now I've seen the progress that's been made -- there's a lot more to do -- but progress has been made. People that just come into the movement now would see that there is still a massive amount of animal abuse, and the problem is that they may begin to feel that what they are doing isn't really having an effect. But if they could look back over the last 15 years and look at what has been achieved it might discourage them from those thoughts.

The problem that we had twenty years ago was when we looked back, all we had was a story of animal abuse getting worse all the time, and the campaigning used against it being ineffective. That's all we had to look back at, but people today, they have got a history of recent successes. So OK, that's only a small part that has been done away with, but at least it shows that we can have victories and that we can change things. That should be a positive

encouragement to people who are coming into the movement now, and it is important to be positive in that way.

**How is writing letters to animal rights prisoners part of our movement?**

One of the problems in prison is that you are really cut off from the outside world. You have two visits a month, and you can use the telephone sometimes, and you receive letters. From my own point of view, getting people's letters, telling me about what was going on in the movement, and just that contact with the outside world was very important. The time of day when I received letters was in many ways the high-point of the day, being able to get people's letters, read them, learn about things, and have that contact with the outside world. It is important.

That is part of animal rights, giving help and support to other activists, because that creates a strong movement. We should always give our support to each other and when people are in prison that is the time when they need that support the most.

**What was the media making you out to be after your arrest for conspiracy?**

They said I was the ALF General, but that was something that was put forth by the prosecution. What the prosecution did to try and get convictions against people and to get certain people big sentences was to divide it up into ranks like in the army, and I was the General. There were two other guys who were sort of Area Commanders. Viv, who worked with me in the Press Office, she was my Lieutenant. Then there were some other activists and they were called foot soldiers. All of these ranks were given to people and then when people were sentenced, they were sentenced according to the rank they had, and because I was the General, I got the biggest sentence.

**You mentioned earlier that the ALF could target weaker animal abuse establishments to produce more victories, do you see any other areas where the ALF could improve?**

Possibly another mistake the ALF has made is in terms of animal rescue -- when people go into labs, take animals out and find homes for them. There are problems about that. I mean there are certain positive aspects, you save the animals, it's good publicity, nice photographs of beagles coming out of labs, but on the down side, organizing a raid like that takes a lot of resources. You've got to have a lot of people involved to take the animals out. You've got to have the vehicles involved in that. You can be spending quite a long time in the place if you are carrying out a load of ani-

mals, especially large ones. After that you have to find homes for them, and what the lab actually loses is the value of those animals, because what they've lost really is how much it is going to cost to replace those animals. Now, in some cases it can be thousands of pounds.

But imagine if those same people had done damage to the laboratory instead. In the same amount of time, they could have done far more damage, which is far more economically harmful to the lab. You need less people. You can do it more quickly, so there is less chance of being caught. And you don't have to find homes for the animals. Because another spin-off from animal rescue is where do these animals go? See if those animals are given to other animal rights campaigners then that really hinders those people to quite a considerable extent in terms of campaigning, because those people have those animals to look after. So they are spending time and energy looking after those animals and that is time and energy that could be spent on campaigning.

I think that there is a very real sense in which animals get in the way of animal liberation because you tend to find that animal rights campaigners tend to have their homes filled up with animals. They've got loads of dogs, cats. Now those creatures take time to look after. I mean obviously if you've got animals you've got to look after them properly. That takes time and energy and responsibility. You're tied down to those animals. It's like having a load of kids. And that is time and energy that could be spent on animal rights campaigning.

Because with animal abuse we are talking about millions of animals in laboratories and billions of animals slaughtered for foods, many of those in factory farmed conditions, hundreds of thousands of animals hunted and it goes on and on and on. You're talking about a very vast number. And because of looking after a relatively small number of animals, people are tied down by that. Their time and energy is tied down by that small number of animals, so they can't campaign as effectively for the vast number of animals. This is the reason why I would never have a companion animal, because I do not want that responsibility. I want to be free to campaign. I don't want to be tied down.

The other thing is that there have been cases in the past where people's animals have been attacked by animal abusers. It's a weak spot. I knew a case where a guy who was a prominent anti-bloodsports campaigner came home one night and he had some rabbits, and they had all been killed by bloodsports supporters. They all had their throats cut, and that has happened a few times. So you've got this constant worry on your mind, "if I campaign, am I putting my animals at risk?"

So to a large extent I think that it is a bad thing for animal rights campaigners to have their own companion animals. I think it's a tie on their time and energy, and I think that those animals are put at risk. It is far better for people who *only* want to look after animals -- people that don't campaign -- to look after the animals. Let them look after the animals, and let the campaigners campaign. We should be free to campaign as much as we can.

In many ways, saying that is going to upset a few people. But there are also people who I've spoken to, and even people who have got animals, who have said,"Yeah, I've made a mistake here. I've got these animals now, so I've got to look after them. That's fair enough. But it was a mistake for me to take them on because I realize that it is effecting me. It's stopping me from campaigning as much as I could."

It's the same as having children, and that's another point. I think that animal rights people should set an example of not having children. One of the main reasons for animal persecution is human over-population. I spoke earlier about the destruction of the environment. The human race has actually invaded territory which rightfully belonged to the animals.

I mean there are millions and millions of different species of animals on this planet and we're just one of them. But we don't just take our fair share, we don't say, "well look there are all these other species so we'll limit ourselves and we'll have a certain amount of the world, and the animals can have the rest." That's fair, but we haven't done that. We've just spread and multiplied all over the place. We've invaded territories where we have no right to be.

I believe that the human population has to be drastically reduced in order to give the animals back their space and give the animals back what is rightfully theirs. Obviously I advocate all contraception and education and things like that. And if we are saying to people,"Look, you shouldn't breed. You should limit your number of kids because you're destroying the environment. You're making it difficult for us to be getting back to a situation which is fair regarding the animals." If we are trying to say that to people, then we've got to set the example ourselves. We've got to say, "Right, we're not having any children."

One of the reason's why I don't want to have children, why I am not going to have children is animals. First of all, because the responsibility of children would mean that I wouldn't have the same amount of time to devote to animal liberation campaigning. Secondly, because bringing children into this world means that there is more resources going to the human species, when it should be going toward other animals. More resources are used up by humans which rightfully belong to the other animals.

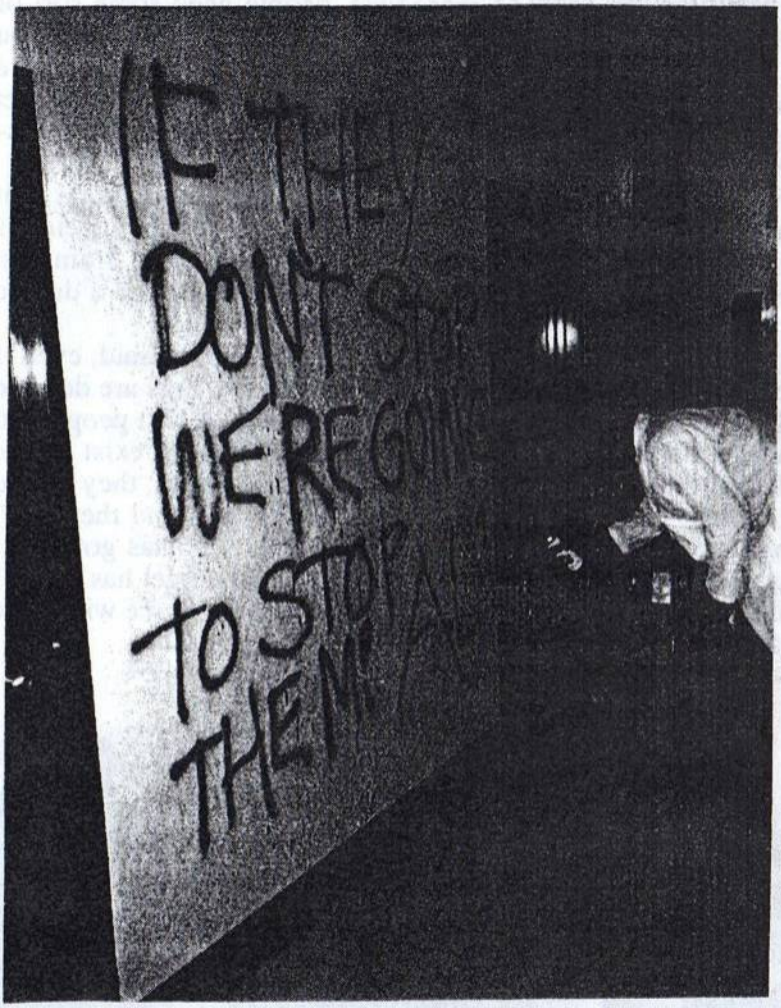
I had a vasectomy over ten years ago. I would like to see a system -- some people would be horrified by this suggestion, but I think it would solve a lot of problems -- where every male is vasectomized at about the age of fourteen. Their sperm is kept in a sperm bank, and in order to reproduce, people need some sort of permission. I mean that would cut out all unwanted children. You would have no more abortions because there wouldn't be any more unwanted pregnancies. The human race would be kept under strict control, and it could be reduced. Of course, it demands that descent people are in charge of the whole show.

People say,"O! That sounds fascist!" But the thing is, is that what is happening now is fascist, the way the human species is taking over the earth from the animals, that's fascist. I am just proposing a solution to that. A drastic problem demands a drastic solution.

I think that there are some things that do have to be said, even if people don't like them. It is important that these things are debated as well. One of the reasons we started Arkangel is that people did have a forum to debate and discuss things which didn't exist before now, because usually places that published magazines, they would only put their own viewpoints in those magazines, and there isn't even a place in their publication for somebody who has got a dissenting viewpoint. They just won't allow it. Arkangel has always published articles that the editors didn't necessarily agree with. We felt that it was good to stimulate and encourage debate.



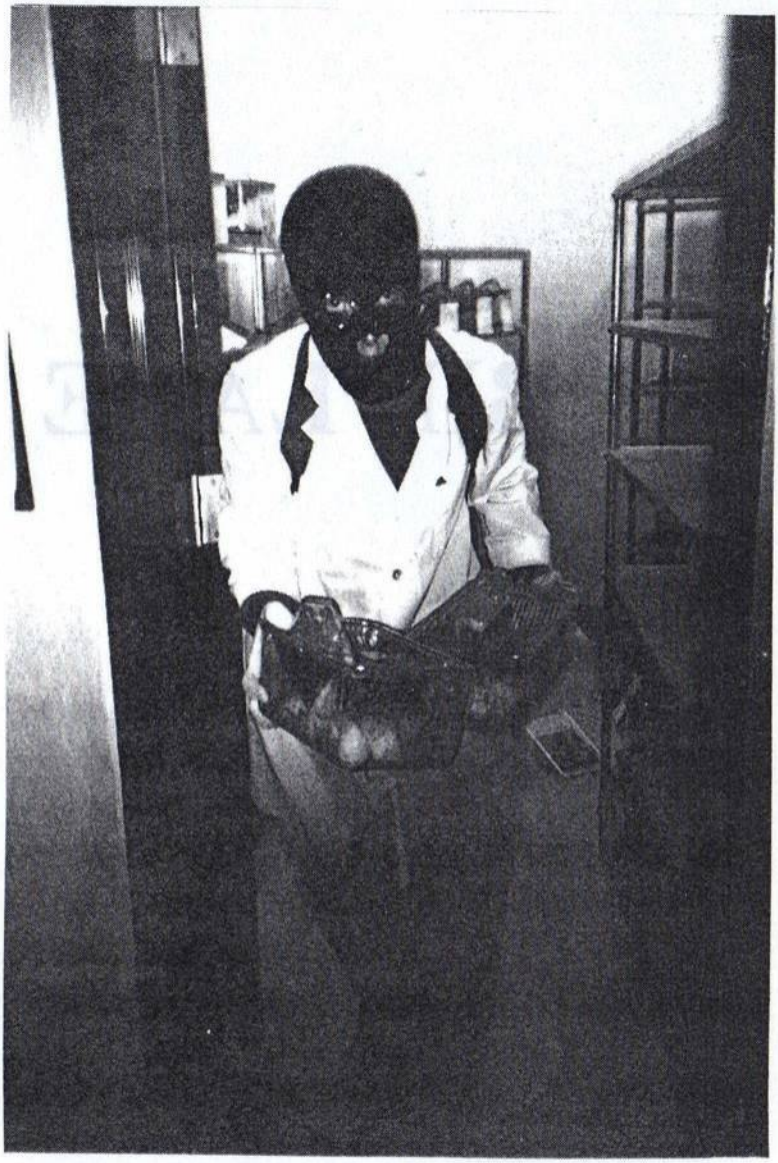
The Animal Liberation Front strikes again! *ALF SG*




Greetings from the Animal Liberation Front! An ALF activist finishes a successful raid on a vivisection laboratory by leaving a little message behind. *PETA*

# ROBIN LANE

**Interviewed**
**August 27, 1991**



These mice are getting a second chance at life thanks to the Animal Liberation Front. *PETA*

**When and how did you get involved with animal rights?**

I became a vegetarian in 1980, and at that time I was quite involved in the anti-nuclear movement. I saw veganism as a logical extension when I started to become more aware of the animal rights movement, and I became vegan in 1982. The first group that I got involved with was the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, and I started going on anti-fur pickets, and I just became more and more aware of the issues.

**So what was your first exposure to animal rights?**

In actual fact, I was near Stresson Common and I saw this slogan painted on the wall: "FIGHT VIVISECTION!" I didn't even know what vivisection was at the time, because I didn't have any animal rights friends, I didn't have any vegan friends, I didn't have any vegetarian friends. So I asked my girlfriend at the time, "What's this vivisection?" and she told me, and I started thinking about it.

The next thing I did was pick up a BUAV leaflet, and then I went to visit the BUAV offices. I started talking to the people there. Picked up a load of posters. Started going out by myself and leafletting. I had been a postman, and I started delivering anti-vivisection leaflets to the people around where I lived. I delivered a few thousand door to door. Then I started going out by myself in the streets leafletting, collecting signatures on petitions. I worked very much on my own at that point because I didn't know anyone else involved in animal rights. Then I started meeting other people on fur pickets etc. and my involvement grew steadily and rapidly.

**What has the movement accomplished?**

I think that there's an awful lot of people who would say that nothing's changed -- that people will never change. But in the ten years I've been involved with animal rights, I have seen just the most incredible change. I think what it is, is that people who are very involved with something don't actually see much outside of that sphere. They don't see the changes that are going on within the general public, for instance. They don't see the changes that are going on in the shops so much. They say, "O look, have you tried the latest vegan ice cream, or have you seen the latest vegan chocolate ice or something," but the change in the shops is phenomenal, it's just incredible. The animal rights message has spread worldwide. There's ALF groups in many countries of the world. Yes, it's grown to a very large extent.

**How have you stayed motivated for the past ten years?**

Because I have this very strong basic belief that animal exploitation and animal abuse and animal murder is wrong. That is the bottom line for me.

**You never get "burned out"?**

No, and I think that's probably got something to do with the fact that I've changed what I've been doing over the years. I've got involved with lots of different groups. I've been involved in lots of different ways in the movement. I think some people get involved and do an awful lot in a particular field and they think, "What am I going to do now?" and they just drop out. I don't ever see myself dropping out. For the rest of my life, I don't see that.

**You're one of the the contributors to Arkangel, could you explain what Arkangel is about?**

On the face of it, Arkangel appears just to be a magazine, and it is a very good magazine. It's unique in so far as there isn't another animal liberation magazine like it. Turning Point, for instance, which is an excellent magazine, tends to focus on animal abuse a lot. Where as that isn't the purpose of the Arkangel magazine. Arkangel is to focus on the progress in the movement and what people are doing, what people are achieving. It's supposed to have a very positive outlook, and it does have a very positive outlook.

When we were running the magazine until Ronnie Lee came out of prison, it was specifically a magazine. But now that Ronnie Lee is out of prison, he is setting up all of the projects which he set out to do when the magazine was founded in 1989. Now he's out and about. He's actually putting his energy into Arkangel International, and Arkangel Information.

Arkangel Information will be providing local animal rights groups with information such as the names and addresses of vivisectors so that purely legal campaigns can be carried out against them. With Arkangel International he's helping to set up animal rights and animal liberation type groups -- purely legal of course -- in other countries and he's succeeded in setting up a group in Spain, someone in Israel has been in touch, and I can see animal rights groups starting up in other countries to a much, much greater degree now that Ronnie is on the scene again.

**Arkangel has changed its format for describing ALF actions. Could you explain to me the reasoning behind that?**

When I was involved in the ALF Supporters Group back in 1986, Ronnie had just been taken to prison on remand. Between 1982 and 1986 they had been producing "Action Reports" which

was literally a chronological catalogue of Animal Liberation Front actions. When they were taken to prison and we took over the Supporters Group, we decided to continue to produce those action reports, even though Ronnie had been charged with incitement. But we figured that they were very important, and instead of changing the format, we changed the name, and we called them "Diary of Actions," but in fact they were exactly the same thing.

When I was arrested for incitement in April 1987, between then and the time of my conviction in June 1988, we continued to produce the "Diary of Actions." I was convicted of incitement for producing the "Diary of Actions" -- amongst other things. When I came out of prison I decided that I wasn't going to be one of these people who just went back and did exactly the same thing just to get convicted for the same thing again.

So when I got involved with Arkangel magazine in December 1991, I wasn't going to follow that line and we changed the format to press cuttings. I liked the idea of producing press cuttings of actions because it shows people what the public sees, and it's not just as one policeman said to me, "You just like looking at these to see what you've done and your friends have done." I just think that the press cuttings are a safer and more interesting way of providing the information.

**In what other ways has Arkangel ran into trouble with the police?**

The only time that Arkangel has run into trouble with the police was when Viv Smith was arrested for conspiracy to commit arson. She was in the process of producing Arkangel #6. That was in her possession. She was arrested, the police went around to her place and they found Arkangel #6. Which is why folks, you will never see Arkangel #6, because it's in the hands of the metropolitan police.

Arkangel magazine found itself as part of the evidence in her case and her co-defendant, Kieth Mann. Arkangel found its way into the evidence of those two defendants. So Arkangel wasn't actually raided by the police, as Arkangel magazine. It found its way into evidence as a result of the people running it being arrested.

**What are the logistics of Arkangel magazine?**

Arkangel is run on a shoestring budget. We only ever have enough money to produce the next magazine, so it's an extremely tight situation. We print 1,000 copies every time, and they all go by the time the next issue comes out. The subscription is £7.20 for four issues. Originally we said that we would produce four a year, but in actual fact we can't produce four a year because it's too

much. So now we just produce one when we can -- hopefully not more that six months in between each one. But then as far as I'm concerned, you don't need a magazine to come out every month, or every two months, or every four months. The purpose of Arkangel is for people to see overall, what's happened in the previous six months. So that's fine by me.

**Do a lot of people contribute to Arkangel?**

There are two people that actually put the magazine together, that's me and somebody else. There's people that help out on the sections. Like someone does the hunt sabbing section, somebody does the group section [the section that lists all the groups, their addresses, and their accomplishments over the last six months], somebody does the road to victory section. So we've got probably about 8 people working on it independently, and then it all comes together. The magazine is really a case of us putting together what people submit. We don't actually write anything, and we put in advertisements free of charge.

**Do you get many article contributions?**

We do get an awful lot of stuff. We've extended the magazine to 52 pages now, and there is never a shortage of things to put in.

**In the past, you have been an ALF Press Officer. What is the function of the Press Office?**

I think that the animal liberation movement absolutely needs an ALF press officer, because otherwise you've got all of these ALF actions going on all around the country, and when I was ALF Press Officer, there was on average four to five actions every single night of the year. Now they can be going on and local people can be reading those actions in their local paper, because ALF actions hardly ever get into the national papers, but if you want people to know what the animal liberation movement is doing on a national level, you've got to have a national Press Officer. The current Press Officer, Robin Webb, is extremely good, because he is a very respectable and intelligent person, and he comes across that way. And that's invaluable.

**As the ALF Press Officer, did you ever run into trouble with the police?**

Yes. I had an extremely bad time with the police. They did their absolute utmost to stop me doing what I was doing. I think I had this big problem because I took over as Press Officer after Ronnie Lee was arrested, and I think the police had this idea that once they got all of the "leaders" as they put it, they weren't really

expecting people to come along and step into their shoes, but we did. And I think they were really pissed off about that.

The police really gave me a hard time. I was raided six times at my flat. They came, they smashed the door down with a sledge hammer, I was arrested by the anti-terrorist squad, and I was constantly being arrested and questioned for actions that ALF people had done. I spent an awful lot of time in police cells being questioned, and I had a really hard time with it. It wasn't the happiest time in my life, but I carried on doing it because I felt that it was a really necessary thing to do. I only stopped when I was sent to prison.

**When were you the ALF Press Officer?**

I took on the job as Press Officer in August 1986. After being arrested and hassled and the anti-terrorist squad, they came round and they turned my place over, and they questioned me for six hours about the "Diary of Actions," etc. After that I decided to officially stand down as Press Officer. But that was literally just officially. In actual fact I was still Press Officer up until May '88 when I went to Cardiff to stand trial. So really, to officially step down as Press Officer was just a tactic, it wasn't an actual reality.

**Did the authorities stop hassling you after you "officially" stepped down?**

Yes, I think by that time they believed that they had ground me down enough. Well, they visited me in September '87. I'd already been charged for incitement in April '87, and they knew that the trial was coming up and I was on bail for a year. They probably thought that since the trial was coming up, "that's going to be that, he's going to be convicted, so we won't bother to hassle him anymore."

**Did you say "no comment" throughout your police interrogations?**

Yes, I did. It's very difficult actually, because when you are being arrested for an ALF action which you know you haven't done, and your being questioned for six hours, you really want to say, "But I didn't do it! I didn't do it!" But you know that if you say anything, if you say "I didn't do it" or say anything other than "no comment" they then would ask you another question. Then you say "no comment" and they'll think "well why is he saying 'no comment' to this and answering that?" So people have really got to be sure that they only ever say "no comment."

It's a misconception to think that if you give a statement you will be released sooner. In actual fact, if you give a statement, you're

probably going to be released much later, because they are going to be wanting more and more information out of you.

So I was consistent with the "no comment" except on one occasion when the ALF had apparently poured paint stripper over a car that didn't belong to them. There was a lot of trouble over that. I was questioned for five hours, and I said no comment. But I eventually said that, "Yes, I agree that I am the liaison officer for the Animal Liberation Front" because they kept asking and asking, and I thought, "Well, what's the point in not saying that ?" because they know I am anyway.

**The time you were interrogated for six hours, did you only say "no comment" throughout the entire session?**

Yes. What the anti-terrorist squad did -- it was very heavy, the interview, it wasn't physically heavy, it was psychologically heavy -- what they did, there were these two guys, and they were both staring at me. One was asking questions and the other one was staring at me all the time. And if I moved my hand, they'd write that down. Or if I scratched my head, which they see as a sign of knowing something, then they'd write that down. And it was a very psychologically trying experience.

Now when I was questioned by the Cardiff police for incitement. That was taped, and I said "no comment" through the entire thing as well. When I was arrested another time with my girlfriend at the time, we were arrested for conspiracy to commit criminal damage, and criminal damage to the house of Dr. Meldrum and his garage. We said, "no comment."

Now we had a beagle at the time. I can safely say now that the animal has passed on, that she was a rescued beagle from a laboratory, but at the time there was no way that I would ever tell anybody that. The police really did try the dirty tricks tactics and said that, "We know that this beagle is stolen," not rescued, "we know that this beagle is stolen from a laboratory, and we're going to take your dog away if you refuse to comment. You've got to cooperate." They were saying really terrible things about our dog and what they were going to do her and everything, but we still said "no comment." They couldn't get to us like that, even though they tried. They do really sink to an all-time low when they are questioning you. But we were consistent in our "no comment."

**What else have you been arrested for?**

I was arrested with three other people for the alleged Dr. Meldrum action. Two of the people were released, but me and the other person were on bail for a year. Eventually the charges were dropped in February '87. But then in April '87 I was re-arrested

for conspiracy to incite. So there were those two things.

I was arrested for suspicion of causing £18 hundred worth of damage to butcher shop windows, but eventually I was acquitted of that. I was actually very surprised at that time because I hadn't been involved in high profile things. I had been arrested on the "Stop the City" action in 1983 when we were occupying a fur warehouse. So I thought the police kind of knew me, but when I was taken in for questioning for this butcher's shop window stuff, they actually had a file of me with my photograph on it, which I was really quite shocked about, because I didn't think that I was that well known. But I think that other people should be aware of that, that probably everyone who has had any kind of involvement in animal rights, whether they've been arrested or not, is probably got a file on them.

I don't think that I've been arrested for any other ALF type things, but I've been arrested lots of times on sit-down protests, and occupations, and stuff like that.

**How much time have you spent in prison?**

I've only spent the four and a half months in Cardiff Prison for the "conspiracy to incite others to commit criminal damage" charge. That's the only time that I've been to prison, and it's not an experience that I would like to repeat, although it wasn't the most terrible experience in my life either. But I've spent an awful lot of my time in police cells.

**Could you explain your campaign against the vivisector?**

The campaign ran between 1984 and 1986. The name of the vivisector is Dr. Brian Meldrum. He was considered an arch-vivisector along with people like Colin Blakemore. He was to vivisection what Ronnie Lee is to the animal liberation movement. Meldrum used to go on t.v. and justify vivisection. He was a spokes-person for the vivisection industry. He had previously had a six year campaign against him by other animal rights groups, but they had all fallen apart.

SLAM was the group that I was involved in at the time, South London Animal Movement, and we started an extremely intense campaign against Meldrum. We had seven demonstrations outside his house, involving different tactics. We had taken his photograph -- he actually posed for it. I don't think he knew who we were at the time. We put his photograph on our leaflet, with the heading "Animal Torturer." We also put a picture of a baby monkey sucking his thumb on the front of the leaflet, just to show who his victims were.

Meldrum carried out, and probably still does carry out, epilepsy

experiments where he actually induces epilepsy in baboons. He's also been responsible for putting mice under a bell and ringing it very loudly.

The campaign was extremely intense. It got to the point where he actually said on television that he was spending half of his time dealing with animal rights issues. I think that he was shunned a bit by the Institute of Psychiatry, where he was working for, because so much attention had been directed at him. There was an extremely intense freepost campaign against him [sending letters to one of his mailboxes that pays the price of postage. Sort of like an 800 number, except for mail.] which involved him receiving hundreds of catalogues, cabs in the middle of the night, and thousands of items of unsolicitated mail. That was one aspect of the campaign.

The ALF turned up periodically to throw red paint all over his house. In actual fact, the newspapers said that Meldrum couldn't even see out his windows there was so much red paint on the house. He also had a toy monkey put on his door step with its hands and legs tied, and red paint had been poured over it. His car was attacked with paint stripper, he had a GM sports car. Back in January '86 a bomb was apparently planted under his car and the whole street was blocked off.

Meldrum was working for the Institute of Psychiatry, which is in South London. There was also a very intense campaign against the Institute of Psychiatry where the ALF had previously raided the lab. It was a very effective raid. Thirty-one mice were rescued, and £50,000 of damage was caused. The ALF kept visiting the institute on various occasions throwing red paint over the animal house. Slogans like "room 101" which was taken from the book *1984*, was sprayed. "Animal Belsen" was sprayed on the buildings.

The campaign against Dr. Meldrum really came as a result of us who were really carrying out a highly legal campaign against the institute. Seeing that the deeper and deeper that we delved into the institute, the bigger and bigger it seemed to become. We found that the US Army was actually funding some of the experiments, and the tobacco companies were funding the experiments, and the Medical Research Council -- which is a front for all sorts of dodgy people -- were funding the experiments. We figured that instead of trying to bash our way into the institute to try and close them down, which we saw as a bigger and bigger unlikelihood, we decided to focus our campaign on an individual vivisector, and we picked Meldrum because he was well known. And I think that achieved an awful lot. Unfortunately laboratories are funded by these big people, and they are almost impossible to smash, although I think we became a very big thorn in their side.

Unfortunately in 1986 we were arrested because we were big in the campaign. We were arrested for the ALF stuff because we were allegedly responsible for that. We were taken away and the campaign fell apart after that, and I think since then, Meldrum had been getting on with his work, which is unfortunate. But we certainly made his life a misery.

**What information was on the leaflet against Dr. Meldrum?**

We had a little working party and we decided to put his home address and his phone number on it, but one of our lot said that it wasn't fair to put his home number because they didn't think it was fair that his family should receive all these unpleasant calls. So we wanted to be united in the campaign, so we decided to drop his home number from the leaflet, but we put his work number on as a compromise, and we kept the address.

I think a lot of his neighbors were shocked when they found out what he actually did for a living. The ones we spoke to were very upset by his activity.

The people he worked with didn't like all the publicity, and there is a tendency to blame the person who is getting all the bad publicity. So they were not very keen on being associated with him within the institute for fear of being targeted themselves.

We printed 5,000 of the "Animal Torturer" leaflets, and we delivered one leaflet to every single household in the area, which is quite a few thousand.

We also used to dress up. I Dressed up as Dr. Meldrum actually. I had this mask with a bald head and hair on the sides and glasses, it really did look like Dr. Meldrum. We took a chair down to his house and my girlfriend at the time dressed up as a monkey. I tied her up in the chair and pretended to perform epileptic experiments on her, which was quite interesting. We had the press down there, and crowds of people used to gather around, they were quite a bit amused by it all.

The local papers weren't actually very sympathetic. Once, we were all there with animal masks on and the press came along, and they took a photograph of us all. When it appeared in the newspaper, what they had done was darken the picture and made the masks -- which were like rabbit and cat masks -- look like balaclavas [ski masks], and focused it on one person, and had a big headline, "Animal Terrorists!" That's the sort of thing the press do.

The campaign got local TV coverage, newspaper coverage, and got very intense publicity.

We had a chimps tea party in his driveway on his birthday. That was funny. His wife came out and started screaming at us, and I rushed forward with this banana, and she fell into the hedge. It

was reported in the paper that I had attacked her with a rubber banana. It was a real banana actually. It was quite a laugh at the same time, but it was a very serious campaign. It's a pity that more people don't take up that kind of campaign.

For another one of the protests we hired an open-back lorry. We set up a stroboscope and got a generator which made a hell of a noise at night. We figured that if we all sat in the back of this lorry then we couldn't get arrested, which was wrong actually. We set up the stroboscope and pointed it at his house. What happened was that the stroboscope ended up getting reflected back at us from the windows, and we ended up feeling really nauseous. On top of that the police turned up and told us that if we didn't move off that we'd be arrested. So that didn't really achieve very much.

Another time we had a banner which was 30 feet and it had in huge, great capitals painted on it, "ANIMAL TORTURER LIVES AT 128." We stood right at the front of the house, and we all had animal masks on. The police turned up and told us that we couldn't stand there, but we could stand on the other side of the road. So that was really good. We never had any real hassle from the police all the time we were doing these completely legal demonstrations. Those were some of the more notable things in our campaign.

**Considering the bad press you got, did you find the campaign to be effective?**

Yes, I think it really was. I think that if a local group's campaign gets national and local newspaper coverage, and local TV coverage I think that is an extremely good thing. Unfortunately what happened in the group that we were in, SLAM, there were certain people in the group who were getting cold feet over it. They were saying to us, "but your only getting bad publicity" and we were saying, "Hang on a second, this campaign is really effective, we're getting a lot of publicity, but what did you expect? If your going to have that much of an effect on an animal abuse establishment figure, your going to get bad publicity." But they were really giving us a hard time in the group. So we actually left -- all the main organizers -- and we set up an anarchist group called RATS. That was what I was involved with before I got involved with the ALF SG. I was kind of moving off in a different direction anyway.

**RATS?**

Yes, we decided to call this group RATS. It was an "R" and an "A" in a circle and a "T" and an "S." We thought we'd be a bit different because everyone has group names that mean something. Like they think of a name of a group and it's got to spell some-

thing. We did it the other way around, people would say, "What does RATS stand for?" and we'd say, "It doesn't stand for anything, it's just called RATS." It was really a very small group, and I liked that.

We produced a very good leaflet which has been much copied called "What do you know about the Animal Liberation Front?" It was a leaflet to explain to the public what the ALF did, why they did it, and on the back of the leaflet it had various forms of animal abuse photographs. It was a good leaflet. We also raised money that went straight to animal sanctuaries. David Henshaw's book, *Animal Warfare*, mentions the group RATS. Really RATS was just a group which supported the ALF publicly and raised money for animal sanctuaries. That's all it was.

**What is CALF?**

Right, CALF stands for the Campaign Against Leather and Fur. We set up the group in June 1989, me and my girlfriend at the time. The reason we set the group up was because leather was a very neglected issue. People were campaigning against the meat industry which is where leather comes from, and they were campaigning against every other aspect in the animal rights movement. But we felt that even though people were campaigning against the meat industry, it was important to direct a campaign specifically against the leather industry. We wanted to point out the connection between the fur industry and the leather trade.

A very interesting thing we noticed is that in Oxford Street in London, when all the fur shops were closing down, the leather shops were springing up. I think that the important thing is that now that the fur trade has been decimated by the animal rights movement, people haven't actually taken the logical step of taking up the campaign against the leather trade, and it is only really starting to happen now with the Animal Rights Coalition day of action in November.

We also wanted to say that we believe that if everybody went vegetarian in this country, there would still be a big demand for leather because a lot of people become vegetarian for ethical reasons, but an awful lot of people become vegetarian and vegan for health reasons. And just because people becomes vegetarian and vegan doesn't necessarily mean that they will stop wearing animal products. I know a number of "vegans" that do wear leather.

So there were two reasons for starting CALF, one was to bring the issue of leather to the attention of the general public, and the other part of the campaign was to encourage the animal rights movement to take up the leather issue.

**What does CALF do?**

We have a general mail-out. What happens is that I pick the post up every week and we get a number of letters, on average about six letters a week, mainly from school children. I have a general mail-out to send which includes literature about leather. There was a very good article which was printed in the Vegan Society's magazine on the leather issue. I send that out, I send out our leaflet, and I sent out a leaflet on the wool industry and on the silk industry, and then I sent out a whole lot of other group's leaflets ranging from Campaign to Abolish Angling to various sanctuaries to ALF Supporters Group and fur facts sheet. So it is not a single issue campaign by any means.

We don't really actually have any demonstrations because the whole purpose of CALF really wasn't to become like LYNX. We really didn't want to produce thousands of high quality, glossy leaflets to give to other groups to give out. There was only two people involved with CALF then, and there is only one person now. Our real aim is to encourage other groups to actually produce their own leaflets and organize their own demonstrations.

We also produce stickers. We produce twelve different types of stickers with slogans that we made up ourselves. We produced a common cause T-shirt with various names of various animal rights organizations on it. And we produced posters. In actual fact Veggies produced a very good poster on behalf of us which we send out.

We don't have a membership list, by the way. We rely on donations, and we don't really get any. We get the odd check for £1.50 or something. So it is very tight financially.

**Do you see a connection between animal rights and environmental issues?**

Yes, I do. I see a very strong connection between the animal rights movement and the environmental movement. I think if the animal rights movement and the environmental movement join forces then it could be a really strong broad-based movement. When I came out of prison in 1988 I actually got involved in a local group based in South London called Life Before Profit which consisted of about eight vegans. We didn't campaign specifically on veganism or animal rights issues. We produced a leaflet which we're still distributing even though the group disbanded about 4 years ago. Life Before Profit campaigned against environmental exploitation, it campaigned for human rights issues, it campaigned on animal rights issues - the group was a very broad-based environmentalist and animal rights set up. We used to have video showings every meeting which covered environmental issues

showing the connection between the animal rights movement and the environment.

In the Campaign Against Leather and Fur, part of out literature actually incorporates the argument that some green people have put to us. They say that leather is bio-degradable so its more ecological because it breaks down naturally and therefore it is better to wear leather than plastic for instance. Our argument is that the leather industry actually contributes to a lot of the slurry and toxic chemicals which go into the environment and pollute the rivers. We actually have a leaflet which we send out to people who ask specifically on the environmental damage in connection with the leather industry, and there's just hundreds of toxic chemicals which are being pumped into the environment.

**What do you see as the way forward for the movement?**

I think that the way forward should just be a continuation of how it has been and is, except of course for its disunity. This movement is notorious for fighting against each other, and I think the way forward is for the movement to unite, and I know that this is easier said than done because there's always going to be one group saying that they're doing it the right way and saying that the other groups are doing it the wrong way.

Arkangel is attempting to bring some kind of unity, but then as I said, that is easier said than done. So I think that we have to accept that every group is doing some good. Even groups like the BUAV that tend to put an awful lot of money into political campaigning, they are also carrying out very effective campaigns against the cosmetic testers. So more unity, and just continuing with hard hitting campaigns, getting local groups out into their local environment, and getting the message out to the general public.

**Any last words?**

I would like to see the animal rights movement become as big and progressive in other countries as it has managed to become here. America is such a vastly bigger place than Britain, and I am very inspired. In Arkangel magazine we have an International News section, and in the latest magazine we produced, we had a number of countries covered, but the USA is the largest section of all, and I feel very inspired and encouraged by the fact that so much is actually going on in the States. If you live in America then you probably feel that not much is going on because of the vast area that is being covered. But from our point of view, in this country, we see an awful lot going on over there.

I think that PETA is a very good organization. That's something that this country lacks. I think that we in this country -- even

though the animal rights movement is very big -- I think that we should try to learn from organizations like PETA. And I hope that in America, animal rights groups and organizations will try to learn from the experiences that we put forward. I hope the animal rights movement just grows, and grows, and grows until nobody can ignore it any longer, and nobody can ignore the animals that are being tortured to death for vanity and financial gain.

Keep fighting.



# ROBIN WEBB

**Interviewed**
**September 9, 1991**




"Devastate to Liberate!" has always been a motto of the Animal Liberation Front. They put that principle to practice at Swanson Meats in Minneapolis, Minnesota where they glued locks, painted slogans and torched five meat trucks, costing the abusers over $100,000. *ALF SG*

**When and how did you get involved with animal rights?**

I became involved about 11 or 12 years ago when I was working for an electronics company next door to a slaughter house. I began to realize that the animals being taking in there were the same animals I was eating at home. One time I went for a walk on my lunch break. I saw some pigs being unloaded. In the afternoon I had heard them and smelt them. I went home and my partner Margaret had cooked pork for dinner that evening. I couldn't eat it. We almost immediately went vegetarian. And, as we knew a little bit about farming practices, within about two months we had become vegans.

**How has the movement effected society?**

I think society has become more aware of how we use and abuse our brothers and sisters of other species. The ALF's activities of going into research laboratories and factory farms has publicized it, also educational organizations have publicized it, people going into schools have done very good work amongst young people.

Ten years ago, for example, I used to have a dream that in a corner of a supermarket I would find soya milk. Now, not only do you find soya milk on a major display rack in supermarkets, but they have their own brand of soya milk, which indicates that we are making advances. People are aware, not just of the ways we treat laboratory animals, circus animals, and factory farmed animals, but also that things that have appeared to be innocent in the past, like the dairy industry, also contain a great deal of cruelty and exploitation.

**How have you stayed motivated?**

Since I saw the pigs being unloaded and went home to dinner that evening, I haven't had a moments peace of mind. I still wake up in the middle of the night with nightmares about what I've learned about animal cruelty over the years. I have never got used to it. I've never gotten hardened to it. If anything, it has gotten worse and worse. I couldn't live with my own conscience if I stopped trying to do something to change it.

**What is the role of the ALF Press Officer?**

The role of the ALF Press Officer is to explain to the media why activists have carried out unlawful activities, and it can happen in a number of ways. An activist can telephone me anonymously to tell me what they have done, I would then contact the media, tell the media what they've done, try to publicize it, and explain why the activists were driven to carry out the action. Or an action can be carried out, not claimed, in fact, for the activists' own security a lot

of them won't telephone me because it is reasonable to assume that my telephone is monitored by the police. So within those instances, the media would often contact me, explain the action to me, and I could then say whether or not it fell within ALF policy, whether or not the ALF would claim it as one of their actions, and also try to explain why it was carried out.

The other functions of the Press Office are to speak at public meetings, rallies, and demonstrations, to try to highlight animal abuse, to encourage lawful ways for people to campaign against it, and also to explain publicly why the activists break the law. I would not encourage anyone to go out and break the law because that would be incitement which is a criminal offence.

**What is the Press Officers' relationship to the law?**

Well, my two previous predecessors, Ronnie Lee and Robin Lane, have both served prison sentences for their role as ALF Press Officer. I've been arrested on a number of occasions since I took up the position. I find that the police really cannot understand the motivation of the Animal Liberation Movement. They cannot comprehend that so many people are willing to risk their freedom, their careers, their lives -- in effect -- in pursuit of something which they have no personal reward what-so-ever. They also cannot understand that it is not an organization. It is people who go out following what their hearts tell them. What they can't realize, but will need to realize eventually, is that you can imprison people, but you cannot imprison an ideal. The fight for animal liberation will continue no matter what they do.

When the police arrest me all I can ever tell them what the media tells me, and the history of the ALF which I am sure they know already. Anything else would be "no comment" to protect the activists.

Also, if there is a major action costing several thousands of pounds, which an activist informs me about anonymously, as well as informing the media, I would usually telephone the police and report the call, as the media would check with the police that the action has been carried out, would tell the police that I had telephoned them, and if I hadn't already contacted the police, within a couple of hours after the media contacted them, it's likely that my front door would be sledge hammered down and I would be arrested. So hopefully, me contacting the police first, would pre-empt that type of thing happening.

**How do you maintain security for the activists?**

Activists who write to me claiming any action would either communicate by writing on an unidentifiable typewriter, using

stencils, anything like that. They wouldn't use their own hand writing. They would be very careful not to leave fingerprints on the writing paper or the envelopes, (and would not use saliva to moisten the stamp or envelope.)

With telephone calls it can be more difficult. I am fortunate in my role as Press Officer in having a hearing defect which makes it very difficult for me to recognize peoples voices on the phones, and therefore it is quite impossible for me to give descriptions of caller's voices. Also, most activist who call me anonymously would disguise their voices, and hopefully that would prevent the police from identifying them. Certainly the police have claimed to identifying people in the past through voice tapes, but not since I've been Press Officer.

**How do the activists disguise their voices?**

Recently, 19 pheasant rearing pens were burnt down at the cost of £15,000. These are where pheasants are bread for shooting, for bloodsport, and the activist who phoned to claim that sounded like a dalec [A dalec is a robot from the British television show Doctor Who.]. That was one of the few times that I gave the police a description of the voice. I am not sure whether they appreciated it or not.

**How often do actions happen?**

A great many actions happen without the Press Office even being informed. ALF, as I said earlier, is not an organization. Anyone can go out and undertake an action which falls within ALF policy, and claim it as an ALF action. In brief, the policy is one; to rescue animals from suffering or potential suffering and place them in good permanent homes, or where appropriate release them into their natural environment. Two; to damage or destroy property or equipment used in animal abuse. The purpose of this is twofold; first, it would take that equipment out of the arena of animal abuse -- it can't be used to harm animals anymore. Secondly, it would also cause great financial loss to the companies through replacing the equipment, increased insurance premiums, and increased security costs, which would hopefully, eventually, price them out of business. The ALF's third and over-riding policy is life should not be threatened or endangered. Anyone can go out and undertake an action within those policies and claim it as the Animal Liberation Front.

On a nightly basis, up and down the country, windows are broken in butcher's shops, in retail outlets of pharmaceutical companies, and at betting shops because of their association with the cruelties of horse racing and bloodsports. Locks are glued up.

Slogans are painted across buildings. Animals are rescued from people's back yards. It's not only research laboratories and factory farms where animals are being abused, companion animals in people's houses can be dreadfully abused, and these would be just as legitimate targets as anything else.

At least 15 to 20 actions would happen every night up and down the country, quite often more. I had one anonymous claim recently where two people in a car had gone for a ride in the early hours of one morning and took the windows out of eighty shops. And that is just two people in one night in one area. Of course you then have larger activities like the pheasant pens I mentioned earlier. Indeed about two years ago there was a hoax against Lucozaide which is a product made by Smith-Kline-Beecham, a pharmaceutical company which uses many animals in research. The product which had to be poured away cost £6 million sterling and tens of millions of pounds were wiped off of their share prices. That was without doing anything at all. Nothing was contaminated. No one was endangered. Nothing was done, it was just a hoax.

**How often do you think the larger ALF actions happen?**

It goes in cycles. The whole animal liberation movement, as in other campaign movements, has its peaks and troughs. One example I can give, in the financial year 1991 - 92, some 100 refrigerated meat lorries were destroyed by fire at a capitol cost of about £5 million, plus the knock on effect of increased insurance premiums, increased security costs, etc. which would have tripled or even quadrupled the true cost. Although arson was used, no humans and no animals were endangered in any of those actions.

With liberations, one of the largest ones was at the London Hospital Medical School two years ago when 4 beagles and 1,400 mice were taken in one night. Recently 10 beagles were rescued from the Cheshire beagle hunt. Another 7 dogs were rescued from a farm in Lincolnshire. Animals are being rescued on a regular basis. Two pigs were rescued from a research unit, and 83 hens from a battery unit. All within the last few weeks.

Several thousand snails which were being bread for food, and activists entered the snail farm and rescued 30 to 40 thousand so-called "edible" snails and took them to freedom. It indicates that it really doesn't matter how cuddly a creature is. It's whether it can feel pain, whether it is an individual creature which is important. Not what they look like or how a human relates to them.

**Why does the ALF do what it does?**

Well, the first animal welfare law was past in 1822. One-hundred and seventy years of lawful campaigning has seen an

increase in animal abuse that the animal reformists couldn't have invisioned in their worst nightmares. Lawful campaigning, lawful lobbying, has failed our brothers and sisters.

Now with other liberation movements in the past, the abolition of slavery and emancipation of women -- neither of which have been completely achieved yet, but we are a long way along the road -- people worked both within and without the law. Yet no one with hindsight would condemn those who broke the law in pursuit of the abolition of slavery and votes for women. I believe that history will show that those who've gone outside unjust laws in pursuit of justice for those who cannot fight for themselves were equally justified in doing so.

Legislation isn't constant, laws are introduced, amended and withdrawn. What was legal years ago may be illegal now and vice versa. What is constant is what is morally right and morally wrong. And in a nutshell, to break unjust laws in pursuit of justice cannot be wrong.

**Has the ALF really produced any positive change for the animals?**

I think the ALF isn't the be-all and end-all. ALF is not the only way to achieve animal liberation, and it won't achieve it on its own. Education in schools is important. Putting pressure on those in government is important. Putting legal pressure on animal abuse establishments is important. What is important is that all areas are working toward the same ends. We're all walking down the same road in the same direction, and the only common enemy at the end of the road is the animal abuser. I wish that all strands of the animal protection movement would remember that as too much time and energy is lost arguing tactics and methods, and while that is being done, we're not fighting for those who need us.

**How should legal organizations deal with questions from the media on ALF incidents?**

Well, I've been in that position myself. I've actually worked for lawful campaigning organizations, and I've even been on the National Council of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. My response has always been on behalf of those organizations, "We cannot condone unlawful activities as we work within the law, but we can understand people whose minds are so troubled by the horrors of animal abuse, and are so angry at what they see as the ineffectiveness of legislation, that we can understand them being driven to work outside the law." I think that's a perfectly proper way of responding. It doesn't indicate that they are supporting law breaking. Equally they are not criticizing

those who are risking their freedom.

**How can the ALF be helping the movement when they generate so much bad publicity?**

The movement is not the be-all and end-all. The movement is there to help the non-human animals, not to protect its own image. I don't believe those who broke the law to help the slaves escape were thinking of the image of the political campaign. I think they just wanted to help oppressed human beings to freedom in the same way that those who are trying to free non-humans aren't too bothered about the media reaction.

However, it's interesting to note that originally the media portrayed the ALF activists as English eccentrics who had just gone a little bit too far, and gave them a Robin Hood type image, and almost a pat on the head, and a "isn't this a jolly game." However, when it became clear that the ALF were having a real effect on the pharmaceutical industry, on the factory farming industry, and on the fur trade, the media began to change its attitude and began to portray these same people as urban terrorists and enemies of the state, rather than the compassionate commandos which they really are.

What they are now trying to do with police inclusion, if not police instruction, is to censor ALF actions as they know that the more publicity ALF actions get, the more people are going to be encouraged to go out and fight in that matter for non-humans. In fact, I telephoned the police recently to report an action and the police officer I was speaking to asked me to hold as one of his senior officers would like to speak to me. The senior officer requested that I didn't tell the media what happened as it encourages other people to go out and do similar things. A number of times recently, I have reported ALF actions to the press which have been very newsworthy, and they have not been published.

**I understand when you say that individual animal lives are more important than bad publicity, but how can firebombings and other forms of economic sabotage be justified when weighed up against the bad publicity?**

Economic sabotage, or damage to property and equipment, has closed animal abuse establishments down. One example recently, a Hallal slaughterhouse. Hallal is a method of killing animals where, for religious reasons, they are not pre-stunned. Local residents and animal rights campaigners campaigned to close this slaughterhouse for three years. A couple of weeks ago the ALF went in, completely wrecked the offices of the slaughterhouse, and took a number of important files. The place is now closed down. Economic sabotage stopped animal cruelty from being carried out

on those premises.

It was also the ALF who decimated the fur trade in the United Kingdom. And that is not just a claim made by the ALF, it's a claim made by the British Fur Trade Association who said two or three years ago that if it had been the lawful educational campaigns, they would still have fur shops up and down the country. It was the ALF attacks on their premises which drove people out of business. Direct action does work.

What annoys me dreadfully is when people refer to damaged property as violence. I do not believe that one can be violent to property, unless it is gratuitous vandalism for kicks. One living creature cannot own another creature. We don't have the right to do that, it is slavery. So property would be a chair, a table, a door. Something that has no feelings, it can't react to painful stimuli, it has no social awareness. Surely if that type of property is being used to inflict pain and suffering on living, breathing creatures, surely taking that out of the arena of animal suffering is no different morally, to a demolition contractor going in and demolishing an unsafe house in case it harms life. Morally, I can see no difference. It is removing property used to inflict pain and suffering on innocent creatures. How can that be wrong?

**How does the ALF justify breaking the law?**

A lot of people say at the end of the day, "Yes, we understand to a certain extent why you damage property and rescue animals, but you really shouldn't break the law. It is anarchy."

Now the law, as I explained earlier, can change. The law is not constant. If I can give you an analogy. In two buildings you have a number of dogs, and these dogs are being cruelly treated by humans. Another team of humans sledge hammer the doors down, go in, rescue the dogs, and take them to safety. In the first instance it is an old house in the county and it's an illegal dogfight, and the team who sledge hammered the door down are members of the RSPCA special investigation department and the local police. The law says that they have done a good job. Quite right, they have done a good job. The law says that those abusing the animals are criminals. Again, quite right, they are criminals.

In the second scenario, it's a research laboratory and the dogs are beagles, and the humans who sledge hammered the door down are ALF activists. They are guilty of criminal damage and theft. We're also told that those who are abusing the dogs are doing so for great humanitarian purposes. Now I or someone else can argue until doomsday the rights and wrongs of legislation, but what it boils down to is until someone can explain the difference in the law to dogs themselves, either both actions are morally right or

both actions are morally wrong. You cannot have it both ways.

**Why do we need the ALF?**

To justify the ALF . . . . Many years ago, humans because of their race or color of skin or country of origin, were considered inferior. Now all right-thinking people realize that is absolute nonsense. The animal liberation movement is trying to extend the circle of compassion to all creatures.

We are told animals can't talk. That's nonsense. Of course they can talk to each other. They have communication skills the same way that humans speak to each other. Now I can't communicate, in language to a Mandarin Chinese person for example. It doesn't mean that that person can't feel, hasn't got emotions, hasn't got intelligence. In the same way that I can't communicate with a dog or a cat in their language, again, it is no reason to assume that they cannot feel, they cannot think, they cannot reason. Each individual has a life and that life is of intrinsic value to that individual, and should be respected. No individual should be used or a abused or exploited by another individual merely because they have the power to do so.

It was misuse of power that created the slave trade. It was misuse of power that kept women in bondage for many, many years. It's misuse of human power that is keeping our brothers and sisters of other species in bondage, and that bondage has to be swept away, and it is only humans who can do that on behalf of those whom are being oppressed.

**How do you justify the ALF's activities?**

I think the only justification for the ALF existing is that animal abuse exists. I hear the activists being termed "extremists" and "terrorists," surely it's extreme to stitch up the eyelids of a kitten in a research laboratory, it's extreme to transplant the head of one monkey onto another, it's extreme to tear a young calf from his mother's side to steal her milk and condemn him to a short life in a veal crate, it's extreme to castrate a young piglet without anesthetic merely to argue that the meat will taste better when he's murdered. Surely that is true extremism, real terrorism against the weak and innocent. I believe that those who seek to end atrocities of that nature are only guilty of one thing, and that's compassion.

**What is the RSPCA?**

The RSPCA is the oldest surviving animal welfare society in the world. It was formed in 1824 and had the prefix "royal" added to it in 1840. It began as a radical campaigning organization. In fact one of its earliest secretaries was thrown into prison for the socie-

ty's debts. Also the person who actually paid to get him out of prison was a vegan who didn't leave London for many, many years because he didn't believe in horses being exploited for human transport. He was eventually forced out of the society because his views were considered extreme.

Now the RSPCA has become part of the establishment, and, unfortunately, rather than improving the lot of animals, in many ways it is encouraging the continuance of the status quo. It argues that it is *not* a vegetarian society, it is *not* an anti-vivisection society, it's *not* this, it's *not* that. Surely anti-vivisection means an end to cruelty, which is what the RSPCA is about. Surely vegetarianism means an end to cruelty to farm animals, which is what the RSPCA is all about.

At one of the council meetings I was at, someone said that we would have to discuss this issue at more length, we would have to get up to date, we must remember that we are now in the twentieth century. Someone pointed out, "Hold on, we're nearly in the twenty-first century." I believe the RSPCA is unfortunately lagging behind. It has great promise. It has the ability to do a great deal for the animals. Unfortunately, at this time it is failing very badly.

**How were you involved with the RSPCA?**

I was elected to the council in 1989 and served on it for nearly three years, until I became ALF Press Officer, and those on the council who saw fit to eat the objects of their compassion decided that I could no longer stay amongst them. I was expelled from the society completely for "bringing it into disrepute." I don't see how I can bring an animal protection society into disrepute for speaking up on behalf of animals. It really seems a none-sense. At the time of my expulsion I received many messages of support from the grassroots members of the RSPCA.

**What did you do as a council member?**

A council member is an elected person who is a trustee of the society, which is a charity. The council was there to formulate policy and to direct the society in the way the majority thought it should go. The day to day running of the society is carried out by paid staff from the chief executive downwards, including the uniformed inspectorate.

But I found a number of council positions were ignored by the staff. One example was that I got a resolution through council to mount the strongest possible campaign against the export of live so-called "food animals" from the UK to Europe and other countries. It should be a carcass only trade to prevent the suffering of transport, although, of course, they shouldn't be killed under any

circumstances. That went through with a great majority in council. In fact, it had been RSPCA policy for many years to campaign for this. So it wasn't something new and radical. It was something that the RSPCA had been campaigning for on a low level for 30 years or so.

Yet when the campaign had been introduced, it had strangely been changed into a maximum journey time which would still allow live animals to go across to Europe after which time the UK had no control over their welfare. It just licensed drivers to drive the vehicles and a couple of other things which were of no consequence. I tried to put another resolution through council to tighten up the campaign to meet its original requirements. The vote ended up being split as certain members of staff, behind the scenes I found out later, had threatened to resign. The vote was split. The chairperson, who happened to be a member of the National Farmers Union and a former pig farmer, cast her deciding vote against my resolution and so it was lost.

Now if that kind of thing can happen within the RSPCA, it means that they are not wholeheartedly fighting for what their constitution asks them to fight for, and I look forward to a time when they return to their radical campaigning roots, and really try to do something for the animals who are being so dreadfully abused.

**What are the people in the RSPCA like in regards to their concern for animals?**

Most of the staff are flesh-eaters. On the council, when I served as a member, there were twenty-eight council members of whom three, including myself, were vegan, another three or four vegetarians to a greater or lesser extent, which means that a vast majority of the trustees of the society were eating the very creatures which they were supposed to be representing. I really can't comprehend anyone who does that.

I can remember an incident where the three major farm animal issues at that time were the veal crate, the battery cage system of egg production, and the close confinement of sows. In this lunch break, a council member sat down and ate ham, veal, and egg pie for lunch. All three RSPCA farm animal concerns on one plate in one go, and in the afternoon she was expressing her deep concern for farm animals. With tunnel vision like that, I found it very difficult to contain my anger and frustration within council meetings.

**You are also a Christian consultant, is that correct?**

I am a co-opted member of the Christian Consultative Council for the Welfare of Animals. It's an organization which draws re-

presentatives from Christian based animal welfare groups including the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals and the Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare. It also has representatives of various churches on there. I was co-opted as an individual member for what they termed "special expertise," though I've never found out what that special expertise was.

I agreed to join the council as I feel the church is a major part of the establishment, and it was an opportunity to open other doors to work in other ways for the non-human animals. I believe that no stone should be left unturned in trying to achieve animal liberation, whether it be lobbying Parliament -- or your Congress and Senate -- whether it be through the churches, whether it be through the trade unions, women's institutes, or any other bodies. If you have the ability to use your organization for the benefit of alleviating cruelty and abuse, then I believe that one should do all one can to achieve that.

**Have you been involved with any other organizations?**

I have been involved with a number of organizations. The very first organization that I went out on the streets for was the Vegan Society, and I am now honored to be the Vice President of the Vegan Society. I've been the Assistant Director of Animal Aid, my only paid position in the animal liberation movement. Ironically, Animal Aid is one of the greatest critics of the ALF, which is quite unfortunate. I have also represented the League Against Cruel Sports, Compassion in World Farming, the RSPCA national council, and a number of other organizations.

At the moment I am still the Vice President of the Vegan Society, a committee member of the National Anti-Hunt Petition, a co-opted member of the Christian Consultative Council for the Welfare of Animals, and the ALF Press Officer.

**If you are not in any paid positions currently, what is your source of income?**

All of the donations and subscriptions made to the ALF Press Office go for the running expenses of the Press Office. For my day to day living, I am a house-husband. My partner Margaret works full-time and she pays all the bills. I couldn't do what I do without her.

**What are your thoughts on activists who are paid to work for the animals?**

I think its understandable if one is giving all of one's time to the animal liberation movement to be paid a reasonable amount to live on. I do not believe that it is right for people to be paid market

rates for salaries. Animal liberation is not something to make a profit out of, not something to make a good living out of. The animals need help. Any spare pennies that are left over should be to finance the battle itself. The battle against exploitation, the battle against abuse, not to give someone an increased standard of living. That is not what animal liberation is about.

**What do you see as effective types of campaigning to really stop the abuse?**

To really stop the abuse -- apart from unlawful direct action which the Animal Liberation Front carry out -- find out who the animal abusers are, for example vivisectors, go and demonstrate outside of their houses, leaflet their neighbors, make it clear to their local community how they make their money, that their mortgage repayments are paid with blood-stained money. They will then become outcasts in their own community. It will encourage them to find another way of earning a living. If the animals can't get away from their exploitation. If the animals are imprisoned 24 hours a day. Why should the abusers go home, put their feet up, and watch television?

One argument against that is that you shouldn't make the partners and children of the family pay. It is not the responsibility of the campaigners, it's the responsibility of the animal abuser. All they have to do is stop what they are doing, and their family won't be involved in any unpleasantness anymore. It's all the responsibility of the animal abusers. If they stop what they're doing, then any demonstrations and picketing would stop.

Also, people should make more use of petitions. I don't believe national petitions are any use at all. In this country, for example, they are given to the Prime Minister, and are recycled in the furnace to heat #10 Downing Street, in America they would probably be recycled to heat 1400 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Where petitions are important is if it is in a local community, and it's signed by local people, and handed to a local representative, and that local representative knows that every person on that is one of the people who voted for him or her, and if they don't vote for him or her that they won't be in that position of power anymore. That makes them think.

Another important way, of course, is to take the message into the schools. Young people are the adults of tomorrow. I know that sounds a little cliché, but it's true. Young people are much more aware than I was when I was their age, and I do believe that with the increase of compassionate education, and the increase in awareness amongst young people, that we are on the threshold of real change at last.

**I find it ironic that you criticize national petitions when you are a committee member of the National Anti-Hunt Petition.**

Although I am on the committee of the National Anti-Hunt Petition, I don't have much involvement with them. But the National Anti-Hunt Petition actually helps to fund local Hunt Saboteur groups as well. The petition is a way of raising public awareness on bloodsports, also, to be absolutely cynical, a way of raising money from the general public. That money is being used to further raise public awareness and to help fund people who are prepared to go out on the hunting fields and stop these bloodthirsty individuals from murdering innocent creatures. At the end of the day, I don't believe the petition itself will do much good.

**What are other types of effective campaigning?**

I think I've covered the unlawful side, the educational side, the lobbying-the-politicians side, and the taking-it-to-the-front-doors-of-the-abusers-themselves side. Without wishing to get myself in trouble, all I would add is that people know in their hearts what is right and wrong. If their heart tells them to do something, then they shouldn't allow their head to try to rationalize them out of doing something that's right. Too many people have done that who are not fighting as strongly as they could.

**Any last words?**

The animal liberation movement is not just about freeing non-human animals from oppression. It is also about freeing humans from oppression, about a complete change in how we use and treat this whole planet. A lot of people who go out campaigning on the streets have members of the general public come up to them and say, "You only care about animals, you don't care about people." What they are trying to do is to really say that they don't do anything themselves for either people or animals, and they're trying to transfer the guilt onto the campaigner.

Human rights and animal rights have always been inextricably linked. Animal rights campaigners have always been in the forefront of human rights. At the inaugural meeting in 1824 of the RSPCA, two of the founding members, William Wilberforce and Fowell Buxton, were leaders of the fight to abolish slavery. Later in the 19th century it was RSPCA members and staff, using RSPCA premises who started the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. On demonstrations you will often hear the chant:

"Human freedom!
Animal Rights!

One Struggle-
One Fight!"

It's absolutely true, and animal rights people have often been in the forefront of human rights.

What we need is less dependence on environmentally damaging modern technology, we need to draw back the boundaries of human encroachment on the planet. Our species is the only species that really needs culling. We need to reduce our numbers. I am not promoting killing or culling humans. Certainly birth control needs to be introduced on a far more widespread basis than it is. It's our species which is over-populating and destroying the environment. By drawing back the boundaries we could then allow those of other species to gradually retake their own territories again to carry on as the other nations which they have always been.

We must remember that these were nations which were on this earth millions of years before humans ever trod it. What right have we as babies of the plant to spoil it? It is always the young, it is always the immature who break things and damage things -- who throw a rattle across the room and tread on it. We're the babies on this planet. We haven't got the maturity to treat it as it should be treated. The sooner we draw back our boundaries and try to recognize our limitations, I think the better it will be for our species, the other species, and the planet as a whole.

Abuse, of any nature, is wrong. In the same way that whilst there is one slave on this earth, we won't be completely rid of slavery, I don't believe that I have any authority to compromise on behalf of non-humans. I have no authority to agree to larger cages in research laboratories or anything like that. It is a war. It's not a campaign, it's not a battle, it's a war. And it's a war in which all of the casualties have been on one side. And to me, while there is one non-human suffering at our hands, that war will still need to be fought.

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# This April 2nd, Celebrate ALF Appreciation Day!



"Santa Clause" gave these turkeys a new life for Chirstmas -- a life where they won't become someone's dinner! Help support the ALF for their courageous efforts, organize an ALF Appreciation Day event in your local area!

Every April 2nd, activists and groups across the nation take the day to thank the anonymous Animal Liberation Front activists who rescue thousands of animals from tortuous conditions, expose animal abusers with video and photographic evidence, and economically sabotage the industries of exploitation. ALF Appreciation Day is April 2nd in honor of the ALF's 1989 raid on the University of Arizona, Tucson where they emptyed vivisection labs and gutted them with fire. They saved over 1,000 animals and caused over $200,000 damage. Interested in coordinating ALF Appreciation Day in your area? Contact:


## Student Organization for Animal Rights

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In March, 1994 three sheep were rescued from the Leeds University Agricultural Farm by the ALF. *ALF SG*