

RSPCA MEMBERS'



# WATCHDOG

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## A BIG STEP FORWARD

**AT LAST** we have a Chairman of Council who is both nationally and internationally known for his long record of work for animals - it is Dr Richard Ryder. He will be supported by Vice Chairman David Thomas, Treasurer Mr Ian McIlveen and Vice Treasurer Ms Linda Rimington.

**\*RICHARD RYDER and his fellow officers have inherited a very difficult and serious situation. The Society has a deficit of between £10 and £20 million incurred over the last 15 months.\***

Members attending the AGM were made aware of the deficit by the former Vice Chairman Lewis Page.

Many members may not know about the huge contribution Richard Ryder has made to the work of the RSPCA. Richard helped to write the Society's current policies, he set up the scientific departments to deal with cruelty to laboratory animals, wildlife and farm animals, he initiated the Inspectorate undercover operations and many other excellent 'modernisations.'

**\*HE IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING THE BRANCHES.** He has been a branch member for over 27 years. He is determined to see that hard working branch members receive the respect they deserve.\*

Richard was Chairman of Council from 1977-1979 and Vice Chairman in 1976 and 1990-91. **IT IS A TRAGEDY** for the Society that we have had to wait so long for a repeat of his inspiring leadership.

Richard has written many books. Perhaps his best known ones are 'Victims of Science', 'The Conquest of Speciesism' (a word now in the Oxford Dictionary) and the 1990 RSPCA book of the year 'Animal Revolution.' He was also co editor of 'Animal Rights - a Symposium' which is a record of the 1977 meeting hosted by the RSPCA at Trinity College Cambridge on the ethical aspects of man's relationship with animals. Scientists, theologians, writers and academics took part. Among these were Rev. Andrew Linzey, Brigid Brophy, Ruth Harrison, WJ Jordan and the late Lord Houghton.

cont

Those members and staff who scornfully dismiss past events like the 1977 meeting as "it is a long time ago" might like to reflect on the suggestions of Richard Ryder in the Foreword to Animal Rights - a Symposium. He wrote that animals' rights should include consideration of their 1)right to life 2)right to be protected from suffering 3)right to live free from interference and 4)right to live in accordance with their 'natural requirements.'

On June 21st 2002, rights were given to animals in German law. Paragraph 20a of the German basic law now says that animals, like humans, have the right to be respected by the state and to have their dignity protected. This makes Germany the first European Union country to pass such legislation. I BELIEVE that if Richard Ryder had continued to lead the RSPCA Council we would now be celebrating the same enlightened legislation in this country instead of removing the Declaration Against Speciesism from the Policy book.

Finally, I would like to plead with the new officers to make the following reforms:-

1. Make the RSPCA an open democratic Society with far less unnecessary secrecy about the work of the Council. In spite of what the staff say, the Agenda CAN be changed to separate non confidential and confidential matters.

2 PLEASE put right the injustices inflicted on so many members. Stop the lies that are spread around. Let us be nice to one another!

Margaret House

# German animals given legal rights

**Kate Connolly in Berlin**

Life may be about to change for the average German farm-yard creature, zoo animal and household pet after the go-ahead was given yesterday to award animals rights in the constitution alongside those given to human beings.

Paragraph 20a of the German basic law now says that animals, like humans, have the right to be respected by the state and to have their dignity protected.

Their entry into the constitution ends a decade-long battle between politicians and campaigners.

It means that the rights of animals will in theory be viewed more stringently in every area of life.

"We hope this will bring a whole range of changes," said the president of the German Animal Protection League, Wolfgang Apel, adding that he expected it to lead to a tightening in rules for drugs and cosmetics testing.

Previous laws — recognised in 11 of the 16 German states — governed only the conditions in which animals were held. The new legislation covers every type of animal from household pets to those held in zoos and parks.

However, the agricultural ministry has admitted the law is unlikely to bring radical changes overnight. Opponents of the amendment, particularly many conservatives who declined for years to support

it, say it risks putting animals on a higher level than humans and undermines the concept of human spirituality.

However, many on the right were won round to supporting the law, seeing it as the lesser of two evils after the constitutional court last year ruled in favour of allowing Muslim butchers to slaughter animals in the traditional way without them first being stunned.

The change follows a final vote yesterday in the Bundestag, the upper house of parliament, where it won support from two-thirds of members.

It makes Germany the first European Union country to pass such legislation and will encourage animal rights campaigners to fight for similar law changes elsewhere. Switzerland, a non-EU member, amended its constitution in 1992 so that animals were acknowledged as "beings" rather than things.

Germany's Green environment minister Renate Künast has insisted that the ruling has to be widened to limit the duration of animal transports, and to limit vivisection.

The amendment came into force on the same day that the German Animal Protection League began legal action against the state broadcaster ZDF, accusing it of abusing a monkey in one of its programmes. The animal, one of the stars of a vet drama programme, is alleged to have been beaten by his trainer. ZDF denies the charge.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

According to those present at the AGM, the attendance was very poor with seemingly, more voting staff than ordinary members.

**THIRTEEN** motions were submitted to Council for debate at the AGM, **ONLY 6 were accepted** and 5 of those were from Council members! Michael Sutcliffe and Dave Wetton complained about the rejection of their motions and you can read their letters. Why are members views suppressed - what is there to hide? Make the SOCIETY MORE OPEN.

Proposed by Mr M S Sutcliffe, seconded by Mr D Wetton:

"That Freedom Foods be wound up as an RSPCA Company and, in its place, a new, honest and comprehensive campaign be waged against the multiple and systematic cruelties of industrial livestock rearing and slaughter."

15th June, 2002.

R.S.P.C.A.

Dear Tony Suckling,

Thank you for your letter, of 13th June, Ref: AJS/ba.

I appreciate the restraints, and intricacies, of Rule XVII, of the Society's Rules, the purpose, no doubt, to stifle any criticism, however mild, whether by "proposal" or "discussion", considered "detrimental to the interests of the Society". A very wide "sweep" indeed, aimed to prevent any criticism, even discussion and debate.

I think you'll agree that my Resolution and supporting speech, enclosed, is a very mild rebuke (if that), with constructive suggestions for valid future campaigning, and, surely, in line with the true, historic, RSPCA aims and ideals. You may continue Freedom Foods (although widely held with huge suspicion, even condemnation, throughout the country), but I do appeal to the Society to boost its campaigning against the real cruelties of the meat industry, as in the excellent booklet, "Behind Closed Doors", which I was going to hold up to the AGM as an excellent example of what the RSPCA can do, at that appropriate moment. Such a campaign, however, will seem a very strange "bedfellow" of Freedom Foods, condoning the same meat industry by its alliance with the meat industry, destroying any confidence in RSPCA "ideals" and honesty - especially when widely known that Society staff, Trustees and members continue to eat the very products of this same meat industry. Thus, the RSPCA can only be hampered by any such campaigning, and, contradictory, that the Society continue to promote Freedom Foods alongside such a campaign. A bit awkward, you'll agree!

So real problems ahead, as the whole subject should be on the Agenda for future Trustee and staff debate, and consideration.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

MICHAEL SUTCLIFFE

Dear Dr Suckling

RSPCA AGM – 29 June 2002: Rejected motions

Thank you for informing me of the Council's decisions to reject both of my submitted proposed motions.

I have re-read my copy of Rule XVII and agree with your statement that the reason given for acceptance of a correctly submitted proposed motion is "that in the opinion of the Council the proposal or discussion of the motion will not be detrimental to the interests of the Society". The decision therefore surely boils down to one of personal prejudice, presumably backed by suggested considerations fed in by Head Office staff.

As a result of the rejections I have a number of comments and questions to make:-

*Motion 1 – "That this meeting requests that the AGM shall in future be a full day meeting to enable members to present more motions for discussion which will encourage members to remain in the Society"*

1. The two back-up explanations for the rejection given in your letter both revolve around the amount of time available for the discussion of motions at this year's AGM. There is no suggestion in anything you say in those two paragraphs that the motion is "detrimental to the interests of the Society" is there? If unavailability of adequate discussion time is, in itself, to be a legitimate reason for rejection of a motion the Rules should be amended accordingly. Until then I would respectfully suggest that any motion which does not fall foul of the "detrimental to the interests" rule should be included.
2. AGM's are the means by which members can make their views known to a wider range of generally like minded people and, if successful, influence the future direction of the Society by way of proposing popular motions. Even if a motion is unsuccessful at least the subject will have been aired – surely a reasonable expectation in a democratic society?
3. May I please have a copy of the relevant section of the minutes of the council meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> June relating to the rejection of this motion?
4. Was the rejection initially put to the Council by a member of staff?
5. If adequate time is ever to be found for the discussion of all submitted motions which do not truly fall foul of the "detrimental to the interests of the Society" rule just how does the current Council (and staff) visualize this being achieved?

Under the recent ruling relating to the rejection of my motion there's clearly a good chance that this will never be achieved if the Agenda continues to be dominated by primarily Council sponsored motions.

The current situation is a clear case of "Catch 22". If you've ever seen the film or read the book you'll understand what I mean.

There is, of course, an easy solution. The AGM could be extended into the afternoon session which, in comparison, is the least important of the two. Even if it bit two hours into that session, leaving just one for the Animal Welfare Conference, surely only a minority would mind. The hall is always already booked and most members would still have adequate time to get home.

**DAVE WETTON**



# RSPCA <sup>5</sup> millions go on politics and HQ

**T**HE RSPCA is one of Britain's richest charities. High profile animal welfare work by its uniformed inspectors ensures that it has a steady stream of income from donations and legacies.

Half of the £70 million it spent last year was on the 328-strong inspectorate and on prosecutions. But it is the way that money is spent elsewhere that has raised concerns.

The society has new headquarters near Horsham, West Sussex, and trustees complain of the mountains of paperwork produced by their bureaucracy.

Campaigns, including the drive against hunting, cost the charity £4,415,000 last year. Freedom Food cost £1,632,000 in direct grant aid, even though trustees have been repeatedly assured that it would be self-funding.

The fact that the society's directorate believes that more than £2 million can be saved from "efficiencies" suggests that those who work there are aware of slack that can be cut out of the system.

A council member said: "The problem is that the society has never had to worry about making money so hasn't had to worry about economising."

"Last year the AGM was in Newport and all the staff and council members stayed in the Hilton Hotel. At the end of the day it's a bed for the night and it's an animal charity. We could have got beds cheaper at the Travelodge across the road."

However, an RSPCA spokesman said people could not be put in low-quality hotels and expected to do a good job. "There's a balance to be struck between looking after yourself and extravagance and I think we strike that well," she said.

"I can only imagine that we stayed there because we got a good block booking rate."

There has been criticism of the society's new £16 million headquarters, built to replace its old HQ in central Horsham.

The society says it was needed for the extra room. It could not have been built in a cheaper area because many staff would not have moved, adding redundancy and recruitment costs.

The council member, who asked not to be named because the society's "protocols of confidentiality" prevent councillors from talking to the press, said staff were already complaining about the new building.

The open plan offices were noisy and some employees were unhappy with the dis-

This concern may rise with the news that the lunchtime minibus into town is one of the potential cuts.

The council member said: "The society sold its old headquarters in the centre of Horsham for £5.2 million and has spent £16 million on a shed. We didn't need it."

"The amount of staff we have is ridiculous. It's because they like to run it on a military basis with chains of command. You could take three layers out of the bureaucracy and it would still work." Eyebrows were raised when the society

donated £80,000 to a charity chaired by Peter Davies, the director-general, which is building a memorial to animals in war. Money was also donated by WISPA, an international charity supported by the RSPCA.

The decision to give the money was backed by the Charity Commission and, the society says, on the condition that the memorial "promoted kindness towards animals and discouraged ill treatment".

The RSPCA is appealing for a similar amount to save the Llys Nini animal centre which opened near Swansea in 1997.

Local members claim the case is indicative of the way the society uses money.

The local branch, which raised more than a million pounds to build the centre, accused the national society of forcing them to build something more extravagant than was necessary.

They say that the £95,000 needed by September to keep the £1.3 million centre open would still be available if a more appropriate and cost-effective centre had been built, using local architects and cutting down on the administrative space that the headquarters demanded.

The RSPCA counters that the centre was built to the society's "national standard" using a "tried and tested approach" but the result was that it lost the support of some of the local fund-raisers now needed to keep the centre open.

It is uncertain whether the money will be raised in time.

Members who criticise the society's activities claim to have been ostracised. Paranoia and an obsession with secrecy afflict both the organisation and its critics. Private

used to investigate the society's opponents.

Last year, the society spent £40,000 pursuing an inquiry into the activities of David Mawson, a vegetarian chef and member of the council. The cost of the failed attempt to suspend him from the council is reported to have included £3,560 to track his e-mails.

There was also anger earlier this year when *The Daily Telegraph* disclosed that the society was planning to spend

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tens of thousands of pounds to find out which council member spoke to the BBC. The investigation, which some sources suggest cost as much as £80,000, culminated in a 120-page deposition delivered to the Broadcasting Standards Commission last week disputing claims about Freedom Food in an edition of the *Watchdog* programme. The BSC has not yet published a ruling. The RSPCA defended the expenditure, which it claimed was much less than reported, and had to defend itself. A spokesman said: "The programme could have done us a lot of damage. If our fund-raising capabilities are threatened we will defend ourselves again and again. The society spent £4.2 million on campaigning last year, including taking out full-page advertisements about hunting in national newspapers. Owen Perks, who was a council member and treasurer of the society, resigned last year and returned his Queen Victoria Medal in protest at the way he believed the hierarchy had lost touch with supporters. "I believe the RSPCA should be doing the job it was set up to do and that's preventing cruelty to animals," he said. "It's become a campaigning body."

Fears over repercussions mean that many critics within the organisation are willing to speak only anonymously. When they do, what they say reflects a desire from both the pro-hunting and animal rights wings of the society to find clarity on animal rights. There even appears to be an opportunity to find common ground between the two sides of the hunting debate, though both say that the RSPCA gives no effective forum for it to be found. One critic from the Left of the society said: "I would open membership to everybody then have a proper debate. 'You've got a proper members who agree with the objects but they don't have to agree with the policies. The objects are to promote kindness and prevent cruelty to animals. There are more important issues in animal welfare than hunting.'"

Critics fear charity is losing sight of its role to help animals, writes Thomas Penny

HELP ANIMALS!



In the interests of natural justice, I require you to issue a statement in any subsequent Watchdog issues that "you have been told the facts" and that you accept that I did not make such a statement.

P. DAVIES

## RSPCA cuts

SIR - The article "RSPCA seeks cuts amid spending row" (report, July 24) will unsettle dedicated staff.

The society has made no secret of the fact that it is reviewing the budgets, which is intended to streamline the organisation. This cost-cutting exercise is a result of September 11, and the still volatile markets, and is not unique to the RSPCA. As your report stated, no decisions have been taken by our council where those efficiencies are to be made.

The RSPCA spends 85p in every

pound on animal welfare, and this will continue - our services and support for animals will not be affected by these changes. On the other hand, the society spends 6p in every pound on campaigning, or "politics", as *The Daily Telegraph* calls it. The RSPCA has always been a campaigning organisation, but hunting represents a very small proportion of the money set aside for the 20 campaigns we run at any one time.

The decision to build a new headquarters was taken by our council. At the time, the 25 elected council members were convinced that a new HQ would enhance the society's contribution to animal welfare.

All organisations the size of the RSPCA will have internal critics, but few are run as democratically as the RSPCA. It is important to remember that, according to the Charities Act 1993, charity trustees are "the persons having the general control management of the administration of a charity".

Charity trustees must act reasonably and prudently in matters relating to the charity and act only in its best interests.

Peter Davies  
Director General, RSPCA  
Southwater, W Sussex

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Unlike the Director General, we believe that the rule of natural justice should apply to everyone. That is why we are publishing his response to the Daily Telegraph article. (Natural Justice - the rules of fair play means that the accused person must be given a fair opportunity to state his/her case and to know and answer the other side's case.) Peter Davies wrote the above statement in a letter dated 11/02/02. We immediately published a transcript of the relevant radio interview. It is a different story when members are accused - natural justice flies out of the window. Peter Davies in his letter to the press claims that the RSPCA is democratically run!

Are Regional Representatives to the Council elected democratically? NO

Are members allowed to put reasonable motions to the Annual General Meeting? NO

When lies are printed in RSPCA minutes is there a proper enquiry? NO

Why should council members and staff have stayed in the Newport Hilton paid for with money given for animals? What jobs do the majority of council members and staff do at the AGM apart from voting?

In the last 2 years 15,500 members have left the Society - a loss of over £200,000 in subscriptions alone.

We congratulate the council member who spoke to the Daily Telegraph. It is a pity that more council members are not troubled by all the unnecessary secrecy, the lack of information (by the way exactly what are the 20 campaigns referred to by Peter Davies?) and the very unkind treatment of so many innocent members. It is not surprising that there is such a serious lack of voluntary workers. The majority on the council have made a start in reforming the management by electing new officers of council. Soon there will be a new Chief Executive with a less aggressive title than 'DIRECTOR GENERAL'. We hope that under Richard Ryder's leadership there will be no need for an RSPCA MEMBERS' WATCHDOG newsletter. Best wishes