

## AN EXCHANGE

The first of the two pieces printed below, "The Exploiters Among the Defenders," has previously appeared in Animal Rights Law Reporter and in Agenda. It is reprinted here by permission of its author, who holds copyright. The second piece has not previously appeared.

### The Exploiters Among the Defenders

Animal exploitation is alive and well within the animal rights movement. Many animal liberationists who are vegan, denounce vivisection, hunting, zoos, etc. and otherwise try to avoid being accomplices in animal suffering engage in a more subtle form of animal exploitation: using the fight for animal rights to promote political aims which have nothing to do with animal liberation. This hurts the animals in that it weakens and discredits the animal rights movement.

Animal experiments performed by the armed services are neither more nor less objectionable than those performed by anybody else. Some animal rights leaders, however, are trying to single out those experiments in an effort to attack the military at the same time that they attack vivisection. This is a fallacy: the fact that many doctors are vivisectionists does not discredit the whole of medicine.

In a free country - its free institutions being preserved by the very armed services they deprecate - their right to advocate any views they see fit is not in question. What is objectionable is using animal rights contexts to advocate other philosophies which have nothing to do with animal rights.

Some animal rights leaders try to depict animal exploitation as the result of one particular economic system: capitalism. Do people in socialist countries not consume flesh and eggs? Do socialist countries not send animals in rockets into space? Are there reports, of which I am unaware, of much animal rights activity in socialist countries?

Some animal rights leaders recommend coordination or liaison with "other progressive movement". Not only are "other progressive movements" embarrassed by any association with animal rights: some of them contain elements which are in contradiction with the animal rights philosophy: the feminist movement advocates legalizing abortion, which is a form of animal killing; the movement for the economic development of Third World countries advocates an increase in the standard of living which, in most eyes, entails an increase in the consumption of flesh; the anti-nuclear

movement advocates a return to coal, which has a more serious and widespread impact on the environment, and therefore on animals, human and non-human, than nuclear energy; the movement for the rights of native Americans advocates, among other things, the preservation or restitution of fishing and hunting "rights"; the so-called "peace" movement advocates a reduction of the defense capabilities of Western democracies, which would open the way to world domination by communism, a system under which there are no human rights, let alone animal rights.

Do animal liberationists want to promote killing, fishing, hunting and flesh-eating? If not, let the animal rights movement concentrate on animal liberation, and leave other issues to be aired in other fora.

To the extent that they are able to "muddle through" - to use Professor Magel's expression - these contradictions, individual animal liberationists might wish to join any of these other movements (or their counterparts advocating opposite views), but the animal rights movement itself should not be identified with any position except those relating to the rights of animals.

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#### Response to Lipitsky

In a statement entitled "The Exploiters Among the Defenders," reprinted above, Mr. Jacob Lipitsky denounces as subtle exploiters those animal rights activists who, in his view, use "the fight for animal rights to promote political aims which have nothing to do with animal liberation" or which actually contradict its principles. He pro-

ceeds to cite several examples of these allegedly irrelevant and contradictory endorsements.

It is always depressing and discouraging to see self-avowed animal rights activists engaging in in-fighting and unfounded rhetorical insult of other activists to the detriment of unity, cooperation, and communication within the movement, especially when it is based upon an analysis of the issue in question which is as superficial and distorted as Mr. Lipitsky's. There can be little doubt that the principal object of Mr. Lipitsky's attack is the Animal Rights Network -- an ironic target since ARN has made a concerted effort to promote unity not only between progressive movements, but also within the animal rights movement.

It is not my intention here, however, to take sides, and to hurl insults at Mr. Lipitsky in turn, a response which would only contribute to the very disunity which ARN rightly deplores, but to explore the issue which Mr. Lipitsky brings up in as unbiased and objective a manner as possible. Mr. Lipitsky first cites two examples of political criticism which he believes are not justified by the principles of animal rights: attacks upon the military and upon capitalism. "Animal experiments performed by the armed services," he says, "are neither more nor less objectionable than those performed by anybody else." What he presumably means by this statement is that experiments should not be objected to simply because of who performs them. This is quite true. But this is not why military experiments have been "singled out" by ARN and other groups for attack. It is rather because of the fact that the widely-held myth that animal experimentation contributes to human welfare is most obviously false in the case of such experiments, which are designed with

no other purpose in mind than to enable the military to learn how to maim and kill human beings. Particularly severe condemnation of the infliction of suffering on non-human animals for the sake of learning how to inflict suffering on human animals is quite in keeping with animal rights principles. That it is the military which is performing the experiments is not the point, the point is the purpose of the experiments.

Similarly with the attack upon capitalism. No animal rights activists with whom I am acquainted are so naive or ignorant as to believe that animal abuse is confined to capitalistic countries. To characterize their position in this way is simply a caricature. The fact that capitalism is not the only economic system under which animals suffer does not mean, however, that capitalism should be exempt from criticism or that such criticism is irrelevant to animal rights. On the deepest level it is two thousand years of ingrained homocentric prejudice which accounts for the abuse of animals. This is why it exists all over the world, not simply in capitalistic countries. But in America, which is unquestionably the biggest exploiter of animals in the world today, homocentric prejudice functions through capitalistic structures which directly contribute to and reinforce the exploitation, not only of animals, but of human beings as well. Except for isolated, sadistic abuses, the vast majority of both human and non-human animal suffering in the United States is linked, directly or indirectly, to the profit motive and vested economic interests (usually corporate interests). To work for the liberation of animals here (human and non-human alike) is thus to work for the overthrow of capitalism.

Mr. Lipitsky next criticizes the proposal to ally the animal rights movement with other progressive

movements. He claims that certain "elements" within these movements contradict animal rights principles. In some cases this is true, but groups like ARN, which recommend such an alliance, are not unaware of these contradictions. Nor do they advocate an unthinking, wholesale endorsement of every aspect of these movements. The question is whether the presence of certain contradictory "elements" within a movement is sufficient reason for animal rights activists to totally dissociate themselves from it, as Mr. Lipitsky would have them do. In point of fact, the examples which Mr. Lipitsky cites of "elements" which do contradict animals rights principles are by no means universal or fundamental to the movements in question. Mr. Lipitsky's tactic here is to take one strand of the movement and to equate it with the movement as a whole. Thus not all feminists advocate legalized abortion. Many, on the contrary, are beginning to recognize that a pro-choice stance is inconsistent with the fundamental ideological principles of feminism: freedom from violence, oppression, and exploitation. Not all advocates of economic development of the Third World are promoting increased consumption of flesh in those countries. What many of them are saying, in contrast, is that the American meat fetish is largely responsible for hunger in the Third World. "Economic development" means to them not increased meat consumption but the proper use of land and grain to feed people rather than to fatten animals for slaughter. Nor, finally, is the preservation or restoration of fishing and hunting rights, by any reasonable estimate, the central issue in the native American liberation movement.

In the case of the anti-nuclear and peace movements, on the other hand, it is highly questionable whether there is any contradiction of animal rights principles at all. Quite apart from

the fact that anti-nuclear activists typically advocate as much reliance on and development of solar and wind power as possible, it is far from clear that the use of coal presents a greater threat to animals than nuclear power, especially when one takes into account the staggering problem of the disposal of nuclear wastes.

Nor is Mr. Lipitsky's pro-militarist assessment of the peace movement accurate or fair: the movement does not advocate "the reduction of the defense capabilities of Western democracies." What it advocates is a halt to the madness of unrestrained nuclear arms proliferation by both Russia and America, a build-up which is due primarily to the macho rhetoric of the Reagan administration.

Perhaps because Mr. Lipitsky is so concerned to avoid collusion with any movement which he regards as tainted in any way by animal abuse, he altogether fails to recognize the profound ideological connections between animal rights and these progressive movements, a rapport which is far more fundamental than the contradictions and purported contradictions which he cites. The principle which all these movements share at their roots is an ethic of reverence and respect for life as an organic, interconnected whole, all the members of which are entitled to equal consideration and freedom from violence, exploitation, and abuse. The principles of animal rights derive from this foundation, just as do human rights and "earth rights," and it is the sheerest folly to try to isolate the animal rights movement from kindred liberation movements. As Peter Singer has convincingly shown, the concept of animal rights represents a natural and logical extension of the reasoning which demands equal rights for human minorities. Since animal and human rights derive from the same source, if we

animal rights activists disavow all connection with human rights movements, what can the foundation of our movement possibly be? The true animal exploiters will welcome Mr. Lipitsky's advocacy of a total dissociation of animal rights from all other progressive and liberation movements, for such a dissociation can only serve, in his words, "to weaken and discredit the animal rights movement."

This is not in any way to excuse or condone the continued abuse of non-human animals which takes place within human liberation movements. On the contrary, it is surely the appropriate task of the animal rights activist to counteract such abuse, not be withdrawing from the human rights arena, but by revealing to allied liberation movements that such abuse in fact contradicts the basic principles of justice and reverence for life which they espouse and which the animal and human liberation movements share. To advocate alliance with other progressive movements is thus not, in Mr. Lipitsky's words, "to promote killing, fishing, hunting, and flesh-eating." It is, rather, to reaffirm the shared principles of justice and morality which must inevitably lead human liberationist to expand their moral horizons, join forces with us, and work for the liberation of all animals--human and non-human alike.

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