



WATCHDOG

44 Kingsley Road, Horley, Surrey. RH6 8HR ☎01293 786166

There is a page in 'Animal Life' (Winter 2002 issue 50) that seems to me, to show the readers how strange the Charity is becoming. We read that the FORMER Director General, Peter Davies, is 'kicking off' a new series of questions.

If this is of interest, which to my mind it is not, then surely it would have been better if it had been published before he came into power in the RSPCA? The questions are a waste of print and the answers pointless.

Do we really want to know if he sings in the shower, or that he unwinds by swimming and drinking red wine? He says the best advice he was given was: 'Remember to thank people'.

Well.....How often did he thank the voluntary workers in the branches all over his 'realm'? In view of the appalling secrecy shown by him and others in the hierarchy, he certainly never trusted them.

Did he 'protect and encourage' his staff?

Over the page we find a list of 'letter-writing tips'. Another waste of words. It read like a lecture to schoolchildren on how to write a letter. There was nothing we didn't already know. I see on page nine, the 'budget cuts'. Gloomy reading, and as usual the RSPCA takes no blame, it's all the fault of the stock market and September 11th.

Most of the magazine is good when it deals exclusively with the fate of certain animals. There is seldom anything about how the Society works. The reason is it won't admit to having used its money (our money) inefficiently.

It appears in the papers from time to time in a bad light, but it is a long time since I saw, or heard, anyone speak highly of it.

Many members have left the society. If I ask why, will I get an answer? I doubt it.

The RSPCA is determined to make sure that no-one knows anything about its inner workings. Why the secrecy?

When people find anything is shrouded in this way, they assume that that something won't stand up to being looked into. Secrecy breeds distrust, and distrust makes people careful with their money. They want to know what the money is being used for. They aren't fools, and they know that to run a Charity of this size needs a very sound and sensible administrative hierarchy. If it is sound, why the secrecy? The same old question comes up again.

I would ask the people who deal with the public this simple question :

'If the RSPCA is running in the way it should, what is the reason for being secretive?'

Are there one or two things they are 'afraid' might come to light? Luckily, some of the less savoury doings are 'leaked', but everyone knows that something leaked, always sounds worse than if it had been freely given and so the Society is defeating its own ends.

This old and once respected Charity has so much to give to the animals, and to its members, not only financially, but in help, advice and education. Why is it letting itself go down and down? We all want to see it rise up and shoulder the appalling burden of cruelty going on round it. We want it to succeed, but instead of talking to us, asking our opinions, using our help, sometimes even asking our advice and hoping for our money. It is pushing us away, making us doubt it, and presumably getting into deep financial trouble if it has to cut back so much.

Why should people contribute to a charity that may not be using their money in a sensible, responsible way for the welfare of animals? I suspect that the PDSA and the BUVA and both the BLUE CROSS and the IFAW and all the other animal welfare societies will end up doing rather well out of the disenchanted RSPCA members who are leaving.

I have done my best to protect the reputation of the RSPCA. Will any of the hierarchy tell me honestly why I should continue to do so, or recommend my friends to give away their money?

Once people said "The RSPCA will help, they are wonderful."
Now I hear:

"Oh I'm not giving the RSPCA anything. I don't think they care twopence about the poor wretched animals, they just want to line their pockets."

What a sad downfall!

If the Council had the sense to talk to their members, instead of treating them as if they were unimportant baggage, to be shut up and put up with, they would earn back the affection and respect they have undoubtedly lost.

DR PANDORA MOORHEAD

A MEMBER WRITES

*WITH COMPLIMENTS and best wishes
to all the watchdogs.*

*(It would be nice to think that recent
changes at RSPCA mean you ~~no~~ do not
need to keep barking, but somehow
I doubt it.)* — *Shreeley Graham*

"We re-read the Sparrow Report which my husband had filed and hope the points raised in 'Watchdog' will be raised at the AGM."

(COMMENT There is little hope of that happening with the AGM being held on the outskirts of Birmingham and members only having less than an hour for their motions - even if the Council decides to accept them!)

"Watchdog - I agree with your aims and along with many others (members and non members of the RSPCA) am disturbed at the present unhappy state of affairs. Let us hope for better things.

I await to see if Jackie Ballard shows herself to be successful in her new role. I wish her luck- she will no doubt need plenty of it."

"Thank you again for the very interesting and informative Watchdog. I am so pleased that you see a more positive future for the Society under the guidance of Mrs Ballard."

A MEMBER WRITES

TO THE PRESS

On 16 February 2003, an article by Chris Flood was published in the Review section of the Mail on Sunday. The article was both sad and silly. It was sad because Chris descended to a very personal attack on Mrs Ballard. It was silly because a petulant tirade in the press is not the way to protest.

We all know that there are many criticisms going back a decade about the management of the RSPCA by the Council and the staff. So why not give Mrs Ballard the chance to improve the management?

Mrs Ballard has made a good start by **LISTENING** to members and by saying she wants to 'open up the Society.'

**Four Good Reasons Why The Society should not promote the meat trade through
FREEDOM FOOD**

1. "Governments in all countries are advised to consider their investment and subsidy policies in both agriculture and the food industry to ensure that these are consistent with the nutritional concepts contained in this report. Policies should be geared to promoting the growing of plant foods, including vegetables and fruits and to limiting the promotion of fat containing products."

(WHO Report 1991 A Checklist for Government Action.)

2. "The number of farm animals on earth has risen fivefold since 1950 humans are now outnumbered three to one. Livestock already consume half the World's grain and their numbers are still growing. Within as little as ten years the world will be faced with a choice; arable farming either continues to feed the world's animals or it continues to feed the world's people. It cannot do both."

(George Monbiot The Guardian)

3. "How much animal suffering is justified in order to grow crops, eat meat ...or use animals in innumerable other ways that benefit people."

(Professor Donald R Griffin quoted by Compassion in World Farming.)

4" Unlike Pythagoras, Plutarch did not base his vegetarianism upon the idea of reincarnation, but upon a general duty of kindness to human and nonhuman alike. He argued that much of the world's cruelty arose from humankind's uncontrolled passion for meat;

'For the sake of some little mouthful of flesh, we deprive a soul of the sun and light and of that proportion of life and time it had been born into the world to enjoy.....'

(From ANIMAL REVOLUTION by Richard Ryder Plutarch lived in Rome around 46-120 A.D.)

Freedom Food cont

On 22 June 1822, Richard Martin's Bill to "prevent the cruel and improper treatment of cattle" was given Royal Assent. This Bill specified cruelty to horses, cows, oxen, heifers, steers, sheep or other cattle as wantonly beating, abusing or ill treating. In 1835 another Bill presented by Joseph Pease MP and passed, increased the protection for cattle and included bulls and domestic animals. It ended (in theory) bull baiting and cock fighting.

With the fairly recent recognition that animals are sentient beings - capable of feeling pain and suffering and of enjoying life, there has been a huge step forward. Compassion in World Farming has also drawn attention to the distress caused when a young calf is separated from his mother. VIVA! and Animal Aid have produced reports on the suffering caused to animals in slaughter houses. The recognition of animal sentience must call into question the way that we use animals and therefore the Ethics of promoting the eating animals by Freedom Food. Twenty odd years ago, vegetarians in the RSPCA were ridiculed as "cabbage eaters" by Roy Forster.

Richard Martin MP was one of the founding members of the RSPCA and he stressed that the prime aim of the Society should be "to alter the moral feelings of the public" How can the advertisements of Freedom Food have any effect on people's moral feelings when it promotes the eating of pigs, lambs, cattle, chickens and ducks?

We would welcome the views of members who read this newsletter. You will have often heard it said that the RSPCA is not a vegetarian Society. But surely, in 2003, the oldest animal protection society should be leading the cause of preventing cruelty to animals by promoting a diet that is healthy, environmentally friendly and does NOT INVOLVE THE EATING OF THE OBJECTS OF THEIR CONCERN.

JUNE PAGE

We were sad to learn of the death of June on December 3rd 2002. June was an honest and kind friend to people as well as to animals. June and her husband Graham looked after injured wild life in their beautiful garden. June, like so many other RSPCA members suffered cruel and unjust treatment at the hands the Society's Council and staff in the early 1980's. To the end of her life she longed to have her name cleared.

Surely, the time is long overdue for members to be protected from unjust treatment and are treated with the respect and consideration they deserve.

RSPCA calls for more help as closure threat looms

Lincoln Echo 18.2.03

Cash crisis puts pets at risk

NEEDY animals are to be turned away from RSPCA rescue centres as there is not enough money to care for them.

Volunteers at the Lincoln branch of the animal charity say it is so strapped for cash that it may have to start finding other homes for pets.

And some of the older animals may have to be put to sleep.

Branch manager Denise Oldershaw said: "It is heart-breaking for us all.

"Everyone here is an animal lover and we all want to be able to take them in but it is getting to the point where we do not have the resources to cope with them.

"But we cannot take any more animals and if we do not get any money soon or the numbers do not go down then we may be in serious dire straits.

"Many of our fund-raising events are outside and so need the weather to be warmer and so they will not start until April at least so we are desperate at the moment."

In December 2001, the charity was facing closure through lack of funds.

But after a series of public appeals the RSPCA received enough donations to avert closure.



WE NEED HELP: The Lincoln branch of the RSPCA has called for funds aid.

by Jenny Eastwood

jenny.eastwood@lincolnshireecho.co.uk

Now the money is coming to an end and volunteers fear that the service is once again in danger.

Currently it needs up to £60,000 a year to maintain a full service.

The £5,000 a month covers the cost of running the kennels, providing food and litter for the cat foster homes and the ever increasing vets bills.

The regional charity office has also come under financial strain over recent months and has lost key personnel through lack of funds.

The Lincoln branch receives no money from the national charity and relies solely on its own fund-raising efforts and charitable donations.

RSPCA inspector for Lincoln, Dean Astill-Dunseith,

said: "I am employed by the national charity and so not directly affected by the lack of funds but I do work closely with the Lincoln team.

"Once I have prosecuted an owner the animals are then turned over to the Lincoln branch.

"The problem is that we have so little kennel space to keep the many dogs that need care."

Mr Astill-Dunseith believes the area is not getting the support it needs.

"Although we are a small city we are still a major area and we should not be struggling like this," he said.

"If people want to continue having somewhere for animals to go they need to put hands in their pockets."

Co-ordinator of Lincoln Cats Protection, Brian Lewis, knows only too well the pressures facing rescue charities.

"We are under constant demand and in the last year I think we must have taken in around 400 cats.

"But the number we take in is dependent on how many we can then rehome.

"I think we need to change people's attitudes towards pet ownership.

"The problem is that often animals are abandoned as so many people's lifestyles can change overnight."

The Lincoln branch is like many other branches that are struggling for survival.

With widespread rumours of reduction in the number of regions, it is interesting to look back to the formation of the present system.

In the 165th Annual Report (1988) we were told:-

"To push some of the administration outwards from HQ has much merit. It will enable branches to see their resources being deployed at a more local level...

We must be careful to keep any new organisation trim and resist the temptation to build empires."

The setting up of 10 regions was finished in July 1990.

Each region had its own HQ manager and supporting staff.

LINCOLN ECHO 18-2-03

In 1988, Employee costs were £7,586,000 and the average number of employees was 782.

Ten years after the setting up of regionalisation employee costs of the Society had risen to £34,401,000. That was in the year 2000. What is it now?

With best wishes

THE WATCHDOGS