

DISCURSO INAUGURAL

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I would like to thank everyone who is responsible for inviting me to this very exciting meeting, especially Jorge Riechmann and Marta Gonzalez. Need I reiterate how complimented, glad, pleased, and happy, I am to be here on this auspicious occasion and how delighted I am at the formation of this splendid organization.

To an outsider, it looks like change is in the air for the animals in Spain. I will discuss some of what we are doing in the US, but my impression is that Spain has made greater progress in less time than we have and this despite the fact that we have a strong tradition of kindness to animals that I think is not present in the many Spanish speaking countries.

Let me start from the modern beginning of animal protection—to use a neutral expression. 19th Century England saw a number of people advocating for the better treatment of animals. That Century, 1834 to be precise, saw the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), later the RSPCA with its patron Queen Victoria. In the US the American Anti-Vivisection Society (1883) and the New England Anti-Vivisection Society (1895) were formed while Henry Bergh founded the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to animals (ASPCA) in 1866. In 1889 George T. Angell founded the Massachusetts SPCA (1868) as well as the American Humane Education Society (1889) to protect children. These two organizations shared a board of directions revealing that both the protection of children and animals was viewed as important in achieving a more humane world.

In 1892 Henry Salt wrote *Animal Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress* in which he presented a number of arguments for animal rights, but much of this was either ignored or forgotten by the early part of the 20th Century. The 1950s saw the formation of a number of organizations such as The Animal Welfare Institute in 1951, the Human Society of the United States (HSUS) in 1954, and Friends of Animals in 1957. Although these organizations worked to improve the treatment of animals it was not until Peter Singer published “Animal Liberation” his review of *Animals, Men and Morals* in the New York Review of Book in 1973 and later his *Animal Liberation* in 1975 that people once again began speaking and thinking about animal rights. Peter Singer initiated, or at the very least, reinvigorated the animal rights movement in the 20th Century. Ironically Peter Singer was called—even on the jacket of his own book—the father of the animal rights movement despite the fact that Singer is a utilitarian and like Bentham before him, does not believe in rights.

At first this expression ‘animal rights’ was laughed at and made the butte of jokes, but gradually with the publication of books like *Animal rights: A Christian Assessment* in 1976 by Andrew Linzey’s and *The Case for Animal Rights* in 1983 by Tom Regan, the notion of animal rights was understood as calling for better treatment of animals even if many thought such a matter was of no significance whatsoever. Authors such as Regan and Linzey tried to establish the intellectual basis for rights; they introduced the notion of abolition as opposed to welfare, a theme Gary Francione has talked about at great length.

After the publication of *Animal Liberation*, organizations to protect farm animals sprang up while old antivivisection organizations were revitalized or new ones were formed. These new organizations reflected Singer's emphasis on the cruelty and exploitation of food animals and laboratory animals. For Singer, a good utilitarian, the mere numbers of suffering food animals makes them perhaps the most important problem in the treatment of animals

PETA, founded in 1980, provides us with an example of early activity for laboratory animals. In 1981 Alex Pacheco not only photographed the monkeys and the unsanitary conditions in which they lived at a research laboratory in Silver Springs, but he also brought in several veterinarians and primatologists to corroborate these conditions. As a result the laboratory was raided by the police, the first time in US history that a lab was raided on the basis of animal cruelty.

PETA again made headlines in 1985 when the Animal Liberation Front broke into the Head Injury Laboratory, hidden in the basement behind unmarked doors, at the University of Pennsylvania, and stole video tapes made by the researchers themselves. These tapes, delivered to PETA's doorstep, revealed wiggling baboons glued into helmets and shaken with such force that they developed brain damage. PETA edited some 60 hours of tape and used them as evidence to show that Federal guide lines were not followed, that the baboons were not anesthetized as claimed, and so forth. The US Secretary of Health and Human Services suspended funding and the lab was closed although it resurfaced later, this time using pigs instead of baboons..

In the early days of the animal rights movement, we urged people to neuter their dogs and cats, investigated acts of cruelty, wrote letters, marched, demonstrated, wore placards, held up signs and filed lawsuits in order to inform the public about the often hidden inhumane treatment of animals. Our efforts to reveal animal exploitation was duly, if skeptically—and often inaccurately-- reported in local newspapers. In those early days, demonstrations were somewhat newsworthy because they were unusual. The reporters were full of questions concerning future plans: would there be violence they would ask in what seemed like a rather hopeful tone. Now, 20 or 30 years later, demonstrations are routine, the TV camera crews do not always show up and if they do, the videos are often shelved if there is something more "exciting" to report on the evening news.

Lawsuits are still filed, letters are still written, and demonstrations still take place, but unless there are huge crowds, they are no longer very effective. There is now an increasing realization that these efforts, although important, by themselves will not bring about the desired changes. There is a general and growing acknowledgment concerning the importance of political activity. Animal protectionists, by which I include both animal rightists and animal welfareists, are slowly coming to the realization that we must have legislators who know the issues and are willing to introduce new legislation or perhaps to enforce or fund already existing legislation. This emphasis on political activity, I believe, is a sign of the maturity of the animal rights movement in the US.

What we see is a growing interest in lobbying and electioneering. Most of the large animal organizations are 501 (c) 3 or charitable organizations. This means, among other things,

that if you donate money, you can take a deduction on your taxes, but it also means that although a charitable foundation can engage in some amount of lobbying for a cause, such organizations by law cannot engage in electioneering, that is cannot actually give money to a candidate or be involved in a candidate's effort to get elected or conversely be involved in trying to defeat a candidate. These laws limited the efforts of animal organizations to bring about change.

Thoughtful individuals have begun to recognize how useful animal Political Action Committees or PACs can be in achieving the goals of the animal rights movement. PACs can legally engage in electioneering, that is PACs can actively engage in the election process, either by helping a candidate get elected or re-elected or by targeting a candidate so that he or she is not elected or re-elected. Since PACS are political rather than charitable organizations, donations are not tax deductible, but PACs offer the advantage that their donations to candidates are less severely limited than those made by an individual. Animal PACs are single-issue political organizations, that is issues unrelated to animals are ignored; PACs are also non partisan in that they will endorse a candidate from any party who supports their views on animal issues.

It is not surprising then that the last 7 to 10 years has seen the formation of animal PACS. In 1997 Peter Muller founded a PAC, the League of Humane Voters (LOHV), in New York State to influence legislation in that state. It now includes a state chapter and 5 local chapters, as well as 2 chapters in Ohio with possibly a third in Pennsylvania Muller believes that it is more effective to work from the bottom up and thus LOHV works primarily on the local or state level. Other state PACs include the Animal Legislative Action Network in California and the New Jersey Animal Protection PAC.

In the fall of 1999 Humane USA, the first national animal PAC was formed by Linda Nealon and Wayne Pacelle, now President and CEO of HSUS. Humane USA works primarily, although not exclusively, on the national or Federal level.

What precisely do these PACs do in their electioneering activities? In general, animal PACs try to establish a data base of "single issue" voters. Politicians are often grateful for the promise of these guaranteed votes particularly in a contested election where even a small number of votes can determine the outcome of the election. PACs will publicly endorse candidates, and will often volunteer to answer phones, hand out literature, distribute lawn signs, and be generally helpful in publicizing the views of the politician. For example, in trying to defeat a candidate who was in favor of cock fighting, Humane USA paid for radio and newspaper ads.

The small number of voters that can change an election may sound surprising to this audience. My understanding is that one has to vote in Spain, but this is not the case in the US. Consider a typical district in the US such as where I live. There may be 25,000 people in such a district, but of those 25,000 only 12,000 are registered voters and of those 12,000 registered voters only 6,000 or even less may vote. More people vote in an a presidential election than in a local election. This means that in order to win in a district of 25,000 people, a candidate needs only a majority of those who voted, namely 3001 or so votes. These facts explain how misleading it is when presidents such as Nixon or Bush assert that they have a "mandate" from the people. Since most of "the people" have not voted, what they have is only a bigger or smaller majority of those who have voted.

What kinds of animal issue are these PACs working for? Humane USA refers to the HSUS website where six headings are listed under Federal Legislation. These include:

- 1) Animals in Research.
- 2) Companion Animals.
- 3) Cruelty Issues.
- 4) Farm Animals.
- 5) Marine Animals.
- 6) Wildlife.

1) Animals in Research includes a bill to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act.

2) Companion Animals includes a number of bills:

- a) The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act is a bill to prevent the slaughter of horses (horses are not eaten in the US but are shipped primarily to France).
- b) The Antifreeze Bittering Act of 2005 is a bill to add a bittering agent to antifreeze so that animals and even children will not eat the sweet tasting antifreeze and be poisoned.
- c) The Pet Animal Welfare Statute of 2005 would close a loophole and include protection for puppies and kittens sold over the web or through newspaper ads.
- d) The Pet Safety and Protection Act ensures that any dog or cat used in research is obtained legally (some people steal dogs or cats and then sell them to research laboratories).
- e) The Pet Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act requires that state and local authorities include household pets and service animals in an emergency evacuation.

3) Cruelty Issues contains only one bill:

The Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act for violations of the federal animal fighting law.

4) Farm Animals also contains only one bill:

The Downed Animal Protection Act requires downed animals (animals that cannot walk) to be humanely euthanized, thus prohibiting the inclusion of such animals in human food.

5) Marine Mammals does not include any bills, but two resolutions:

- a) The Canadian Seal Hunt Resolution that calls for the end to the seal hunt.
- b) The Drive Fisheries Resolution which condemns the driving or herding of small cetaceans such as dolphins and small whales into enclosed areas where they are slaughtered with spears and knives.

6) Wildlife contains a number of bills:

- a) The Captive Primate Safety Act that prohibits interstate and foreign commerce in nonhuman primates for the pet trade.
- b) The Truth in Fur Labeling Act that closes a loophole that enabled furs of small value to avoid the requirement of naming the animal from which the fur was taken, the country in which the animals were killed, and other pertinent information.
- c) The Great Cats and Rare Canids Act of 2005 that provides support for the conservation of rare felids, such as lions, leopards, Iberian lynx among others and rare canids, such as the gray wolf, African and Asiatic wild dogs.
- d) The Computer Assisted Remote Hunting Act would prohibit computer hunting.

- e) The Wild horse and Burros bill would restore the prohibition of slaughtering free roaming wild horses and burros.
- f) The Sportsmanship in Hunting Act that would prohibit the interstate commerce of exotic animals destined for canned hunts.
- g) The Multi-Use Conflict Resolution Act of 2005 that would provide compensation for livestock owners who voluntarily relinquish grazing permits on Federal lands.
- h) The Yellowstone Buffalo Preservation Act that would prohibit the killing, or hazing of the Yellowstone National Park buffalo (really bison).
- i) HSUS opposed the Hunting Heritage Protection Act that requires all federal public lands, with only a few exceptions, to be open for recreational hunting and that the pertinent federal agencies support and promote hunting.
- j. Endangered species day resolution promotes awareness of the need for species preservation.

Several other national organizations announce both federal and state legislation and ask for letters in support of, or in opposition to, these bills on their websites. Some of these sites carry the complete text of the legislation--others provide links for the text--enumerate the legislators that introduced the bill, and give the present status of the bill. All of the sites include links so that one can identify his or her legislators in case the latter are unknown.

As these websites reveal, contemporary technology is a tool that can support and facilitate the growth of animal activism. Computers and the internet, printers and copiers, small cameras and video all offer animal activists a number of advantages. Computers and email make communication quick and easy. Dawnwatch, for example, announces animal issues discussed in the print media throughout the US, as well as on TV, giving addresses for hard copy or email responses and even suggesting what particular issues might be raised in such letters.

Using computers to communicate also means that news about animals is not filtered through editors who often think such news is unimportant or in some cases that visual images cannot be televised because they are too graphic and might offend or upset some people. For example, cable television carried a segment on the fur trade involving dogs in China but omitted some footage because it was "too graphic." Computers, however, enable PETA to show such footage on its website so that one can judge for oneself how cruel or not cruel the activity in question actually is. Computers also allow one avoid the often inaccurate or exaggerated descriptions of so-called threats or "liberations."

Computers also allow for the easy accumulation of data in data banks so that mass mailing can be accomplished, data can be transferred, information can be archived, etc.

Technology, particularly cameras and various kinds of projectors, have also allowed for specially outfitted trucks or vans to drive through a city while showing videos of animal abuse. SHARK (Showing Animals Respect and Kindness) has used this method, showing tapes of rodeos in their campaign to get Starbucks to stop supporting this activity. PETA has used small TVs that demonstrators can wear showing animal abuse. Small DVD players set up on tables enable people to see what the animals endure rather than simply reading pamphlets about animal abuse. A slightly different use involves video cams running constantly showing, for example,

elephants in a sanctuary. If they are within range of the camera, one can watch the elephants doing whatever they do naturally without disturbing them. The cam vividly reveals the difference between the life of such elephants and an elephant confined to a small zoo enclosure and thus clarifies the claim that elephants do not belong in zoos.. The National Zoo had a cam running 24 hours a day on the newly born panda cub.

Another very recent example of the use of video involved observers of the Canadian seal hunt. One could actually see footage of their small craft being rammed by a Canadian fishing vessel and could hear one of the women observers calling the sealers a name. Incidentally a lot of the information about the intense cruelty of the seal kill was corroborated on film taken by a helicopter in such a way that the sealers were unaware that they were being filmed.

Even the very traditional work of trying to find homes for abandoned or stray dogs and cats is aided by technology. A website lists and describes with photographs thousands of animals, including horses and small mammals, that need homes.

It may have happened that the animal rights movement in the US has matured and is beginning to realize the importance of political activity, but technology has certainly aid the trend.