1. Cage fighting: the Animal Liberation Front

Despite the combined efforts of all the wretched industries we abhor, the ALF is alive and well and growing. If people want to stop the ALF it is simple: **stop doing unspeakable acts to other-than-human beings!** There will be an ALF for as long as tiny chicks feel the pain of that searing wire on their beaks and chained pigs dig hopelessly into the hard cement with their hooves … as long as there are terrorized animal victims of human injustice and callousness.

Valerie, an ALF activist

INTRODUCTION

Of the radical environmental groups examined the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) is the oldest and still holds enormous sway today. It is also the most violent group in that they have been willing to directly target their human opponents at certain points in their history. In 1987 the FBI first categorized the ALF as a terrorist group. Arslan’s research demonstrates that the ALF is still the most dominant radical environmental group with its adherents committing almost half (43.8 per cent) of recorded radical environmental actions.

To its adherents and its supporters, though, the ALF and its more violent *nom de guerres* – the Animal Rights Militia, the Justice Department and Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty – are willing to put their freedom on the line to defend animals against the ‘vast industries [that] have built up around what Animal Liberators see as the “exploitation” of non-human animals’. According to Best and Nocella, ‘there are two faces of the ALF – the “benign” one that breaks into prisons to release and rescue animals, and the “malign” one that smashes windows, wrecks equipment, and torches buildings’.

The ALF and its smaller antecedent group the Band of Mercy grew out of a concern that activist actions in trying to prevent ongoing hunting in the UK were not enough and that militant action was needed. Inspired by law student Ronnie Lee the group, drawing on the writings of animal liberationists such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan, began carrying out
liberation raids to free animals before progressing quickly to arson against its perceived opponents. However, despite a public stance against physical violence by the early 1980s, as the Sprinzak delegitimation model suggests, some cells began to carry out car bombings and physical threats and attacks against their ‘enemies’. In an effort to still maintain their public stance of non-violence, ALF members went as far as to create new ‘groups’, which publicly proclaimed they were distant from ALF cells but in reality were populated with ALF members determined to protect animals by virtually any means.

This chapter examines the historical roots of animal welfare groups that influenced the ALF philosophies and goals. It examines the role played by the Hunt Saboteurs Association and the perceived failure of its direct action approach on Ronnie Lee, the key founder of the ALF, which prompted him to create the Band of Mercy, a predecessor group to the ALF. The chapter further critically examines the birth of the ALF out of the ashes of the Band of Mercy in the UK and its subsequent spreading to the USA, where radical animal rights proponents enthusiastically embraced its approach to animal liberation. Lastly it focuses on the development of the philosophy of the ALF and its use to permit radical action that allowed, in the minds of some adherents, for a more radical approach that targeted humans in defence of animals.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANIMAL WELFARE GROUPS

The animal liberation movement can be traced back to the nineteenth century, with the establishment of the UK’s Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1824, the current ‘Royal’ prefix was attached in 1840). The organization was created to ‘police the first animal welfare legislation’ that had been passed two years earlier. By the end of the nineteenth century, several anti-vivisection groups had also emerged (including the National Anti-Vivisection Society and the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection). By the end of the Second World War a further 16 similar national organizations were created in the UK. However, since 1960 there has been a plethora of new animal rights groups established.

In the nineteenth century, the lack of moral status afforded to animals changed to a ‘new position of moral orthodoxy, whereby animals were accorded a moral status but an inferior one to that of humans’. While humans had a responsibility to avoid ‘unnecessary suffering’ on animals, they were ‘entitled to use them for their own benefit (e.g. food, clothing and to experiment upon)’. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the
emergence of a distinct animal rights movement that ‘retained the animal welfare tradition’s concern for animals as sentient beings that should be protected from unnecessary cruelty’ but added ‘a new language’ of ‘rights’ as the foundation that called for the end of societal animal exploitation.8

According to Finsen and Finsen, the traditional animal welfare/humane movement can be explicitly distinguished from the animal rights movement in the following way:

The humane movement promoted kindness and the elimination of cruelty without challenging the assumption of human superiority or the institutions that reflect that assumption. The animal rights movement, on the other hand, does not seek human reforms but challenges the assumption of human superiority and demands abolition of institutions it considers exploitative. Rather than asking for a greater (and optional) charity toward animals, the animal rights movement demands justice, equality, fairness, and rights.9

However, it is important to establish that the animal rights view does not necessarily believe that animals and humans should hold identical rights, but that animals ‘certainly have the right to life and to freedom from bodily interference’.10 Garner notes that animal rights activists perceive that: ‘the growth of mass activism is clearly linked to the belief, derived from an animal rights perspective, that since so much more is wrong with our treatment of animals than was previously thought, only permanent and sustained activism will help put things right’.11

The animal rights movement has subsequently spread throughout Western countries and beyond. The aim of such organizations however, ‘has never been eliminating the institutions that exploit animals, but rather reducing or ameliorating animal suffering within such violent and repressive structures’.12 Such organizations initially focused on ‘anti-cruelty campaigns’, including pets, working animals and animals killed in blood sports, with many ‘traditional groups’ still actively campaigning against these issues. However, over time animal scientific experimentation and vivisection, hunting and trapping, animals in entertainment, factory farming, the transshipment of animals and preventing fur-wearing have become important campaigns globally.13

The animal liberation movement currently operates on a global level, ‘from the UK, US and Germany to France, Norway, and Russia’.14 According to Best, the ‘modern animal “rights” movement’ is relatively new (he argues a few decades). However, in a relatively small amount of time it has clearly developed an outsized presence.15
Hunt Saboteurs Association

One of the animal rights groups established in the 1960s, this group ended up playing a seminal role in the creation of ALF. The Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA) was established in 1963 in the UK, when ‘antivivisectionists melded with class-conscious protesters to harass fox hunters, seen as conspicuous symbols of the rich “landed gentry” torturing an innocent creature for sport’.\(^\text{16}\) It is important to note that many believe that the establishment of the HSA was due to the more traditional anti-hunting group, the League Against Cruel Sports with members being unwilling to engage in direct action, which some anti-hunting advocates were drawn to.\(^\text{17}\)

The HSA traces its roots back to 1824 when Catherine Smithies established the ‘Band of Mercy’, a ‘youth wing of Britain’s Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which attempted to disrupt stag hunts and fox hunts in which the quarry was run down by dogs’.\(^\text{18}\) John Prestige, a young freelance journalist, founded and served as the first chairman of the HSA. According to The Guardian, ‘he picked the first of his supporters on 15 December 1963 … he is the founder of the Hunt Saboteurs Association … which has the support of the LACS, whose chairman, Raymond Rawley, says is willing to make available all the latest know-how on how to sabotage a hunt’.\(^\text{19}\) The group was a highly visible one in the 1960s since it was willing to both openly criticize animal rights violations and, unusual for the time, was willing to employ confrontational tactics.\(^\text{20}\)

The HSA’s first action occurred on 26 December 1963. The first action was a rousing success that led to the cancelling of the targeted hunt. The group fed 50 lbs of meat to the hunting dogs to distract them and used hunting horns to create a cacophonous chaos. Even the local police, it was recorded, were bemused by the direct action tactics.\(^\text{21}\) As their campaign to disrupt hunting continued the hunters and ‘sabs’, as they came to be known, began to recognize one another and ‘call each other by first names, and trade insults and animosity’.\(^\text{22}\)

The early result of these actions saw hunters financially and physically impeded from not only carrying out hunts but even prevented from being able to attend meets. Initially, members had not been convinced that such tactics would be effective but, over time, as new members were drawn to the group because of their willingness to engage in direct actions, the new approach was embraced.\(^\text{23}\) The idea also spread to the USA. From 1987 to 1990, Hunt Saboteurs America targeted large game hunters and ‘launched regular annual campaigns to stop the hunting of rare desert bighorn sheep and tule elk’.\(^\text{24}\)
During each campaign, the sabs made their commitment to non-violence well known. According to Arnold, ‘on the rare occasions when they were slugger by an angry fox hunter, they never struck back’. As Kuipers points out, ‘face to face confrontations with hunters who had drawn expensive, once-in-a-lifetime licenses to hunt these beasts had the potential to go down very badly’. Arguably, the only reason their campaigns went so well and drew on public support was the widespread knowledge that the HSA was committed to non-violence.

However, such commitment to non-violence changed with the enlistment of a young law student, Ronnie Lee. He established a branch of the HSA in Luton, England in 1971 and adhered to ‘their nonviolent tactics despite misgivings’ as to their efficacy.

Ronnie Lee biography
Surprisingly little is available on the personal details of Ronnie Lee, as opposed to his political writings. Ronnie Lee was born on 1 January 1951 and is a British activist who describes himself as a ‘socialist animal liberationist’. Lee is a veteran of the animal liberation movement and even his fiercest critics, such as journalist David Henshaw, describe him as charismatic and influential.

Lee was a meat eater until the age of 19 when he was inspired by his sister’s boyfriend back in the 1960s to become a vegetarian. His sister’s boyfriend was athletic, very fit and threw javelin for his county – he was also a vegetarian, and Ronnie Lee was kept awake at night trying to find an excuse for his meat eating. He couldn’t and he became a vegetarian and eventually, by the 1970s, a vegan. He felt it made sense to be one, so as to do something for the animals and to represent his cause honestly. At that time, most vegans were not associated with any animal rights movement or vivisection protests and were merely regarded as an eccentric minority.

Lee’s official involvement with animal rights began when he founded a new hunt sab group in Luton, an offshoot of the Hunt Saboteurs Association. At its inception, the group began by meeting in a basement cafe in London, most of the attendees at that point having had experience as hunt saboteurs.

Before his first experience of ‘sabling’, Lee was studying to become a solicitor at a London law college. According to Henshaw, ‘Lee’s political background was informed by anarchistic philosophies which he never renounced’. However, animal liberation was not Lee’s only focus, as he was also involved in the movement ‘opposing the presence of troops in Northern Ireland’. His environmental beliefs were a mix of...
anti-technological, anti-capitalist, anti-democracy and reduced-population philosophies. According to Lee:

True freedom for all the Earth’s creatures demands a decentralized non-hierarchical society with much lower levels of technology and a massive cut in the human population – as well as the ending of the more obvious abuses such as vivisection, factory farming etc.38

For Lee, animal cruelty was mostly brought about by the pursuit of profit, without which the incentives to treat animals badly would be minimized.39 Lee was equally dismissive of democracy, stating; ‘my main aim isn’t to toady to the public. What we’re trying to do is to actually sabotage the industries of animal abuse.’40 He believed that: ‘it is time for us to destroy the old world and to build the new in the only way possible – by our own direct action. It is time to dispense with all politicians, be they of the right or of the left.’41 Lee perceived animal liberationists as the ‘enlightened ones’ – puritanical, self-abnegating and selfless in their cause.42

According to Henshaw, Lee and another member (and friend), Cliff Goodman, quickly became disillusioned with the HSA’s refusal to ‘return violence against violence’. As Henshaw further observes, there were other more puissant examples of how to prevent hunting and the newspapers ‘were full of the doings of a shadowy group calling themselves the “Angry Brigade”’.43 The following year, Goodman sustained an eye injury during the campaign and the event served to convince Lee that a ‘different, more violent direction was called for, one that went beyond annoying the upper class to target any part of individual civilization that, in his view, abused animals’. As a result of this decision, Lee and Goodman created the Band of Mercy in 1972.44

The Band of Mercy

In Lee’s opinion, the flaw with hunt sabotage was twofold. It focused only on a single issue, effectively ignoring other aspects of animal use, and such a strategy was confined to stopping hunters once they were actually engaged on the field. Lee believed that the hunts could be ‘sabotaged far more effectively, and foxes saved much more efficiently, if the hunt never reached the field in the first place’.45 Lee decided that there was a need to create a new organization, the Band of Mercy. The name of the organization was taken from the ‘children’s wing of the nineteenth century RSPCA’. The group initially comprised six members, including Lee.46 The disillusionment with the HSA and its
non-violent philosophy, strategy and tactics, and Lee’s creation of a new
group, fits neatly within Sprinzak’s crisis of confidence stage.

The Band of Mercy combined ‘the nineteenth century tradition of
animal rights, which was most cogently voiced by Henry Salt (“Animals’
Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress” (1980), London), with
a late 1960s assurance in the necessity and obligation of liberation
struggles’.47 While superficially it appeared on the surface to be similar
to other animal welfare organizations, ‘beneath this sanitary image lay a
[new] radical attitude towards direct action for animal liberation’.48

The Band of Mercy also believed in the necessity of animal rights and
that the group’s morality allowed for greater scope of actions to prevent
cruelty towards animals.49 In 1973, the Band of Mercy destroyed kennel
vehicles and, following these attacks, Lee and Goodman began to
to consider arson as a possible tactic.50 By November 1973, the tactics used
by the Band of Mercy had shifted from petty vandalism and the
destruction of hunt vehicles to arson attacks (which they now perceived
as an acceptable tactic) and destruction of butchers and purveyors of farm
equipment. It was the opinion of the small organization that such actions
were justifiable, ‘in view of the cruelties and disrespect that it identified
with the current lot of animals’.51

In less than a year, the group was responsible for two arsons at a
pharmaceutical plant, causing £46,000 in damages.52 After one arson
attack at the Hoechst building the organization’s communiqué to the
media maintained:

The building was set fire in an attempt to prevent the torture and murder of
our animal brothers and sisters by evil experiments. We are a non-violent
guerrilla organisation dedicated to the liberation of animals from all forms of
cruelty and persecution at the hands of mankind. Our actions will continue
until our aims are achieved.53

The only liberation raid conducted by the organization caused the
targeted farm to close down for fear of a return visit. However, just six
guinea pigs were rescued in this raid.54 The Band of Mercy were
unapologetic for their actions and tactics and concentrated on a strategy
of economic damage, with the aim of rendering animal abuse unprofit-
able.55 According to Molland, the group when carrying out an action
always ‘left a message to the hunters explaining the reasons behind their
actions and the logic of animal liberation’. Arguably, this also served to
confirm that these actions had not been planned and undertaken due to
any personal animosity against a single individual.56
The activists successfully completed other direct actions until 1975, when Lee and Goodman (and another man, Robin Howard) were caught and arrested as they returned to the scene of a break-in. The men were arrested as they prepared to set a fire at the Oxford Laboratory Animal Colonies near Bicester for a second time. The activists were charged with 14 counts, including causing £57,000 in damage to several locations. The arrests caused public sympathy and support for their actions, including from Lee’s MP, the Free Church Minister Ivor Clemiston.

Lee and Goodman, as the leaders of the action, were each given a three-year prison sentence after admitting the charges. Howard was given a 12-month suspended sentence and a £500 fine. Significantly, the judge accepted that they were men of sincerity and integrity and not ‘common criminals’. Lee was sent to Winchester prison and Goodman was sent to Oxford prison. Maintaining a vegan diet and lifestyle proved challenging in prison. Lee’s treatment by the prison drove him to hold a hunger strike at the Winchester prison that caused media attention. In prison, he was offered only a vegetarian diet and decided to go on a strike to secure vegan food and clothing. During one of his campaigns for vegan rights, he resorted to eating only vegetable protein burgers for three months.

It appears that Sprinzak’s second phase, the conflict of legitimacy, occurred in November 1973, when the Band of Mercy took up property damage and arson, as opposed to liberation raids, as an approach to achieve their ends. They grew more militant, as they viewed purely non-violent political or confrontational politics as having limited value. They had begun to question the legitimacy of the current political system and sought to transform the system because of its treatment of animals. The current system and its norms was thus delegitimated in favour of a new ideological and cultural system, which can be characterized as a break from the current political order. Sprinzak’s idea of a ‘great disappointment’ needing to occur also appears to be linked to the failure of the HSA to achieve its goals.

THE BIRTH OF THE ANIMAL LIBERATION FRONT

Establishing the ALF in England

The militant approach employed by the Band of Mercy also became a foundational tenet of the ALF. Both Lee and Goodman were paroled in 1976 after serving 12 months, only one-third of their sentence. Goodman came out of prison with only one purpose, not to go back. His career...
as an animal rights revolutionary was over and, whilst he remained a believer in animal rights, carrying out picketing, letter writing and attending demonstrations, he was determined not to break the law by his actions. He was critical of Lee’s approach that he believed condoned violence, going so far as to describe his old comrade as a ‘lunatic’. Goodman would go down in history as the movement’s first traitor or ‘grass’ (police informer) when he gave up the group’s radio communication methods to the police.

On the other hand, Lee left prison as the ‘undisputed leader of the movement’. While his organization, the Band of Mercy, had disbanded by Lee’s release in the spring of 1976, there were still a core of about 30 animal rights activists who were prepared to carry out actions and perceived Lee as their mentor.

On his release Lee found that many regarded him as a martyr for being willing to go to prison for his beliefs. He had used his time in prison to create a ‘battle plan’. He believed that the best approach by activists was to incorporate hit-and-run tactics and a diffuse cells structure. Any raid carried out would be publicized through the mass media, trying to demonstrate ongoing animal abuse to shock society and to generate support for their cause. The proposed model could also be easily duplicated.

The organization emphasized direct action as an economic strategy, with the overarching goal of inflicting economic loss on animal enterprises. According to Lee:

> If you go and damage a laboratory they have to pay to put it right and to install extra security measures (because often they won’t get insurance unless they put in extra security). This money often comes out of their research budget and would be spent on experimentation. A lot of people criticize the fact that damage is done, saying that property is sacred. I think it is important to point out that damage to property does save animals.

Lee wrote later, ‘we saw the situation as a guerilla campaign and those participating in it were very much in the front line’. Lee wanted to declare war on industrial society and was looking for a new vehicle for his ambitions. While the British police had been able to stop many members of the Band of Mercy, Lee (also known as ‘Captain Kirk’) and the 30 remaining activists created what became ALF-UK in June 1976. For many activists the ALF was born out of frustration. David Barbarash (former press officer for ALF) argues: ‘many activists do not understand the revolutionary nature of this movement. We are fighting a major war, defending animals and our very planet from human greed and destruction.’ According to Kim Stallwood, the ALF was created because
‘nothing was happening’ to stop vivisection and other animal abuses’. Stallwood further maintains:

> It was a drastic situation and we needed a drastic course of action. No one was thinking about it, no one was concerned about it, no one knew anything about it. The illegal activity brought it out and gave it immediate attention … There had been centuries of legal activity that had come to nothing. I don’t think it is that unusual, because when you look at any movement for social change there has always been this combination of legal and illegal activities.\(^77\)

While the Band of Mercy had focused primarily on the issues of hunting and animal experimentation, the nascent ALF also was concerned over the issue of animals in food production. The method adopted by the ALF was to use direct action to ‘liberate animals from what is held to be their violent speciesist oppression’.\(^78\)

With regards to naming this new operation, Mann explains, ‘the Band of Mercy wasn’t considered to be a sufficiently forceful name to represent the vanguard of the revolution that was envisaged, so it was ditched and the new (in)famous title – the Animal Liberation Front – was adopted in its place’.\(^79\) According to Schnurer, three factors made the new organization a unique threat to the ongoing system of animal oppression:

1. The ALF documents a world hidden from view. Photographing and videotaping animals trapped in the most intense states of cruelty provides an immediate ethical challenge to an audience.
2. The ALF communicates a direct sense of warning to all those who participate in animal oppression. The actions of the ALF resonate in the minds of those who profit from animal abuse. This combined with financial cost can make industries unwilling to defend particularly high-profile animal abusers.
3. The actions of the ALF send a message to all who might encounter, or consider taking part in, animal oppression, that they must be aware of the stakes of the issue. The ALF encourages reflection on the part of anyone considering animal experimentation or any other form of exploitation.\(^80\)

It did not take long for the ALF to become well established in the UK. In 1977, a small number of activists freed over 200 animals from laboratory supply companies.\(^81\) The ALF has become increasingly ‘radical and violent’ since it was formed.\(^82\) Within the UK, the ALF has long been considered the most radical ecogroup, with its paramilitary outfits and willingness to use violence to achieve its goals.\(^83\) By the 1980s the group
had been classified by Scotland Yard as a terrorist organization akin to the Irish Republican Army and the Palestine Liberation Organization.84

Establishing the ALF in the USA

The idea of an ALF was within a few years embraced by animal activists in the USA. The idea of so-called animal rights terrorism was once an alien concept to most Americans but over the last few decades has increased in both frequency and violence.85 The first action attributable to the ALF remains contested. Some allege that the ALF’s first action in the USA was in 1977, when it freed two dolphins from the University of Hawaii.86

An activist named ‘Valerie’ has also been credited with establishing the first US branch of the ALF. She was the architect in establishing numerous ALF cells throughout the USA and personally led numerous raids and provided logistical support for many more.87 One early claim of ALF action was in 1981 when 17 macaque monkeys that had initially been removed by police from the lab of a Dr Edward Taub in Silver City, Maryland, were later stolen by ALF members from police custody and taken to Florida.88

However, others date its first action as December 1983 when 12 research dogs were taken from a medical laboratory in Torrance, California. The $50,000 theft ruined years of research on heart pacemakers. Several further break-ins occurred with the ALF claiming responsibility for each act.89

What is clear is that the name ‘ALF’ and its cause entered into the US political and social consciousness following an action in 1984 in which members went into a head-injury lab at the University of Pennsylvania. The activists caused $70,000 worth of damage but, more importantly, took videotapes made by the researchers themselves. The tapes showed the lab technicians laughing as severe head trauma was inflicted on conscious baboons.90

While the lab claimed to be following all standards imposed by the National Institute of Health, the public outrage was immense. In the wake of the public outcry the facility was closed, the head veterinarian’s employment was terminated, and the university itself placed on probation.91 Further, for the first time the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services suspended public funding to a laboratory, an unprecedented event.92 These repercussions shocked the biomedical research community but were lauded by many environmentalists and animal rights activists as a righteous action since such footage could not have been obtained legally.93
Philosophical Underpinnings

Humanity’s consideration of the role and moral worthiness of animals has a long history. Some argue that the animal liberation movement was created because of ‘Judeo-Christian writings’. However, the traditional attitude towards animals is best summed up in the book of Genesis (Gen. 1:27–28):

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’

For many, however, Jeremy Bentham’s writing encapsulated the founding idea of the entire animal liberation movement. At a time when France had just liberated its black slaves but the British continued the practice, Bentham stated:

The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by their hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognized that the number of legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day or week or even a month old. But suppose they were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?

Incorporating ideas from Jeremy Bentham and Henry Salt, Peter Singer suggested that ‘racism, sexism, and specieism are the same breed of human behavior, and that slavery, the Jewish Holocaust, the subjugation of women, factory farming, and vivisection all reflect unjustified discrimination’. Peter Singer’s work, *Animal Liberation*, published in 1975, is commonly referred to as a turning point for the animal rights movement. For some the text gave the emerging radical movement a cohesive moral and philosophical perspective. Singer suggested that animals should be given the same moral consideration as humans. Anything less was specieism, which should be fought in the same way that racism or sexism should be. His seminal text provided a large
amount of evidence that modern agribusiness practices inflicted suffering on animals that far outweighed the benefits accruing to humans.\textsuperscript{100}

Singer argued that morality means ‘that all creatures who are capable of suffering demand consideration of their interests’. He wrote: ‘If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration’.\textsuperscript{101}

It is important to understand that Singer is not supporting animal rights per se, but rather demanding an end to prejudice and a right to equal consideration for all animals.\textsuperscript{102} He wrote that, ‘all sentient beings are entitled to equal consideration of their interests. A being possesses interests if it is capable of suffering and enjoyment; this capacity is the fundamental prerequisite for having interests at all. Equal interests must be equally respected, without regard to the species of beings whose interests they are.’\textsuperscript{103} To that end he believes that the ‘clearest and most dramatic form that testimony can take is vegetarianism’.\textsuperscript{104}

Some argue that the work has been a ‘bible’ for activists interested in direct action.\textsuperscript{105} However, it is important to note that Singer was unhappy with how his work has been utilized to justify radical action. He openly denounced the use of violence in the movement, stating, ‘by violence, I mean any action which causes direct physical harm … and I would go beyond physical harm to acts which cause psychological harm like fear or terror’.\textsuperscript{106}

While, arguably, Peter Singer’s work had an intense influence on the radical animal movement, there has been ‘a marked preference for action as opposed to boning up on correct theory’.\textsuperscript{107} Henshaw argues that Singer had simply been ‘overtaken by the revolution he had helped to begin’.\textsuperscript{108} According to Best and Nocella, while Singer attempted to ‘appeal to the “minds of the reasonable people”’, the ALF ‘believes that far too many are unreasonable and closed-minded, rendering force of reason and persuasion insufficient’.\textsuperscript{109}

A third key philosopher has been Tom Regan. In 1983, his \textit{The Case For Animal Rights} further developed Singer’s initial findings, and ‘laid the ideological groundwork for liberating animals from human oppression’.\textsuperscript{110} Regan maintained that, ‘animals have intrinsic rights … certain animals at least, especially mammals, have consciousness. Mammalian animals have beliefs and desires upon which they act.’\textsuperscript{111} Regan further contended that:

\begin{quote}
We are each of us experiencing subjects of a life, a conscious creature having an individual welfare that has importance to us whatever our usefulness to others. We want and prefer things, believe and feel things, recall and expect things. And all these dimensions of our life, including our pleasure and pain,
\end{quote}
our enjoyment and suffering, our satisfaction and frustration, our continued
existence or our untimely death – all make a difference to the quality of our
life as lived, as experienced, by us as individuals.112

As such, he concludes, arguments that ‘only humans have rights because
they are the only animals that have reason and language, besides being
factually wrong, are completely irrelevant as sentience is a necessary and
sufficient condition for having rights’.113

Tom Regan disagreed with many of the ideas espoused by Singer. Regan
‘attacked Singer from a different philosophical position, while still
sharing the same position on animal cruelty’. Regan argued that, ‘Sing-
er’s utilitarianism supports animal’s research for human purposes, even if
it means that most of these animals will experience pain and harm’,114
and further insists that ‘all animals are equal to humans in their right not
to be harmed arbitrarily’.115

Shift to Radical Philosophy

Garner argues that although concern for the plight of animals in an
organizational setting first emerged in the nineteenth century, since the
birth of the ALF the animal protection movement has become radical-
ized.116 Building on the philosophical underpinnings of Bentham, Singer
and Regan the radical approach of the ALF has ‘abolitionist objectives’,
with the aim to end all types of animal exploitation, whether for food,
clothing, consumer safety, scientific advance or entertainment. Such
activists argue that animals are ‘bearers of rights – and particularly the
right to life – we are not entitled to use them’.117

Since the 1970s, the ‘radical philosophy has fed upon a much more
receptive social climate and, in turn, this has encouraged further interest
at the theoretical level’. However, this statement does not necessarily
mean that ‘activists are aware of the complex philosophizing that
characterizes the leading radical works’. Obvious exceptions include
Regan, Singer and Linzey (all of whom are leading academics and
well-known activists). Such academic work has given the ‘radical wing
of the movement academic respectability in addition to a clearer set of
objectives’.118

As Hall points out the ALF, building on the philosophical insights of
Bentham and Singer, is concerned with the prevention of suffering.119
Both the ALF (and, lately, the Justice Department, an offshoot animal
liberation group) claim that, ‘contemporary ways of treating animals are
an infringement of the non-negotiable and absolute higher law of the
truth of animals’. According to David Barbarash (the former spokesman for the ALF): ‘we’re very dangerous philosophically. Part of the danger is that we don’t buy into the illusion that property is worth more than life … we bring that insane priority into the light, which is something the system cannot survive.’

Steven Best maintains that the struggle for animal rights should be seen as ‘intimately connected’ to the ongoing struggle for humanity. However, while, arguably the basic philosophy behind the ALF is that of animal rights, there must be a distinction made between animal rights and animal liberation. According to Best and Nocella, ‘whereas animal rights often is a legal fight without direct action, animal liberation is an immediate confrontation with exploiters’. For ALF members:

The implications of the new philosophy were rather more urgent than traditional and rather cosy notions of welfare. These were groups that were going to get things done, groups for activists who wanted more out of the membership than demonstrations of de-infestation techniques and the annual charity social.

There are elements of millenarian philosophy in much of the movement. According to Henshaw, ALF members perceive humanity as such an ongoing evil that violence was inevitable. For example, in 1984, Ronnie Lee wrote:

Animal Liberation is a fierce struggle that demands total commitment … There will be injuries and possible deaths on both sides … This is sad but certain … true animal liberation will not come merely through the destruction of the Dachaus and Buchenwalds but demands nothing more than the driving back of the human species to its pre invasion boundaries.

Many times the movement’s writings, and the activists themselves, have spoken of their desire to return to a place where humanity can live in a state of grace with animals, nature is not restrained and human society is deindustrialized.

Members of the ALF argue that many laws pertaining to animals exist only to protect animal exploiters and such laws that permit ongoing suffering are inherently corrupt. In 1984 Lee stated in The Guardian newspaper: ‘the law in this country offers little or no protection to animals so it is necessary for people to break the law to protect animals’. Thus, as Henshaw explains, disobeying the law was an inevitable consequence of those beliefs but it was acceptable since activists did not believe they were ‘real’ laws. Members would argue that they were not breaking what they described as ‘moral laws’ but rather
merely a ‘legal law’. Breaking such a conception of the law was justified to do the ‘right thing’ in protecting animals from human exploitation.\(^1\)\(^3\)\(^0\)

NOTES

12. Steven Best (2006) ‘Rethinking the revolution: animal liberation, human liberation, and the future of the left’, International Journal of Inclusive Democracy, 2 (3), pp. 5–6. For example, in Britain – ‘there are hundreds of pro-animal groups’, including the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (that has approximately 500,000 supporters). In the USA there are the ‘traditional groups’ including the Humane Society, the Anti-Vivisection League and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and ‘new groups’ including the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA, with approximately 300,000 supporters), the Gorilla Foundation, the Human Farming Association, Farm Animal Reform, Alliance for Animals, Citizens to End Animal Suffering and Exploitation (CEASE), Trans-Special Unlimited and the Digit Fund. Similar groups are also present in the Philippines, South Korea, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Mexico, India and Russia (among others). Jody Emel and Jennifer Wolch (1998) ‘Witnessing the animal moment’, in Woch and Emel (eds), Animal Geographies: Places, Politics and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands (London and New York: Verso), p. 520.
Cage fighting: the Animal Liberation Front

24. Kuipers, *Operation Bite Back: Rod Coronado’s War to Save the American Wilderness*, p. 35.
33. Molland, ‘Thirty years of direct action’.
36. Ibid., pp. 11, 50.
41. Ibid., p. 196.
42. Ibid., p. 56.
43. Ibid., p. 13.
45. Tester and Walls, ‘The ideology and current activities of the Animal Liberation Front’, p. 79.
From environmental action to ecoterrorism?

54. Ibid., p. 52.
55. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid., p. 53.
63. Ibid.
71. Ibid., p. 208.
76. Best, ‘Rethinking the revolution: animal liberation, human liberation and the future of the left’, p. 27.
77. Scarce, Eco-warriors: understanding the radical environmental movement, p. 140; Kim Stallwood interviewed by Rik Scarce, Rockville, Maryland (30 October 1989).


88. Kuipers, Operation Bite Back: Rod Coronado’s War to Save the American Wilderness, p. 44.


90. Kuipers, Operation Bite Back: Rod Coronado’s War to Save the American Wilderness, p. 44.

91. Ibid.


93. Kuipers, Operation Bite Back: Rod Coronado’s War to Save the American Wilderness, p. 44.


97. Liddick, Eco-Terrorism: Radical Environmental and Animal Liberation Movements, p. 36.


103. Ibid.

From environmental action to ecoterrorism?

107. Ibid., p. 32.
108. Ibid., p. 201.
117. Ibid., p. 337.
118. Ibid.
120. Tester and Walls, ‘The Ideology and Current Activities of the Animal Liberation Front’, p. 84.
121. Best, ‘Rethinking the revolution: animal liberation, human liberation and the future of the left’, p. 11.
123. Best and Nocella, ‘Behind the mask: uncovering the Animal Liberation Front’, p. 27.
129. Ibid.