

5. The Animal Protection Movement and its Progress

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Introduction

There is a separate module about the history of the animal protection movement, so it is not proposed to repeat this here. However, suffice it to say that after studying animal protection history, we can learn that - in common with the environmental movement - this movement cannot be isolated from social change, politics, culture and economics. In fact, the development of the animal protection movement is strongly connected to these areas. Also, as this is an even more altruistic concern, it is even more necessary to tap this into other social causes that involve human needs of higher ranking/urgency.

There is a vast difference in the way the animal movement is perceived by different organisations and individuals. Some view it as simply a compassionate welfare activity, whereas others view it as a real movement for social change: they see the underlying injustice in the way that current systems treat our fellow animals and burn with the desire to see the situation righted, not just 'sticking plaster' solutions applied to the existing flawed, unjust and cruel system.

In reality, the animal movement is quite clearly one of the great movements for social change, although it is taking a relatively long time to 'come of age', and is in different stages of development in different countries. It is interesting to note that many individuals who championed causes of human welfare also campaigned against cruelty to animals (for example, William Wilberforce and others who campaigned to abolish slavery; great Victorian reformers such as Lord Shaftesbury, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill; black spokesmen such as Toussaint L'Overture of Haiti; and even Abraham Lincoln). The principle of justice and compassion are indivisible.

Our moral foundations (especially in the West) have evolved as a human-biased morality, but the past 30+ years have brought a significant change. Both the animal rights and the Green movements have shifted the focus of attention to include the non-human world.

This perspective is, in fact, not at all new. The ancient, yet living traditions of Native Indians and Aborigines show a reverence and understanding for the natural world, which combines a respect for the sustainability of the environment with a care for the individual animal.

Thankfully, as with many fields of moral concern, the morals of animal protection are following an evolutionary trend, and the current climate is one in which the status and well being of animals is attracting well-deserved attention even though "exploitation of them has become ingrained into our institutions"(Midgely). The current climate, though, is one in which leading philosophers and religious figures actively debate and write about various viewpoints on animal welfare; the media frequently highlights welfare issues; governments throughout Europe and beyond feel growing pressure from their concerned electorates in respect of animal welfare issues; consequently, parliaments

(including the European Parliament) debate and legislate on animal welfare and respected fora such as the International Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Council of Europe (the bastion of human rights in Europe) prepare standards, conventions and recommendations covering the protection of animals in different situations. Even organisations such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations and the World Bank, with vastly different priorities are considering their policies on animal protection matters, and how to integrate these concerns into their work.

Animal protection has become an international issue. Over the last 30 + years it has evolved from a marginal local or, at best, national issue into one that is on the international political agenda. At the same time, the industry has become international – both in terms of its business activities and its political pressure. There is also increasing ‘internationalisation’ of culture, which presents the movement with both an opportunity and a threat. The world is facing a relentless increase in consumerism and ‘Americanisation’, and with this the massive expansion of animal use industries (including producers, fast food giants and supermarkets). The onus is now on the movement to ensure that the animal protection culture is spread internationally to counter these threats.

Barriers to Success

Despite being established for over 30 years and having many well resourced and influential organisations, many still feel that the international animal protection movement has not reached its full strength and potential. This could be attributed to many reasons, including the following: -

- Until recently, there have been no international legislation or policy initiatives around which the movement could unite.
- Lack of urgency about the mission
- Lack of ‘fire in the belly’ from many of the movement’s leaders.
- Lack of ‘common sense of mission and purpose’ (an apt phrase coined by John Hoyt when he was President of WSPA).
- Lack of professionalism and efficiency in many organisations.
- Lack of strategic and operational impact.
- Lack of long-term, sustained campaigns.
- The detrimental effect of divisive attitudes in the movement – particularly as regards the welfare v rights debate (instead of accepting that all are working on same path – just on different steps along the way – and focussing attacks on the common ‘enemy’).
- Failure to develop feasible alternatives to current paradigms and orthodoxies.
- The breadth and range of issues covered by the movement and the lack of (agreed) focus and prioritisation.
- Lack of resources or skills necessary for successful alliance building.
- The tendency towards competition, rather than genuine collaboration.
- Lack of collaboration and support from other social justice movements.
- Allocating the ‘lion’s share’ of resources to ‘service delivery’ work, as opposed to social change (see below).
- Lack of funding (especially Trusts and Grants, favouring service delivery work).

The animal protection movement is in dire need of a strong and forceful movement for social change. Advocacy is the engine for social change. Education is vital but longer-term, and service provision is not tackling problems at their root cause, but akin to applying ‘sticking plaster’ to a wound. The animal protection policy environment is

becoming increasingly ready for fundamental change, but this will not be achieved or sustained without a groundswell of pressure and support for reform. International organisations, governments and civil service departments are, by their very nature, cautious and favour maintenance of the status quo. The same could be said of consumers! All need strong reasons to act, which the movement has to provide – loud and strong!

‘Service Delivery’

Service delivery work (working within the existing system - often known as ‘practical project work’) detracts from the movement’s time, capacity and political will to campaign forcefully for social change. Examples include NGOs taking on responsibility for legislative enforcement and stray control work. Because many in the movement are very empathetic, they cannot overlook immediate suffering and so get drawn into service delivery/practical work, rather than seeking lasting social change.

If the world’s animal shelters had spent as much time and effort campaigning to change the plight of animals as they do picking up the sad end results that demonstrate so painfully the need for change, we would have seen a powerful (and probably successful) revolution! Of course, this is simplistic, as many animal shelters are better suited to service provision work, but the need for urgency and power is still relevant. Certainly every service provision animal protection society should also campaign to change the horrendous situation for animals they face daily. If they do not do so, they are simply supporting an unjust system – taking responsibility and thus perpetuating the situation.

Also, major funders of animal protection work, such as Trusts and Grants, have traditionally favoured service provision activities. This is probably partly due to the more tangible, measurable and emotionally pleasing results gained from this type of work in the short-term. However, as these bodies – and individuals - become more familiar with the complex animal protection environment, this perception is changing. More Trusts and Grants are beginning to realise that the service provision work they are funding, day-after-day, year-after-year, is failing to change the situation for animals in a real and lasting way. The only way to do this is through tackling the ‘root causes’ of these enduring problems. This may be longer-term, but it is sustainable.

Threats

Globalisation Affecting the Movement

The main factors arising from globalisation that impact upon the animal protection movement are: -

- The rise of powerful transnational corporations (TNCs) in animal-use industries.
- The emergence of powerful trading blocs, regional legislation/standards and International legislation/standards (either promoting or restraining/hampering action on animal protection issues).
- The rapid spread of information and communication technologies.
- Increased travel opportunities and personal contacts amongst animal protection groups internationally.
- The trend towards deregulation and ‘consumer choice’.

As markets globalise, the power of those who market (e.g. producers, supermarkets and – especially - fast-food outlets) increases in both strength and outreach. The animal use (and abuse) industries that are the opponents of the movement are becoming increasingly

wealthy and political powerful. As leading Japanese management guru Kenichi Ohmae argues, capital, corporations, customers, communications, and currencies have replaced nation states as determinants in the global economy and have created regional economic zones that constitute growing markets for global corporations.

The movement has to harness all its resources to counter this growing threat and to meet the challenges that the new international political scene is throwing forward. It needs to become a powerful international movement for social change: strategic, focussed and professional – adept at leveraging its skills and capabilities internationally and supporting and assisting nascent and developing organisations across the world.

Science

The way in which the authorities have come to rely on science alone is a real threat to the movement. This emphasis on ‘rationality’ is a result of a schizophrenic dualism, brought about by Greek philosophy and reinforced by the Enlightenment. However, it fails to recognise that facts are always interpreted through cultural screens (of which rationality is one). Intrinsic knowledge and wisdom is ignored until science ‘catches up’ with common knowledge. Unless the ‘precautionary principle’ is applied (to always give the animals the benefit of the doubt where science cannot provide the answers), then this leads to society consistently compromising the welfare of animals. It also leads to increased official support for biotechnological solutions, rather than natural methods and necessary protection.

Co-option

The danger of co-option is another present threat to the movement. This occurs not only with groups that are taken into the system through service delivery activities. It also occurs in other areas. In lobbying, for example, we increasingly see tokenism, instead of real engagement of a broad range of animal protection interests. Consultation is simulated, but in reality input is discounted or ignored, particularly when weighed against commercial interests.

There are also examples of where animal protection organisations are brought into compromise situations as regards the introduction of new legislation, enforcement or structural ‘advances’. The animal movement appears even more willing than other movements to grasp at straws and settle for less than the optimum – possibly because after years in the ‘wilderness’ as a marginal interest it is simply too willing to be taken seriously at any level.

Previous Successes

There have been some excellent successes at European Union (EU) level, where there is now a body of animal welfare legislation that is in most cases stronger than national law. The use of networks and coalitions has doubtless played a fundamental role in these. These include: -

- The Eurogroup for Animals, which has member organisations across the EU and lobbies at EU-level on the whole range of animal welfare issues.
- The European Coalition to End Animal Experiments (ECEAE), which is a pan-European coalition campaigning and lobbying to end animal experiments in Europe.
- The European Coalition for Farm Animals (ECFA), which is an alliance of animal

advocacy groups campaigning and lobbying together throughout Europe.

There have also been significant successes in some countries nationally – particularly within Europe. Far-reaching legislation is passed, and animal protection activity is beginning to be accepted as a legitimate national interest (even being included in some constitutions).

Despite this, in some countries, such as India, the movement appears to be losing ground as other materialistic concerns take precedence amongst the youth (despite an ingrained culture in favour of animal concerns).

What is Needed for Success?

Firstly, the movement needs to understand its role as a social change agent. It needs to make its animal justice mission a real ‘raison d’être’, instead of just paying lip service to this. This should provide the real ‘fire in the belly’ that is needed to change the movement into a strong force for social change.

The rapidly changing commercial and political environment with which the animal protection movement is faced, calls for some fundamental changes. It needs to become increasingly professional and strategic, using modern management methods appropriate to its complex environment.

To succeed in its mission, the movement needs to change its focus to tackling problems at source, rather than endlessly sweeping up the tragic end results. We need to put a stop to being taken advantage of in service delivery activities. If an organisation wants, and needs, to do service delivery work, it should make absolutely sure that it is paid at the going economic rate for this. It should also ensure that this work does not lead to its ‘cooption’ into the existing flawed system, and that it always works for social change for animals.

The movement needs to draw a halt to being co-opted and neutralised. Every serious organisation, of whatever ethical persuasion, should demand full and inclusive representation, not tokenism.

Competition is divisive and tears the movement to shreds. The industry is far stronger in terms of people and resources. Their political clout can be measured in economic building blocks, whereas the movement’s building blocks are far more ethereal and fragile – ethics, morality and the power of good. They can only counter the economic threat if they are placed in a coherent stack, rather than small individual piles, that others are constantly trying to kick into the dust. We need the glue of coherence and unity. We need effective collaboration and alliances across the movement. Only then will consumers and voters begin to adopt the coherent message, instead of giving up in the face of all the noise and confusion.

Advocacy is the engine of the movement for social change. The movement’s campaigning methods need to be updated and dynamic if we are to succeed. In most countries across the world, the days are gone when a small demonstration with placards and a campaign mascot could sway governments. The forces pitted against us are too strong and powerful to be combated with such simplicity. We need to generate a groundswell of pressure and support for reform. This will take new ammunition and new targets. Advocacy targets are changing with the move from regulatory to market-

orientated environments – from government and voters, towards business targets and consumers. An in depth understanding of the political and external environment is vital. Campaigns need to be hard-hitting, with focus and impact, but also well researched. They must be combined with a strong, professional lobby, avoiding the usual NGO pitfalls. Every country should be pressed to recognise animals as sentient beings, not just property, and have fully enforced animal protection laws.

Humane education is vital to the development of a humane ethic in future generations, and the movement

The animal protection movement is quite clearly one of the great movements for social change, but it has yet to reach its real potential and impact. We need to root out exploitation of animals wherever it has become ingrained into our society and institutions (Midgely), and to expose and shame. We must never let the unacceptable become the status quo. We must change hearts and minds before it is too late.