

FEMINISTS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

NEWSLETTER

Vol. I, No. 3 Winter, 1984

Feminist Reflections

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF ANIMALS IN SCIENCE

For centuries the religions of the world have influenced our attitudes toward nature. Today, science has come to assume much of this role. As science has staked out its claims on nature, the major religions have had to respond. The International Conference on Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science held in London on July 25-27 may be seen as one such response. It represents, in a sense, the attempt by one major institutional body of authority (namely, religion) to pass judgment on that of another (namely, science). Animals, of course, are the pawns in this dispute.

Clearly, the major institutional religions can and do have a large impact on people's attitudes towards animals. But how much hope can they offer laboratory animals? Judging from the conference, not a lot. Clearly, the speakers at the conference were anxious to make their religions "safe" for animals. What seems most significant, however, is that not one of the religions was able to condemn all animal experimentation (with the possible exception of one Buddhist speaker). Words such as "legitimate humane need" and "arbitrary" or "avoidable" experimentation were bandied about. Much of the audience was clearly frustrated by the apparent willingness of the religions to compromise the lives of animals (at least on some occasions) for the benefit of science.

Animals, I suspect, have as much hope of being redeemed by the institutional (i.e., patriarchal) religions as do women. None are able to shed the hierarchical vision of the universe which places animals (and women) somewhere below men (even the Buddhists, we learn, feel that

reincarnation as an animal is a form of punishment). Many feminists who have despaired of the patriarchal religions have begun to revision what a feminist spirituality might be. There is also a renewed effort to place our attitudes towards animals within a larger spiritual perspective. Unfortunately, none of these issues were raised at the conference.

The IAAPEA is to be commended for its initiative and hard work in putting on the conference. Hopefully, it will be an inspiration both for increased international networking and for further discussion on religious perspectives on animals. I would hope, however, that in future conferences such a discussion could move beyond the patriarchal religions to the more interesting and more promising area of non-patriarchal spirituality. The issues raised by a number of feminist writers (Susan Griffin, Rosemary Reuther and Mary Daly to name a few) concerning both spirituality and our attitudes toward nature would surely be significant contributions to such a discussion. Hopefully, such changes would also result in a more balanced representation of the sexes (there was only one woman speaker at the entire conference!). Hopefully, as well, there will be greater allowance for audience participation in the future. Since posing questions was the only means by which the audience could participate much valuable discussion and exchange was lost. Such a structure merely replicates the hierarchical aspects of the patriarchal religions.

In short, everyone stands to gain in the animal rights movement from incorporation of feminist insights both into the content and the format of future conferences.

--Marti Kheel

CONVICT

On August 27, 1984 the second organized form of civil disobedience on behalf of animals took place. It was organized by a coalition group called "Animal Rights Direct Action Coalition" in protest of the illegal and inhumane treatment of laboratory animals at U.C.B.

Non-violent civil disobedience has been a favored tactic of a number of movements, most notably the civil rights, anti-war, anti-nuclear and women's movements. For many women it has come to symbolize the living enactment of feminist principles. It involves opposition to violence and exploitation and yet it does not employ the violent tactics of those that exploit.

We are encouraged to see this method of change adopted by the animal rights movement and hope that more actions of this kind will be planned for the future. Letter-writing, demonstrations and education seem to only go so far. The crimes committed under the name of science attract little or no attention on their own. Our "crimes" of protest, however, do. Practically speaking, it is defiance of the law that attracts the media. The media coverage of the 26 people arrested for civil disobedience was far more extensive than any of our previous actions. Such coverage goes a long way toward educating the public and applying pressure to those in control.

Those who have never been involved in civil disobedience might wonder what it is like. The following account gives one person's version of what occurred.

Being arrested was not what I thought it would be. Not that I really had many detailed fantasies about it but somehow it seemed to deserve more fanfare or excitement. I mean, I was supposed to be at work that Monday and instead I found myself searching endlessly for a parking space in Berkeley. I had plenty of water and a chew stick for the stray shepherd dog I had found five days earlier. I had not planned on being escorted away by the police. I went only to add my body to those already there,

hoping thereby to help alleviate the suffering of the animals sentenced to a life inside the UCB laboratories.

We began by reading our statement, then they read theirs and then some time elapsed during which it seemed that nothing was to happen. How embarrassing, I thought, not to be taken seriously enough to be arrested. Finally, about half of the blockaders were arrested. The remaining protestors remained in their places while an occasional police officer loitered in the area. At one point I noticed that the first group was being released from another door in the building and I calculated that if it only took a few minutes, I could be arrested and still make it to work on time! So I sat down in the line of blockaders, unannounced to the CD organizers and the media. This caused quite a disruption, almost more of one than the entire action! But the police waited patiently for me to give my name before taking me away to the basement of the administration building. Here they took identifying information including fingerprints, photo and our signature to promise to appear at our arraignment. The officer admonished, "if you people do this again, bring your bail money so you can be released." "O.K., bye." Then, off to work.

The booking process, which was supposed to last a minimum of one hour, lasted three and one-half hours because the computer was down. They also needed four complete sets of fingerprints, another photo and more questions answered before they locked us up. We took the time to discuss our next action, options for our pleas, and what to do about the shepherd dog.

Sentencing amounted to a four-month probation until our 24 hours of "diversion programming" was completed and we returned to court having been good "girls" and "boys." No more CDs, obey all laws, be on good conduct, call our project intercept worker monthly, blah, blah,

CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, NATURE AND SCIENCE IN SWEDEN

The subject of women and nature has come to the foreground of feminist thought in recent years. A number of books have appeared showing how the association of women and nature has contributed to the mutual devaluation of each. Carolyn Merchant's The Death of Nature develops this theme while showing the particularly destructive consequences of the scientific world view that arose in the 1600s. Although the earlier image of nature as female contributed to the exploitation of nature, the image of nature as a nurturing, benevolent mother also curbed the destructive potential of such a view. As Carolyn Merchant states: "One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body." In the 1600s the image of "mother nature" was replaced with two new images: nature was viewed as either an alluring female virgin whose secrets had to be wrested from her or as a life-less machine. Both images encouraged the mechanistic view of nature that came to dominate modern science. It is Rene Descartes who is best known for his popularization of the mechanistic view of nature. According to Descartes, the world could be divided into mind and matter, the mind (with its male character) being entrusted with control over matter (seen as female). Animals, for Descartes, were mere machines that could feel no pain. Smashing the legs of a dog would hurt no more than removing the hands of a clock. It was this view, more than any other, that sanctioned the exploitation of animals around the world on a scale hitherto unknown.

These ideas formed the background to the conference held over the summer in Malmo, Sweden which featured Carolyn Merchant as its major speaker. The conference was attended by 40 women from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. The first day of the conference concerned itself with the association between women and nature in Western society raising such questions as whether this association has always existed, whether it necessarily leads to the degradation of both women and nature and whether such an association is helpful or harmful to nature as a whole.

In the remaining two days the natural science orientation of the conference came to the fore. Presentations were made on such subjects as the history of women in science and the scientific evidence of sex differences between women and men. The central question that arose throughout the conference was "how to be a feminist in a male dominated field." Many of the women in the sciences (the majority of the women there) clearly had qualms about working in their fields. All seemed to cherish the hope, however, that the sheer existence of feminists in a patriarchal field would of necessity bring about change. After listening to one woman lecture me on "sociobiology and the selfish gene" and another describe her experiments on moles I had strong doubts. (On the slightly more optimistic side, the animal experimenter did confess her inability to morally justify her work and her hopes to eventually leave such research and teach.)

Few of the participants, however, seemed to question their actual work or the scientific discipline itself. What, for example, does it mean to be a biologist and to bring nature inside a laboratory? What does it mean that the major impulse behind the sciences is the desire to penetrate and control nature? What are the implications of these ideas for animals? Unfortunately, none of these issues were raised at the conference. In fact, not a single mention was made of the abuse of animals by science. Much of the discussion of women and nature (both at the conference and in the literature more generally) seems to conceive of nature as simply that which is green. The failure to address the abuse of animals as part of the more general abuse of nature is a silence as oppressive to animals as the many silences that have helped to maintain the oppression of women. The fact that

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CONVICT (Continued)

blah. Or else the charges would stick and we would have to pay \$90 or spend three days in jail and be convicted of this crime in addition to the second offense.

Questions arise. Where's the lawyer? What if we do CD again? Will it matter if it is in a different county? Would we do our time at Santa Rita and could we be together? As it stands now our hands are tied until January 17, 1985.

What about the next CD? Shall I participate which could mean conviction, jail and precious money? What about employment, future and career? But what about the animals and the atrocities that they endure.

I see a fat cat in front of me. He was a street cat once, with hair like straw and bowels filled with garbage and debris. He is secure here with two humans, a sister and an assortment of transient animals who pass through his life en route to better homes. But what if he had gone to the laboratories? How is he different from all those other prisoners who never see anything but fluorescent lighting, hear nothing but the clang of their metal cages and doors. He is such a beautiful being worthy of so much more. See you in court!

--Laura Huffman

SWEDEN (Continued)

most of the exploitation of animals by patriarchal society occurs behind closed doors (i.e., in laboratories, factory farms, fur farms, etc.) no doubt facilitates such silence. Just as lies, secrecy and silence¹ have helped to maintain the oppression of women so too have they contributed to the oppression of animals. Hopefully, future conferences and discussion on the subject of women and nature will break through this deadly silence and give the topic of animal rights the attention and concern it so urgently needs.

--Marti Kheel

PAST ACTIONS

F.A.R. has been well represented at the animal rights events held around California this past year. We attended the Mobilization for Animals Wildlife Rally held in L.A., the several showings of The Animals Film in Berkeley, and the U.C. Berkeley Rally, all held in April. F.A.R. also participated in the vigil held for the primates at the U.C. Davis and supported those involved in civil disobedience there. This was reportedly the first CD in the U.S. held for animal rights. Members were also at the Plague Dogs, the screening of an animated movie about two escapee dogs from laboratories, held in S.F. This June and July, F.A.R. tabled at the East Bay Lesbian and Gay Celebration. One member also represented us at a conference in Sweden on "Women, Nature and Science" and one in London on "Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science" (see articles for details). More recently we joined with a group called Animal Rights Direct Action Coalition at University of CA at Berkeley where a second civil disobedience action happened. On August 27, 1984 26 persons were arrested (see article for details) for protesting conditions of laboratory animals at U.C. Berkeley. Subsequently, photos were released to the public of yet more violations of the Animal Welfare Act by UCB. This evidence was received after UCB officials had announced that they have completed their clean up of the violations found during AAALAC's last inspection! F.A.R. was also involved at the Santa Cruz Animal Awareness Day and at the War Tax Resisters League Conference and also BARFed (Berkeley Anti-Reagan Festival) or at least tabled there. Also, on Oct. 2, Gandhi's Birthday, we were at U.C.B. honoring Animal Awareness Day. In our latest action we joined 500 demonstrators at the Letterman Army Institute of Research protesting the use of animals for war time research.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Please copy and pass to others.

CONSUMER VIOLENCE: ARMING OURSELVES WITH THE FACTS

Patriarchal violence toward nature appears in many forms. One of the more perverted forms of such violence is the use of animals for the production of household products. In the U.S. alone 65-100 million animals are used annually as test subjects by drug manufacturers, cosmetic companies, companies that produce household products and commercial research centers.

All types of animals are used, the most common being rats, mice, rabbits and guinea pigs. Also used are cats, dogs, monkeys, horses, cattles, goats, sheep, hamsters, chickens, ducks and birds.

The FDA is required to regulate the sale of cosmetic and household products and specifies that there be adequate substantiation of safety for products placed on the market. The FDA, however, does not have the authority to demand or enforce safety testing. Most companies test products on animals simply because animal testing has long been the accepted method of substantiation and has gone unquestioned until now.

The three standard methods of animal testing are: Lethal Dosage 50 (LD50), the Draize Eye Irritancy Test and the Skin Irritancy Test. In the LD 50 test the compound is force-fed to a group of animals and over a 14 day period it is observed what dosage is required to kill 50% of the test group. The animals die after suffering internal ruptures, bleeding, convulsions, paralysis and vomiting. And those that die are the lucky ones. The Draize test uses albino rabbits (because their eyes do not tear), immobilized for periods up to 168 hours while various substances are dropped into their eyes. In the Skin Irritancy Test substances are applied to the animals' skin and covered with adhesive plaster while the animal is restrained for a chosen period of time.

Many researchers, including some associated with government agencies, have now come out against the use of these tests stating that the results vary too much from laboratory to laboratory, that the tests are unreliable and that the results cannot be extrapolated with any certainty to human beings.

Large companies are reacting to such statements and to the growing public outrage at the many repetitive, useless and cruel experiments on animals and are now beginning to develop nonsentient testing methods. These methods do, however, have to win widespread approval by rigid regulatory personnel in this country and in those to which we export. Small companies (see our first newsletter or write to us for addresses) are leading the way in this uphill battle giving us various products that are both animal free and that use alternative methods of testing, such as chemical tests and calculations based on previously published test reports. F.A.R. encourages everyone to support these cruelty-free companies. We also suggest that you write to the larger companies and let them know how you feel about animal testing and encourage their efforts to use alternatives.

Non-cooperation with patriarchal forms of violence is a major way in which women can exert their power. By arming ourselves with the facts of the use of animal ingredients in everyday household products we can try to reduce and eliminate the demand for those products and look to companies that are animal free to meet our product demand. The following are some examples of products that contain animal by-products:

--Pill capsules, photographic film, beer and many desserts and ice creams are made with gelatin derived from boiled animal parts such as skin and hooves.

--Silk is obtained from boiling silkworms.

CONSUMER VIOLENCE: (Continued)

- Animal fat is used to make fatty acids and glycerin, which are ingredients in detergents, soap, paint and paint thinner, tire rubber, anti-freeze, insulation, chalk, phonographic records, sweeteners and paper matches.
- Livestock blood is used in livestock feeds and fertilizer, foam rubber, concrete, plywood adhesive and shoe polish.
- Animal glands, organs and intestines are used in hundreds of pharmaceutical preparations, some of which include vitamin B12, insulin, cortisone, pepsin, epinephrine. Cattle testes and spinal cords are used to produce the male hormone testosterone. Heart valves from pigs and arteries from cattle and sheep are used in cardiovascular surgery. Rennet, a stomach enzyme taken from calves, sheep and goats is used to make cheese. Many chemicals are made from livestock by-products.

Some of these products can simply be avoided. Alternatives to others do exist. F.A.R. is currently working on a list of non-animal ingredients used as alternatives to the use of animals. We encourage everyone to learn the facts. Let's make sure that violence does not pay!

--Ellen Lynch

ON SALE

Wow did we goof!? Our last newsletter erroneously reported that 60 rubber stamps were donated to F.A.R. by Cheela Smith. That is the name printed on the side of the stamp; however, proper credit should be given to Miami Heuser of Berkeley for her generous contribution. Our sincere apologies for any resulting mix-up. F.A.R. is still selling them for \$3.00 or \$3.50 by mail to help raise copying and other postage funds. We are pleased to announce they have been a big hit and are running low!

Due to increased cost of reproducing cassette tapes, something beyond our control, Sally Gearhart's tape will now be available for \$5.00 (including postage). The tape is entitled "Feminism and Animal Rights" and explores the connections between the oppression of women and animals. Available through F.A.R. courtesy of Action for Animals.

Also available from F.A.R. are copies of the Cookbook for People Who Love Animals (all vegan recipes). Send \$7.50 (includes postage).

RECOMMENDED READING

Oakland Organic, Bruce Henderson, 1982
available at Community Food Store on
Park Blvd. (a good book that deals with
the subject of veganism)

Green Paradise Lost, Dorothy Gray,
Roundtable Press, 1979 (a clearly and
concisely written account of patriarchy's
treatment of nature)

The Death of Nature, Carolyn Merchant
(a more detailed, historical, academic
approach to the same topic)

Reclaim the Earth, edited by Leonie
Caldecott and Stephanie Leland, the
Women's Press, 1983 (a wide variety of
essays on the general topic of women and
the environment, including one essay on
animal rights)

Reweaving the Web of Life, edited by Pam
McAllister, New Society publishers, 1982
(an excellent anthology on the subject of
feminism and non-violence also including
one essay on women and animal rights)

ANIMAL RIGHTS IS A FEMINIST ISSUE

Order Form

FEMINIST FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS is a not-for-profit organization staffed by volunteers. Our financial resources at this time are very limited, and we regret that we must ask for a donation from those who wish to continue received our newsletter.

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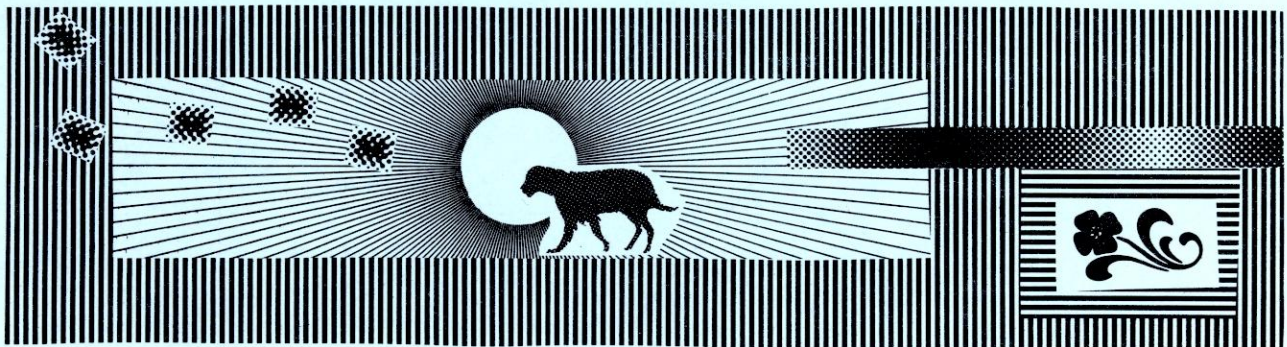
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