RSPCA MEMBERS'

WATCHDOG

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Watchdog Newsletter 95 January 2003 TEL/FAX 01293 786166

A New Look for the New Year

All those members who want to see a more efficient RSPCA with a Council that treats the membership with respect and kindness should welcome the appointment of Jackie Ballard to the post of Director General of the RSPCA. Everything that we have read about her gives hope for the future. She has had a life long committment to animal welfare and is an experienced campaigner against hunting,fur and battery farming.

Mrs Ballard wants increasing openness in the Society with a priority of opening up meetings of the RSPCA ruling council. This should mean no more unnecessary secrecy,more information for members and better behaviour from Council members.

It is a cause for celebration that **AT LAST** we have a Director General who admits that if your cause is saving animals its odd to eat them.(Sunday Times 27/10/02).In this article she is honest enough to admit to being a fish eating vegetarian. Many people become full blown vegetarian/vegan by stages. Twenty years ago RSPCA members and staff were victimised for being vegetarian. Dare we hope that dead animals will not be served at RSPCA events?

Jackie Ballard has a very difficult task ahead as you will see from the resignation statement from Jacq Denham printed below. It is not true that Mrs Ballard has limited financial skills. She was deputy leader of Somerset County Council in 1993 and managed a revenue budget of £500 m and saw the Council through a period of budget cuts and was able to prioritise and take difficult decisions.

Resignation Statement
Jacq Denham
30 October 2002

Following my e-mail on Sunday 20 October I am writing this statement on my resignation from Council.

When I decided to put myself forward for election to Council my objective was to work for the prevention of cruelty to animals and for the positive promotion of the welfare and care of animals.

I give my reasons for resigning below.

1. The recent appointment of the Director [illegible] managed and has brought the Society into disrepute with the Press, the Public, the Members and the Staff. Indeed I believe that the more the Press investigate this appointment the more damage there will be to the Society.

In my opinion the Chairman of Council could have taken steps to prevent this happening but did not. This has caused me to feel unable to continue to serve under his direction.

2. The inability of some members of Council to recognise the seriousness of the financial situation of the Society and the unwillingness of other Council members to put the greater good of the Animals, the Staff and the Society before their own personal ambitions. This, I believe, is in direct contradiction of the Charter of the Society.

3. Council has voted to appoint a new Director General who, whilst, no doubt worthy in many areas, has by her own admission in open forum, very limited financial skills. This appointment may well be viewed by later generations as the event that heralded the end of the Society.

4. The appalling waste of money, that I have witnessed recently, in seeking multiple legal opinions on the same issue, without the approval of either the DG or Council, over an issue that has no direct bearing on the stated aims of the Society.

I would suggest an amendment to the rules of the Society that a Council Member cannot seek a legal opinion from an independent Law firm, that is to be paid for by the Society, without the approval of the majority of Council. This approval must be sought prior to seeking the opinion.

5. I will not be party to a Council that intends to bring in a rule that allows members of the Society to be found guilty of offences against the Society on the basis of 'balance of probability'. In my opinion this goes against the whole foundation of British Justice and exposes the Society to the possibility of costly libel actions in the High Court where I believe full 'burden of proof' would be required.

6. The abuse and bully boy tactics, that I have personally experienced and also witnessed between members of Council has strengthened my resolve to separate myself from a Society that has allowed itself to lose sight of its Charter and to be taken over by a small faction who are driven by personal ambition, desire for power and self seeking aggrandisement.

Finally, it must be remembered that the revenue of the Society is given by members of the Public for the **welfare of animals**. It is not to support internal squabbles amongst members of Council, nor to support any one person, no matter how lowly or senior they are, in achieving their personal ambitions.

It is not generally known by the public that the money they bequeath to the Society is not given to the branches, who do the real work, that they so admire. Nor is it generally known that the branches are self supporting and that money can be willed, or given, direct to a Branch. I shall do my best to broadcast this knowledge.

As you can see I have been sadly disillusioned by my time on Council. I feel I can best serve the animals I care about by working outside the Society where I am free of the constraints laid down by the rules of the Society, and the antagonism of some members of Council, who make it impossible to achieve any improvements.

I shall be offering my statement of resignation to the Press for publication if they wish and will be available to give interviews on how the Society is structured and funded if that is of interest to the public.

Jacq Denham has accused the RSPCA Council of abuse, bully boy tactics between some Council members, of being driven by personal ambition, desire for power, self seeking aggrandisement and an inability to recognise the seriousness of the financial situation and an unwillingness to put the greater good of the animals, the staff and the Society before their own personal ambitions.

When Jackie Ballard opens up the Society, we believe that this behaviour will be curbed as ordinary members will see how their elected Council members act. Running away as Jacq Denham has done is unproductive.

A MATTER FOR CONCERN

In January 2003, the Council will be discussing 'LEAKS' and the effect on the Society's finances. Before blaming leaks for the financial problems, the Council might consider an article in the Lincolnshire Echo (6/11/02) by Roger Helmer MEP RSPCA national member and Branch member (Tomlinson's branch) supporter of fox hunting and hare coursing. In it Helmer says-

"If you want to spend money on real animal welfare, rather than politically correct campaigning, I suggest that you should take the RSPCA off the list and instead support charities that focus on direct work with animals."

(A copy of this article has been sent to the Chairman of Council.)

In the paper was an excellent reply to Roger Helmer's article by Mrs Rachel Astill-Dunseith -we have been told that she is the wife of a local RSPCA Inspector. Congratulations Rachel!

Lincolnshire Echo

I WRITE in response to the column of Roger Helmer ("Time for RSPCA to stop the politics and get on with real animal welfare", Echo November 6). I am astounded at his vitriol towards the animal charity.

Mr Helmer describes himself as a "strong supporter of animal welfare" but this is a most spurious claim.

Anyone who possesses true respect and compassion for our fellow creatures would NEVER condone the barbaric practices of those who hunt.

Any reputable animal organisation or charity must oppose such sickening and selfish pursuits in order to represent the views of their true supporters.

There is NOTHING humane about any animal wearing its innards externally as a result of being torn to pieces by a pack of hounds.

Anyone who wants to know the truth about hunting with dogs only has to look at the most recent edition of the League Against Cruel Sports' publication The Wildlife Guardian to see the true brutality of these so-called sporting events. The vast majority of RSPCA members and supporters are fervently against hunting with dogs and want to see it banned. This is one of the many reasons why they put their hard-earned monies into the charity collection tins.

No educated person would believe the fatuous and ridiculous propaganda put forward by those who hunt. Much of their practices are covert and many of their number are violent.

Mr Helmer also made inaccurate mention of the Burns' report and its overall findings!

I find it quite insulting that someone who moves in the world of the politically correct could make such an obvious faux pas as to describe people who leave their valuable legacies to any charity as "little old ladies".

What a patronising and sanctimonious description. Are all of these legacies left by elderly females of limited physical stature? This is a quote from a man who likes to bandy around the "politically correct" banner in an inappropriate manner throughout his column.

No person has any right to dictate to anyone regarding which charities they should or should not support, particularly an MEP, one who is SUPPOSED to believe in democracy.

All animal charities are equally deserving. The RSPCA is unique in its policing of the current animal welfare legislation and in its prosecutions of those who abuse our fellow creatures.

This work is undoubtedly entwined with politics in terms of legislation whether it be politically correct or incorrect from each individual's perspective.

In an ideal world we would not need any charity in support of people, animals or the environment but our world is far from ideal.

It would appear that the Conservative penchant for dictating to the public is as alive as ever.

Perhaps it would be folly to suggest that Mr Helmer should concentrate his efforts on representing the interest of the majority and refrain from commenting upon subject matter he is clearly ill equipped and ill informed to deal with.

RACHEL ASTILL-DUNSEITH
Lincoln.

Are you really an RSPCA supporter?

The statement above in the Leicestershire Echo,headed the letter from Rachel Astill-Dunseith on page 3. It is worth repeating - Is Roger Helmer really an RSPCA supporter? Has he resigned from the Society yet? A copy of his article has been sent to the Chairman of Council.

FREEDOM FOOD

In January 2002,the BBC 1 programme 'Watchdog' transmitted pictures of two appalling Freedom Food farms. The RSPCA complained to the Broadcasting Standards Commission who rejected the RSPCA's complaint entirely.

Many RSPCA members believe that the Freedom Food scheme was a mistake and that the Society's connection with it should be ended.

In 1932 there was an Act passed by Parliament to incorporate and confer powers on the RSPCA. In the first paragraph of the Act,it is stated that the object of the Society was "the mitigation of animal suffering and the promotion and expansion of the practice of humanity towards the inferior classes of animated beings."

In the Rules of the Society this is translated into "To promote kindness and to prevent or suppress cruelty to animals."

Is it suppressing cruelty or promoting kindness to animals to eat them knowing the terror and cruelty animals suffer in slaughterhouses?

Somewhere along the line the term Animal Welfare has crept in to describe acceptance of the championing of the meat trade . In the VIVA! Life Issue 21 (contact VIVA! 12 Queen Square,Brighton BN1 3FD for a copy) there is an article called TIME TO DUMP FREEDOM FOOD. It contains some very interesting information.

The RSPCA congratulated Pace Farms by saying it was: "...pleased to observe the attention being given to bird welfare considerations in the 'state of the art' cage system" ...capes which will hold 16 to 20 birds, be stacked six tiers high, five rows to a shed and with 60,000 birds per shed.

In Australia which has a similar scheme to Freedom Food called Liberty Foods,a farm which participates in the scheme called PACE FARMS put in a plan to build the biggest battery unit in the Southern Hemisphere. RSPCA Australia did NOT object but CONGRATULATED Pace Farms!!!!!!

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How does this action conform to the stated objects of the founding Society?

In objecting to the Freedom Food scheme,there is no intention to persuade RSPCA not to eat animals. However, should the trustees of the Society lead the way in the promotion of kindness to animals by not eating them?

Quote of the Month

(From the 1974 Report on the affairs of the RSPCA by Mr Charles Sparrow QC, Sir David Barrett and Mr Peter Hunt CA.)

para 2 "A great Society with a noble purpose had become notorious for ill natured bickering."

Para 4 "Our Report discloses the matters on which the Society must act.

COMMENT by Watchdog. The resignation statement of Jacq Denham has described an existing situation on Council similar to the one existing in 1974. unfortunately,in spite of the recommendations of the Sparrow Report being passed by Council on the 21 November 1974 ,four of the most important ones have not been implemented. These are nos 3,4,14 and 15. Watchdog believes that if nos 14 and 15 were implemented it would solve many of the present problems.

A MEMBER WRITES

(members names are not published in order to avoid victimisation.)

"It would appear that the Society has its priorities wrong,too much money wasted on administration and staff,buildings and Freedom Food to the detriment of animals in need of care. I read an item in the Farmers Guardian which stated that Mrs Ballard wished to see members demonstrating at Dover against the export of live animals. Hopefully she is a campaigner and this will be an improvement on the former DG."

"I feel that the September Watchdog,which is the only copy that I have,is most informative and I look forward to receiving further editions." Region 8 member

"Having been on the receiving end of the Society's wrath I know first hand how things happen and have Watchdog to thank for its support. How you can convince people to accept the truth,I do not know." Another,one of many Region 8 branch members who support Watchdog. Now for one who definitely does not! See over

cont

A Mrs Parkinson, Chairman of the Durham and District Branch has claimed (and her words were recorded in the minutes of the Region 8 Conference 2001)that the Watchdog newsletter is a scandalous paper,disloyal to the RSPCA,undemocratic, intolerant and often extremely stupid.

There were some other interesting views expressed at this conference. For example,Peter Davies (former Director General) is reported as saying "that we as a Society have traditionally reflected the views of the reasonable people of this country."

WHO ARE THE REASONABLE PEOPLE?

On the 20 March 1996,the Council voted by a majority of 10 in favour and 4 against to admit foxhunters into membership of the RSPCA.

Were the 10 Council members who voted for fox hunters the reasonable members?

According to a 'leaked' list of fox hunters admitted into membership in 1996 25 hunters had already been admitted **BEFORE** the vote of Council and these included the Hon ED Leigh Pemberton the Chairman of BFSS. Following the vote another 97 had been admitted into membership by the end of April 1996.

Of the 18 members of Council present at that meeting only 6 remain on Council. They are Mr Anyon,Mrs Chamberlain,Dr Ryder,Mr Tomlinson and Mrs Unmack. Is it too much to ask that before the next Council elections they tell us how they voted on that important day? Mrs Harris was also on the Council in 1996

Would any progress be made in the prevention of cruelty to animals if 'we' as members of the RSPCA failed to question the acts of the Council members? Is it *disloyal and stupid to do so?*

There has been far too much secrecy and the sooner the Society opens up the better.

As there is so much false information about the RSPCA Members Watchdog newsletter it is worth repeating that our aims are to uphold the RSPCA policies and to seek justice for members unjustly treated.

There is no charge for the newsletter. There is no committee,no secret group and any member who wishes to write for the newsletter is welcome to do so provided that the material is not libellous and that it can be checked as true.

Open up the Society,stop treating voluntary workers so badly and there will be no need for a newsletter.

THE WATCHDOGS