

'Dewy-eyed veal calves'. Live animal exports and middle-class opinion, 1980–1995

by Alun Howkins and Linda Merricks

Abstract

Arguments about the treatment of animals and animal rights have become more and more central to political debate since the 1960s. This article looks at the 'practical' manifestation of these arguments as they emerged in relation to the campaign to halt the live transport of farm animals in 1994–5. The campaign is examined against the background of changing views of animal welfare and the movements of public opinion in 1994–5 and described through both press reports and material gathered through the organization Mass-Observation in the Spring of 1995. The paper argues that there was widespread support for the campaign and this was part of a wider, highly critical view of modern British farming. However, opposition to exports was based on traditional 'welfare' grounds rather than on newer theories of animal rights.

In 1945 British agriculture stood on the pinnacle of public esteem. Britain's farmers had 'done their bit' in the war effort and now deserved their reward. As a respondent to the organization Mass-Observation wrote, 'the farmers have done their damndest for the country, it should be seen that they are not allowed to go back to penury and difficulty'.¹ Moreover, all this had been achieved with apparent little damage to England's 'green and pleasant land'. The immediate post-war world still saw a certain kind of deep England enshrined in the countryside. This was expressed, for instance, in the Festival of Britain in 1951.²

This happy state of affairs seems to have persisted, despite occasional complaints about 'featherbedded farmers', until the 1960s. Starting with the public debate about DDT (provoked by Carson's *Silent spring* in 1962), farming's comfortable image suffered a number of serious shocks. For our purposes, a key text was Ruth Harrison's *Animal machines* of 1964, which was the first widely read attack on the factory farming of animals.³ This was followed by the first

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¹ Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex (hereafter M-O), Directive, Sept. 1942–3013, housewife, Berkhamstead.

² F. M. Lowenthal, 'A tonic to the Nation'. The Festival of Britain, 1951', *Albion* 27 (1996); Alan Sinfield, 'The

Government, the People and the Festival', in Jim Fyfe (ed.) *Labour's promised land. Culture and society in Labour Britain 1945–51* (1995).

³ Ruth Harrison, *Animal machines: the new factory farming industry* (1964).

debates about the grubbing up of hedgerows. After Britain's entry into the Common Market between 1973 and 1978, stories of Lincolnshire aircraft hangars filled with subsidized wheat caused further disquiet. It was, however, the continuing use of herbicides and pesticides and the continuing problem of the public's attitude to the treatment of farm animals which did most damage to the reputation of farmers, culminating in 1994–5 with the campaign over live animal exports, which was followed shortly after by the suggestion of a link between BSE and CJD, and the EU ban on British beef exports. All this led to a much bleaker view of the countryside, which is now seen by many, especially urban dwellers, as a mixture of private game reserve and factory farm. Even those sympathetic to the rural areas in the Mass-Observation survey we conducted in 1995 noted these kinds of changes since the war.⁴

At the same time there has been a growing public consciousness of the relationship of human beings to their environment, and, as a part of this, a growing concern for the welfare of animals. As Keith Thomas demonstrated in his groundbreaking *Man and the natural world*, attitudes to animals have a long and somewhat confused history which includes an element of concern for their treatment.⁵ Nevertheless, these concerns had little effect until the nineteenth century. Before then, within Judeo-Christian cultures at least, the assumption that animals had been created for the use of humans, as is stated in Genesis 1:26, was generally held by Biblical commentators and most philosophers. Since the foundation of the first animal protection movement, the Liverpool Society for Preventing Wanton Cruelty to Brute Animals in 1809 and then of the SPCA in 1824, similar organisations have proliferated. There were eight national organizations concerned with the protection of animals by the turn of the century; between 1900 and 1944 a further eight were founded. After this, only one was formed before 1960, but fourteen by the end of the 1980s.⁶ The reasons for this increase are relatively straightforward. The nineteenth-century movements tended to be set within a wider attempt at moral reform, while the post 1960s organisations reflect the growth of environmental consciousness. Alongside the increase in number of national organisations has been the proliferation of local groups, with perhaps 300 in existence by the early 1990s. Finally, and most difficult to quantify, has been support from the general public who do not belong to any group but who sympathize with their aims. While the numbers here cannot be given, the strength of public feeling revealed itself in consumer pressure in the early 1990s. The Body Shop franchise made great play from the mid-1980s onwards of its ethical policy of not testing its products on animals. By the mid-1990s all the major producers in the cosmetics industry had been forced – by public expectation – into following suit, and were marketing their own 'cruelty free' brands.⁷

Public interest in animal welfare has not only increased but has become more and more radicalised in recent years. In part, this has led to the foundation of groups like the Animal Liberation Front who insist that conventional, democratic processes are too slow or ineffectual to protect animals, and that more immediate steps need to be taken. More important are the

⁴ These arguments are summarized in an unpublished paper given to the RGS/IBG Conference, 2000, Alun Howkins, 'Qualifying the evidence. Perceptions of rural change in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century'.

⁵ Keith Thomas, *Man and the natural world. Changing*

attitudes in England, 1500–1800 (1983).

⁶ Robert Garner, *Animals, politics and morality* (1993), p. 42.

⁷ For the growth of environmentalist movements, see Grant Jordan and William Maloney, *The protest business? Mobilizing campaign groups* (1997), pp. 11–17.

environmentalists who have queried the right of humans to destroy or disturb the natural world. Since the 1960s, questions have been posed about the human duty to preserve nature, and the relationship of humans to nature. According to David Pepper, the Green movement has re-formulated the conventional argument that humans are separate from nature, so that nature 'can and should be exploited and dominated for human benefit' with one which insists that humans are part of nature. As a result, nature must be protected and respected for itself, regardless of its value to humans, and that the 'laws of nature' must be obeyed, even when they place limits on human behaviour.⁸ From here, theorising about the welfare of animals amongst philosophers, social scientists and environmentalists has led to debates about animal rights (as opposed to animal welfare). This movement is well described by Garner. He distinguishes a 'continuum of views graduated in order of the moral recognition their exponents consider we ought to accord to animals'.⁹ These range from those who would argue that animals have no moral status through the orthodoxy that they have some moral status but are inferior to humans. Garner divides these viewpoints into ones which argue that although animals are sentient, they lack any significant interest, and those which hold while animals have an interest in not suffering, this can and should be overridden to promote the greater good of humans who are truly autonomous. Finally there are those challenges to the orthodoxy which are based on animal rights of some kind.¹⁰

The most striking of these arguments comes from a number of philosophers whose roots lie in 1960s 'liberation politics', and who have, since the 1970s, developed radical theories of animal sentience. In these arguments two main positions can be distinguished. The first, and in many ways still most important, is that of Peter Singer, whose *Animal liberation*, published in 1975, remains an influential text. Putting it extremely crudely, Singer argues that the degree of sentience in animals in the avoidance of pain and hunger should count as much as the comparable interests in humans. To deny this is akin to denying the specific claims of, for example, women or blacks (sexism and racism) and is therefore 'speciesism'. However Singer, as an 'act utilitarian' does concede, in the last analysis, that there might be situations where animals rights are subordinate to those of humans. This possibility is denied by Tom Regan in *All that dwell therein* (1982) and *The case for animal rights* (1984). Regan argues that if a creature has a life of its own, then that creature possesses rights akin to 'civil' rights. Such a creature also has intrinsic value, and is worth dignity and deserves respect. The logical outcome of Regan's position, which he does not deny, would be the end of animal husbandry in any recognisable form. For our purposes these writers have had two main effects. First, they have provided a lot of the theory for the new animal rights movements of the period since 1980. Second, and related to this, but much more problematic, is that by conceding rights to animals, they have blurred the distinction between animal and human animal. The rights or wrongs of this do not concern us here: the important thing is that a degree of blurring has taken place.

To recap briefly. The last twenty or thirty years have seen a substantial expansion in the number of groups concerned with animal protection and welfare, whilst at the same time a philosophical position has developed which concedes animals rights on a par with humans.

⁸ David Pepper, *Modern environmentalism* (1996), p. 11.

⁹ Garner, *Animals*, p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

As we shall see, even a long-established animal welfare society like the RSPCA was heavily influenced by these new ideas about the status of animals. The scene was thus set for a conflict between the animal welfare and animal rights groups and the public, many of whom were influenced by the new philosophy of animal rights, and the farming community, over the export of live farm animals in 1994–5. We intend to look at this campaign as an element in a wider concern about agriculture. More specifically, we want to examine how ‘middle-class’ opinion, which it was argued was so important in the campaign against live animal exports in 1993–5, understood what was happening in that period. What we find is a struggle for control of middle-class opinion between the anti-export groups and the farming ‘lobby’ (the NFU, the farming press and, to an extent, MAFF.) We also hope to give some sense of how these thoughts and opinions relate to debates about the status of animals and about broader attitudes to farming.

I

Opposition to the transport of live animals has a long history. The Humanitarian League ran campaigns between 1897 and 1903 (if not later still) against the transport of cattle across the Irish Sea.¹¹ More emotional in appeal, and securing wider support, were campaigns between the 1900s and the 1960s to stop the shipping of live horses to continental Europe for slaughter. In the 1950s, as a result of the demands of the US forces who argued that British abattoirs failed to come up to American standards, an export trade in live animals developed.¹² In response to this, an organisation called the Protection of Livestock for Slaughter Association was set up in 1956. Their campaign resulted in the establishment of the Balfour Committee whose report laid down certain ‘assurances’ governing the transport of live farm animals. The problem which emerged as the trade in live animals grew in importance in the 1960s and ’70s was that the Balfour assurances were not being enforced and, by 1972, the RSPCA estimated that only about 20 per cent of animals going abroad had any protection. The RSPCA reported on a number of particularly unpleasant cases of maltreatment while, more tellingly, they carried out rigorous investigation by following individual lorries and filming in overseas abattoirs. They also mounted a national campaign under the slogan ‘Stop Live Export of Food Animals’. However, despite attracting the support of a number of public figures, it seems to have had little success in mobilising public support.

In December 1972 Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), which had been founded to campaign against the factory farming of animals in 1967, organized and presented to Parliament a petition with half a million signatures calling for a ban on live animal exports. This, coupled with growing public interest generated by the RSPCA campaign and widespread media coverage, led to a ban on the export of sheep in February 1972. Following a government defeat in the Commons, the ban was extended to cattle and pigs in July of that year. The ban was temporary and was to be reviewed after a committee of inquiry under Lord O’Brien had reported.

The O’Brien Committee published its conclusions in March 1974. It argued that although

¹¹ See a very brief mention in Hilda Kean, ‘The “Smooth Cool Men of Science”. The feminist and socialist response to vivisection’, *History Workshop* J. 40 (1995), p. 30.

¹² For much of what follows in this paragraph see Peter Stevenson, *A far cry from Noah. The live export trade in calves, sheep and pigs* (1994), part 1.

there had been problems with the export trade, a permanent ban was not justified on either economic or welfare grounds. It urged that new safeguards should be introduced (while dropping two of the Balfour assurances, on journey limits and re-imports), and looked to firmer EU regulation as a way of dealing with problems once animals had left the UK. As Peter Roberts of CIWF said, the O'Brien committee wanted to 'Keep live exports going; plug the leaks; make it respectable'.¹³ This neatly sums up both government and farming industry opinion over the following 20 years.

As a result of the O'Brien Report, and despite the fact that Labour, which had opposed live exports the year before, was now in power, live animal exports were allowed to recommence in the early spring of 1975. However, we would suggest that this resumption marks a change in the attitudes of those who were campaigning against the trade. It seems at least possible that the growing arguments about animals rights, coupled with a real failure of parliament to act, pushed many, even respectable supporters of a ban on live exports, into a more militant position. A series of particularly brutal incidents in the so called 'lamb war' of 1990, when French farmers (probably unwittingly) burned a consignment of lambs alive, continued to focus media attention on the export trade and on conditions in continental abattoirs, especially those in southern Europe. This had the double effect of increasing the emotional temper of the campaign while introducing an element of anti-Europeanism. In addition, as Robert Garner argues, the RSPCA adopted increasingly radical policies in the 1970s and 1980s and, although the radical wing within the society was ultimately defeated, it entered the 1990s as a very different body to that which had existed in the 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁴ This is clear, for instance, in their adoption of the *Declaration of animal rights* as well as their education pamphlets on the same subject.¹⁵

Despite these changes, the 1980s saw a huge increase in the export of live animals. In 1963 the UK exported a total of 655,000 live animals. The ban in 1972–5, along with the problems of farming, saw this number drop in the 1970s, but in the 1980s numbers started to rise, increasing very rapidly after 1986 (see Table 1). In January 1993, with the creation of a Single European Market, the regulations governing the transportation of live animals were relaxed. In the aftermath of this, a 'compromise' was patched up which allowed farm animals to be transported for up to 24 hours without stopping for rest, feed or water.¹⁶ In the wake of this, the RSPCA and CIWF began a publicity campaign to end the live export trade totally. As CIWF wrote in Autumn of 1993

CIWF believes that the time has now come for a radical change in policy. The trade in live animals must be stopped. Live exports from the UK should be halted and there should be an end to the trade in Europe as a whole.¹⁷

To this end they pursued a mixed policy, entirely peaceful, of applying pressure initially on

¹³ quoted in Stevenson, *A far cry*, p. 15.

¹⁴ Garner, *Animals*, pp. 54–60.

¹⁵ The *Declaration of animal rights* was written by Richard Ryder who had worked closely with Singer. For other literature, see for example, *RSPCA Information. On the side of the animals; some contemporary philosophers'*

views (Horsham, n.d. but c. 1994); and *RSPCA information. Ethical concerns for animals* (Horsham, n.d. but c. 1994). We would like to thank Paul Brassley for these references.

¹⁶ *The Independent*, 20 Aug. 1994.

¹⁷ *Agscene*, no. 112, Autumn 1993, pp. 4–5.

TABLE 1. Live Animal Exports 1986–1993

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Sheep	161,762	313,556	446,767	491,892	488,908	773,502	1,373,657	2,00,000
Cattle	190,683	365,166	234,651	302,223	338,806	399,599	420,620	450,00

Source: Compassion in World Farming from the Meat and Livestock Commission.

government and the EU and then on organisations concerned with the transport of live animals. Between the Autumn of 1993 and the Summer of 1994 three petitions were organized. One with half a million signatures was sent to Gillian Shepherd (then Secretary of State for Agriculture) in September 1993, one with a million signatures to the European Commission in April 1994 and an organized write-in produced more than 50,000 postcards, again to Shepherd, in July 1994. In addition the CIWF video, 'For a few pennies more', formed the basis of a *World in Action* report on live exports which went out in the Spring of 1994 and was watched by an estimated 5.8 million viewers.

The most important change was achieved though 'consumer' pressure brought to bear on the ferry companies and on airlines involved in the live export trade. The main groups involved were CIWF and the RSPCA. A much smaller organisation which was also involved was the highly successful Respect for Animals, founded by Mark Glover, a former Greenpeace activist and founder of LYNX.¹⁸

On 18 August 1994 British Airways announced an immediate ban on carrying live animals. An interesting sense of what was to come in the campaign can be seen in this first 'victory'. Two elements, which were to become very important in the later campaigns, are already apparent. First, the careful use of press support. On 16 August the *Daily Star*, prompted at least in part by a slow news season, carried a piece on the transport of live sheep from Perth (Australia) to Singapore. Second, 'public' protests took place involving, where possible, public figures. Here the 'key' figure in the ban was Sir Teddy Taylor's parliamentary researcher. As *The Times* wrote,

British Airways announced an immediate ban on carrying live animals for slaughter yesterday, after an outcry over 50 sheep carried in the hold of a jumbo jet ... Passengers, including Mike Penning, commons researcher for the Tory MP Sir Teddy Taylor, were angered when they saw the 50 sheep being loaded onto the aircraft in small crates. Sir Teddy Taylor said of BA's decision; 'This is fantastic for animal welfare'.¹⁹

The use of high profile public figures continued and was successful in reversing power relations. It is significant that the only 'coverage' in *Farmers Weekly* of any of the petitions was a picture of the actress Joanna Lumley carrying a CIWF poster. It hardly counteracted the power of the farming lobby in the Commons: but it secured some notice.²⁰

Vastly more important than the airline protests, if only for reason of numbers, were those directed at the ferries carrying live animals to mainland Europe. P&O carried 60 per cent of the trade, while most of the remainder was divided between Stena and Brittany Ferries. The

¹⁸ *The Times*, 20 Apr. 1995.

¹⁹ *The Times*, 18 Aug. 1994.

²⁰ *Farmers Weekly*, 11 Feb. 1994, p. 11

campaign against the ferry companies began peacefully; throughout 1993 and 1994 there had been pickets at Dover. Then, in June 1994, the 'less acceptable' face of the animal rights movement manifested itself with a firebomb attack on the Stena offices in Ashford. There were also bomb attacks carried out on road hauliers in Yorkshire and Gloucestershire. Although these were significant, of more immediate effect was a 'write in' campaign directed at the companies which led Stena to admit it had received 'hundreds of thousands of letters and cards' during 1994.²¹ This claim was repeated by CIWF in the winter of 1994 when a contributor to *Agscene* wrote '... its your flood of letters and cards which have made the ferry companies realize the strength of public opposition to live exports ...'.²²

In June 1994 *Farmers Weekly* ran a two page spread by Liz Mason under the headline 'No "horrors" on this lorry to France ...'. This was an account of a totally legal journey of a modern lorry taking sheep to southern France. It was illustrated by a picture of lots of happy animals sunning themselves on the slopes of a Provençal hill town. However the very existence of the article shows how the campaign was beginning to have its effect since, as we noted, none of the previous protests had received serious coverage in the farming press.²³ Initially the ferry companies were unmoved. Following the bomb sent to its Ashford office in June 1994, a Stena spokesman said 'We cannot succumb to terrorism ... We are happy to take livestock as long as all the rules and regulations are taken into account'.²⁴ However there was a swift *volte face*. In the first week of August P&O announced that despite the personal intervention of William Waldegrave (who had replaced Gillian Shepherd at MAFF) they were considering a ban on live animal shipments. They were quickly followed by Stena.²⁵ P&O announced a ban from 1 October (unless regulations were changed first) and Brittany Ferries stopped the transport of animals where the point of destination was south of the Loire. Then on 31 August Stena announced that it would introduce an immediate ban on the transport of live animals on its ferries.²⁶

Three points are worth making here. Firstly the pressure seems to have been real enough. A Stena spokesman claimed on 31 August

The number of people taking the trouble to make their feelings known to us about this issue has gone through the roof ... These are ordinary people who feel very strongly that there is no place for this business today. We're listening to the wishes of an increasing number of our passengers.²⁷

Secondly this pressure came against the background of a price war in the eastern Channel. Although the effects on the ferry companies of the newly completed channel tunnel were not fully clear at this point, what was certain was that there was surplus ferry capacity. Ending the carriage of live animals provided good advertising for companies fighting for a share of a shrinking market.

Thirdly, however, opposition to the ban from the farming industry had already begun to emerge, especially from hill farmers, since the main part of the live export trade was in sheep. The spokesman for the British Association of Sheep Exporters, David Porter, had already

²¹ *The Independent*, 31 Aug. 1994.

²² *Agscene*, no. 116, Winter 1994, p. 4.

²³ *Farmers Weekly*, 3 June 1994, pp. 14-5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1994, p. 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 Aug. 1994, p. 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 Aug. 1994, p. 5; 2 Sept. 1994, p. 7.

²⁷ *The Independent*, 31 Aug. 1994.

complained in June about Gillian Shepherd's 'tightening up' on journey times saying, in a tone to become all too familiar 'I feel she has responded to the chattering classes'.²⁸ When the ferry bans were announced, Parker responded that he was seeking alternative routes. More important was the opposition from the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) whose members had a large stake in the live export of lamb, a growing trade, especially with France. As reported in *The Times* in early September 1994, 'Lamb production in France is small scale and costly'. It went on to quote a Dyfed farmer as saying 'most of the lambs I export are fed for another six months on French farms. They are then sold at a high price as French lamb'.²⁹ By the beginning of September the FUW had commenced a campaign, especially in Wales, to have the ban lifted.³⁰

In contrast, the NFU seems to have maintained a relatively low profile. With the announcement of the ban, 'a spokesman' said 'This is going to be another body blow for farmers, but I'm sure that given their usual resilience they will find some way of getting over it. Obviously welfare is a matter of great concern to people'.³¹ It was not until William Waldegrave intervened with 'tougher' legislation that the President of the NFU, Sir David Naish, spoke publicly. He took what was to be the first NFU 'line': conditions for transporting animals were worse on the continent and closing down the cross-channel route would drive foreign buyers to 'Eastern European countries where animal welfare is not the priority it is here'.³² This view was pressed the next day by a letter to *The Times* from Peter Atkinson, Conservative MP for Hexham and a member of the NFU.³³ Perhaps more mindful of public opinion than it had been in the past, the NFU stressed farmers' concerns for animal welfare and argued they wished to tighten up controls on transport, while maintaining it was a 'European' problem. By November the NFU went further calling for a tougher line with 'cowboy operators', a view which had already been put forward by *Farmers Weekly*.³⁴ The NFU's position throughout remained moderate and Naish was later to be criticized for his inactivity by members of his own council.³⁵

At the beginning of October, despite Waldegrave's 'tougher regulations', and the self-imposed ban by the large passenger ferry companies, two changes of great significance occurred. First, other transport companies moved to take over the ferry trade, employing aircraft or ships operating out of smaller ports with surplus docking capacity. Second, there was a subtle change of emphasis in the CIWF campaign to notice not only the transport of animals, but the conditions under which they would be treated when they arrived in continental Europe. This was new only in its connection to the animal export question. CIWF had played an important role in having veal crates banned in the UK and was involved in a long term campaign against their use in Europe. However, this more general concern about animal welfare had not been seen before in relation to the export ban. The change of direction was possibly used to continue the public pressure for change after the issue of new regulations which seemed to satisfy the concerns of 'moderate' opinion about transport. On 7 October, in an interview with *The Independent*, Peter Stevenson, political and legal director of CIWF said, 'conditions for transporting and slaughtering animals in France are worse and Holland and France both still use the crate method of rearing calves for veal which was banned in Britain four years

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1994, p. 8.

²⁹ *The Times*, 5 Sept. 1994.

³⁰ *Farmers Weekly*, 16 Sept. 1994, p. 8.

³¹ *The Independent*, 31 Aug. 1994.

³² *The Times*, 6 Sept. 1994.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7 Sept. 1994.

³⁴ see *ibid.*, 23 Sept. 1994, p. 5; 11 Nov. 1994, p. 7.

³⁵ *Farmers Weekly*, 14 Oct. 1994, p. 8.

ago'.³⁶ This marked a shift from sheep to veal calves as the public centre of concern. The transport of calves, and, through a process of elision, any other live animal for slaughter, suddenly became indefensible in any way at all.

Here, there was the first curious coming together both of animal activist feeling and (perhaps cynically) the NFU. Their agreed point, although never publicly made, was a growing anti-Europeanism. Veal crates, Eastern European lorries and Spanish and Greek abattoirs became the newest version of populist xenophobia in the long and dishonourable tradition of headlines like 'Hop on a frog' and 'Up yours Delors'. It was also a convenient screen for MAFF and the NFU who could both protest (with some justification) that welfare on mainland Europe was out of their hands. This was given extra strength by Brittany Ferries' announcement in November that their concession to transporters was being withdrawn because of the disregard the majority of livestock exporters had shown for the code. 'Basically, they have misled us about the destination of the animals in their care.'³⁷ When we come to look at the M-O material, the extent of this anti-European feeling will be clearer still.

In the meantime, the transport of animals continued using local airports and the smaller ports. In November Ferrylink Freight Services opened a route from Sheerness in Kent to Vlissingen (Holland). Threats to the company caused the service to be cancelled. More significant, in the short term, was the use of airports at Humberside, Coventry and Bournemouth. Again protest, and the professed distaste of the Labour controlled local authorities who owned the airports, caused problems. The situation made worse by the crash of a Phoenix Aviation 737 at Coventry on 21 December which allowed Coventry Council, which was opposed to the trade but had been forced to allow it by a High Court ruling, to stop flights.

In response to this, on 30 December, a consortium of firms operating as ITF, and using a 'flag of convenience' vessel, announced that within the next 48 hours it would commence shipping animals out of Shoreham in Sussex. The move to Shoreham did not come out of the blue. In September 1994 Philip Lacey, General Manager of the Shoreham Port Authority, had stated that the port was open to take animal exports. This led to pickets of the Port Authorities' offices throughout the autumn, and the build up of a local campaign based on petitions and letter writing. It was not however until ITF approached the port for a berth for the 'Northern Cruiser' at the end of December that the movement took on mass proportions.

On 2 January the first attempt was made to load animals at Shoreham. About 200 demonstrators confronted a handful of police. As lorries carrying the animals tried to turn into the narrow dock road, the protesters sat down. After a few minutes the lorries turned around and left. The next night similar scenes occurred, although now both the numbers of police and protesters had increased. It was these night confrontations which really brought the campaign into the national news with television scenes of a young person with a balaclava helmet on the roof of a lorry smashing its windscreen. (Incidentally, the lorry belonged to A. Nicholay b.v., a Dutch Company prosecuted in October 1995 and fined £10,000 for inflicting suffering on calves being moved from Northern Ireland to Spain.³⁸)

The following night 1,300 police were brought in, lorries were taken through another entrance, and what the local press called 'the siege of Shoreham' began. For the next three weeks, at the

³⁶ *The Independent*, 7 Oct. 1994.

quoted in *The Times*, 5 Nov. 1994.

³⁷ Ian Carruthers, managing director, Brittany Ferries,

³⁸ *The Guardian*, 24 Oct. 1995.

cost of some £2m, the port was kept more or less open, although the demonstrations continued. Locally the demonstrators were widely supported. Adur District Council (Lib/Dem controlled) and Hove Borough Council (Labour/Independent), who had minority interests in the port, were both opposed to the trade, as was Brighton's Labour controlled council. Further, one of Brighton's MPs, the Conservative Sir Andrew Bowden, was an animal rights campaigner and, with the usual disclaimers about violence, he gave the campaign his full support.³⁹ Perhaps most importantly so did the daily evening paper, the *Evening Argus* not, it should be said, a paper famous for its liberal sympathies. This was also the case at Brightlingsea in Essex, at least initially, where the Colchester *Evening Gazette* ran a series of articles under the headline 'Cargo of Shame'.⁴⁰

The history of the Brightlingsea protest was slightly different. The Brightlingsea organisation BALE (Brightlingsea Against Live Exports) came into being in early January following the announcement that Richard Otley, a Huntingdonshire farmer and president of the British Association of Sheep Exporters, was to ship sheep through this small Essex port on a six month contract. The animals were to be moved by Roger Mills' company, 'Live Sheep Traders'. Although the run up to the campaign seems to have been much shorter than at Shoreham, the response was, if anything, greater. A survey carried out by the University of Essex in May 1995 estimated that 46 per cent of the population of Brightlingsea had attended at least one public meeting on the issue and 40 per cent had participated in at least one of the protests which stretched from January to October 1995.⁴¹ Further, the same survey showed that 71 per cent of residents opposed all forms of live animal transport. The campaign at Brightlingsea attracted less attention than that at Shoreham, largely because it was 'second' and therefore less newsworthy. However it was different in character. It was, for instance, more ideological. Both Otley and Mills seem to have approached the breaking of the ban with an almost political enthusiasm. Otley insisted on travelling with the convoy of lorries and was eventually threatened with arrest by Essex Police.⁴² Later in the campaign Mills refused any concession on transport of animals, despite being asked to delay a shipment when it was clear it would have to be at sea for upwards of 48 hours.⁴³ The personal identification of those involved, Otley, Mills and Ernest Oliver, the port owner, also heightened tension in Brightlingsea. Attitudes were also different in the surrounding area. Although there was a wide degree of support for the campaign in Brightlingsea and in north Essex, including that of the Conservative mayor of Brightlingsea, the MP for Colchester North, Bernard Jenkin, was hostile, perhaps because of his farming interests.⁴⁴ The attitude of the police also differed. The Chief Constable of Sussex made it clear throughout the Shoreham protests that he was opposed to the exports, and indeed in April 1995 imposed strict controls on the number of lorries going in and out. In Essex, on the other hand, the assistant Chief Constable took a much harder line, resorting on 18 April to the Criminal Justice Act. Obviously, in part this was to do with different policing situations, but it did have an effect on how the protests were viewed and reported.

³⁹ See *Evening Argus*, 20 Jan. 1995 for the 'history' of the campaign.

⁴⁰ *Evening Gazette*, 18 Jan. 1995.

⁴¹ See Ted Benton and Simon Redfern, 'The politics of animal rights. Where is the Left?', *New Left Rev.* 215 (1996) and E. Tannenbaum, *Animal transport through*

Brightlingsea: report of an opinion survey (Department of Government, University of Essex, 1995).

⁴² *The Times*, 20 Jan. 1995.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11 Feb. 1995.

⁴⁴ See 'Members interests', *The Guardian*, 8 May 1996.

What was striking from the start of the mass campaigns in Shoreham and Brightlingsea was the character of those protesting. From very early on, the local and national press stressed that these were 'new' protesters, even given the changing nature of public campaigns during the late 1980s and early 1990s. On 8 January *The Times*, which was studiously opposed to the protests, wrote 'a former fashion model turned animal rights activist stands beside a former Tory councillor. Nearby, a dreadlocked hippie yells abuse next to a well-dressed woman antiques dealer'.⁴⁵ Other reports stressed the diversity of those involved, but increasingly stressed the 'middle-class' and 'normal' appearance and status of most of those involved. On 7 January *The Guardian* noted 'a middle-aged language teacher' and his daughter, a women accountant and a nurse.⁴⁶ Later in the month the Brighton *Evening Argus* wrote

It was the last place you would expect to see a rebellion against authority. But Shoreham Port became the venue for a particularly middle-class protest. The last eighteen days have seen pensioners with walking sticks standing alongside mums with toddlers playing on the pavement beside hardened campaigners.⁴⁷

The Colchester *Evening Gazette* produced similar lists, although here 'residents' were stressed along with pensioners, 'young mums', the 'wife and daughter' of a magistrate, and a churchwarden.⁴⁸ The middle class nature of the protest became a watchword of the subsequent analysis, whether pompously sarcastic in *The Times* on 16 January or metropolitan patronising in *The Observer*.⁴⁹

The truth of this view is difficult to assess. Protesters as a group are constantly changing; there is a lack of distinguishing marks amongst those who have spent hours in freezing wind and rain on the sea front. However, other accounts and personal observation suggests the characterisation of the crowds suggested by the media was correct. From accounts of the protest at Shoreham we find, a 44 year old residential care worker, a 57 year old library assistant, another 50 year old woman whose wrist was broken, a 13 year old girl and a five year old there with her father.⁵⁰ This is clearly seen in the many contributions to the 'memorial' volume issued during the Shoreham demonstrations. For example:

The Port of Shame

My husband and I are ordinary middle class folk who have never done anything spectacular in our lives – Until January 2nd 1995.

We are both well into our seventies, but have stood in the cold and wet and windy weather to make our peaceful protests, along with other people, against the live transport at the Shoreham port.

We are both very proud of what we are doing.

With the help of CIWF, RSPCA, and IFAW may this evil trade be swiftly brought to an end. God Bless all the Animals – and Shame on Shoreham Port.

E & FC, Steyning.⁵¹

⁴⁵ *The Sunday Times*, 8 Jan. 1995.

⁴⁶ *The Guardian*, 'Outlook', 7 Jan. 1995.

⁴⁷ *Evening Argus*, 20 Jan. 1995.

⁴⁸ *Evening Gazette*, 18 Jan. 1995.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 16 Jan. 1995; *The Observer*, 8 Jan. 1995.

⁵⁰ *SchNEWS*, Issue Five, 12 Jan. 1995.

⁵¹ Fiona Stephens and Wenda Shehata, *The siege of Shoreham. Reflections from the front line* (Brighton, 1995), p. 62.

Despite the presence of two universities within ten miles of the Shoreham protest, few students took part, while the Hunt Saboteurs and other animal rights activists, deliberately easily identified in their regular demonstrations through the town, were either disguised as 'ordinary' protesters on this occasion (which is unlikely), or were present only in small numbers. This raises questions about the intentions and objectives of the protesters. What was it about this issue that attracted such a distinctive protest, and such a large percentage of first-timer demonstrators?

Part of the answer lies in our earlier discussion of the changing nature of the 'animal' movement, and we will return to some of the points made there. However, there are less tangible reasons for the protest which lie mainly in the 'victims' at the heart of the protest. The animals whose transportation was criticized, first sheep and then calves, have characteristics attracting a sympathetic anthropomorphism. They are small, soft, gentle animals, and the fact that they were described as 'lambs' or were calves added a dimension of infantilism to the whole proceedings. Time and again the poems and statements which make up the protesters' book *The siege of Shoreham* refer to these characteristics. A calf sees the world 'through child's eyes'; another is referred to, like a child going to hospital, as 'My brave little one'. A child wrote, 'On those horrid lorries baby sheep and cows want their mummies'.⁵² There is no doubt of the power and the sincerity of these views and we would in no way wish to minimize them. But, it goes further. Some, chosen animals, especially those with large eyes, furry bodies and human or child-like emission of sounds, inhabit an indeterminate state between animal and human. The distinction between them is lost. We have here an extreme form of the Singer/Regan view, where animals are not only granted sentience and rights but become in some way actually 'human'. 'A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy' to quote some animal rights protesters. Again this shows in the writings from Shoreham. A cow is made to cry 'Bring back my baby'; for another writer, calves have the same 'feelings' and even souls. 'Mama *we know* there is a heaven for us, /We'll play again in grass so green, under skies for ever blue'.⁵³

This intense identification with the human nature of the animals transported also leads to the strength of feeling and emotion involved. The Shoreham material is overwhelmingly emotional in tone. It is significant that much of the material in the Shoreham writings takes the form of poetry, the literary form for expressing intense feelings. One man writes about seeing animals in the lorries, 'My heart and soul are torn apart / and inside I cry a thousand tears'. Or, as a Korean War veteran wrote (in prose), 'Tears flow from men, women, youngsters alike, tears of grief, rage and frustration'.⁵⁴ Many of the press reports spoke of people in tears as the lorries finally broke through the protesters, as well as intense bouts of 'feeling'.⁵⁵

We would want to suggest that for those demonstrating (rather than simply supporting) this campaign, this intense identification with the human nature of animals was centrally important. They have taken the logic of the Singer/Regan arguments about sentience to its final conclusion, where the distinction between humans and animals disappears. Their suffering is suffering inflicted on humans. The metaphor of the Holocaust comes up time and again among protesters and their supporters (as we shall see); and a Labour councillor from Brighton compared the shipping of animals to the shipping of slaves from West Africa.⁵⁶

⁵² Stephens and Shehata, *Siege of Shoreham*, pp. 3, 9, 47.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 8.

⁵⁵ *Colchester Express*, 18 Jan. 1995, p. 7

⁵⁶ Councillor Tehmtan Framroze at St. Peter's Church, Brighton, 18 Feb. 1995.

II

In February 1995, at the height of the Shoreham and Brightlingsea demonstrations, we sent out a 'directive' through the Mass-Observation organization at the University of Sussex. The main purpose was to secure 'qualitative' data on current views of the countryside as part of a bigger project. However questions on live exports and road protests seemed a useful way of getting at feelings about rural areas. M-O encourages people to write at length rather than reply 'yes' or 'no' to questions and, as a result, the reports are difficult to analyse in a simple way. However certain kinds of quantitative data emerge clearly along with a lot of (perhaps more interesting) qualitative materials.

First a few words about the 'sample'. Those who write for M-O are self-selecting and so while it would be possible to create a control group within the respondents, the sample is initially non-correlated. Rather than loose interesting material, we left it like that. In total 249 women and 89 men replied to our request. For our purposes in this paper the group who replied were remarkably like the stereotype of the 'new' protesters identified above, i.e. white, middle-aged, middle-class, female and southern or south eastern. The majority of respondents were aged between 50 and 70 with a significant proportion aged more than seventy. Women outnumbered men by nearly three to one. About the same percentage of both men and women lived in rural areas (including country towns), that is 58 per cent of women and 49 per cent of men, while 50 per cent of women and 52 per cent lived in the South East. It is worth noting that the regional distribution accords very closely with 'national' distribution of population.

What can this group tell us about middle class opinion and the battle to enlist it for or against live animal exports? First, overwhelmingly, and perhaps not very surprisingly, the majority of those who responded were opposed to the live export of farm animals. Bringing together the two categories 'against' and 'against but accept', 63 per cent of women and 65 per cent of men opposed the traffic. We divided the categories in this rather rough and ready way to distinguish between those who had a positive alternative and those who simply 'didn't like' exports. The most striking thing about these figures is that they show little significant difference in terms of simple opposition between men and women. This is rather surprising since most recent work on the membership of animal welfare/rights organisations stresses, almost as a truism, that they are dominated by women. Garner details both the historical and contemporary significance of women in animal rights organisations including, very strikingly, CIWF, where, in 1993, he estimated that 77 per cent of local contacts were women.⁵⁷ In the light of this, why should our group be apparently so different? The most obvious reason lies in the age/class nature of the M-O group. Dorothy Sheridan and others have argued that writing, like that for M-O, can be seen as a 'feminine' form;⁵⁸ additionally, the class bias of the M-O group towards the middle class probably encourages a more environmentally 'sensitive' group. This tendency would be reinforced, if this argument has validity, by the relative lack of young, working class males amongst the M-O respondents.

⁵⁷ Garner, *Animals*, pp. 66–8

⁵⁸ David Bloome, Dorothy Sheridan and Brian Street, *Reading Mass-Observation writing. Theoretical and*

methodological issues in researching the Mass-Observation archive (Mass-Observation Occasional paper no. 1, University of Sussex, 1993).

If the opposition to exports was clear, the basis of that opposition was less so. A very few had 'direct' experience. A non-demonstrating inhabitant of Sussex wrote:

Shipping animals to Europe affects me very much because my husband works at the port where it happens. We were indifferent until he saw the calves on the lorries and said they were only babies ... They are so young and helpless.⁵⁹

A man who lived in a village near Dover commented, 'I am pleased that we no longer have to share the boat with a truck load of animals being shipped to slaughter'; a view echoed by a woman from Cumberland 'It was brought home to me about two years ago on an overnight ferry from Southampton to Cherbourg. The noise and the stench of the sheep was incredible'.⁶⁰ Surprisingly, nobody claimed to have been on a demonstration, though some had friends who had or had signed petitions. We will return to them below.

Moving beyond that, and given the nature of the material, clear answers were not given, or sought. Some respondents simply wrote a line or two – others wrote hundreds of words, but the most frequently raised objection was one of 'inhumanity'. For example, a typist in her sixties wrote from Leighton Buzzard, 'I am horrified by the inhumane transport of animals to the continent ...'.⁶¹ Or, a woman from Croydon:

I do think it is a pity that animals are shipped abroad alive, sometimes inhumanely. I have not actively protested but I admire those who do. I do not eat veal now that I know calves are force fed to make them fat.⁶²

Inhumanity is a catch all phrase, but is not to be taken within this group as favouring modification of the trade. The largest single solution advocated by correspondents was home slaughtering. A change regulations was sought by relatively few respondents. A secretary in her 'fifties wrote from Bristol offering a typical response to both the reasons for protest and its solution.

I do not agree with the shipping of live animals abroad ... I do not see why the animals cannot be humanely slaughtered in this country. To see them squashed in lorries, obviously terrified, is heartbreaking, and there is no justification for it at all.⁶³

Even those using the phrase 'inhumanity' often have other, and sometimes equally compelling reasons for objecting to the trade. A significant number were vegetarians and their objections do not need spelling out. An eloquent, and ironic statement by a 31 year woman from Liverpool can stand for all of these.

If a person insists on eating meat full of hormones which pass into human immune systems, are linked with cancer, and might just pass on mad cow disease, if its beef, why on earth can't the animals be killed here and shipped over as frozen meat?⁶⁴

A fairly small number had been converted to vegetarianism by the demonstrations and the

⁵⁹ Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Spring Directive 1995 (hereafter M-O 1995), W 632, w, 53 Sussex, Business analyst.

⁶⁰ M-O 1995, W 2174, m, 51, Dover, civil servant; W 2244, w, 65, Kendal, teacher.

⁶¹ M-O 1995, B 89, w, 64, Leighton Buzzard, typist.

⁶² M-O 1995, B 2611, w, 67, Croydon, ret. civil servant.

⁶³ M-O 1995, D 2585, w, 52, Bristol, secretary.

⁶⁴ M-O 1995, B 2653, w, 31, Liverpool, unemployed.

situation they revealed. A man from Derby wrote, 'so deeply do I feel about this issue, I have finally become a vegetarian'; or a women from Essex, 'I can see the faces of the animals peeping out of the trucks, and I do not fancy meat anymore'.⁶⁵

There was, amongst our responses, a significant number who humanized and/or infantilised the animals in various ways. A 57 year old women from Yorkshire wrote, 'I feel upset about the shipping of live animals to other parts of Europe, I regard all small animals as babies'.⁶⁶ In a few cases this is taken still further and a parallel with the Holocaust, often made by the ALF for example, is employed. A librarian from Brighton wrote '... it makes me think with a shudder of the Nazi cattle trucks': and a women from Glasgow, 'I felt like a reasonably moral German in 1941 watching trainloads of Jewish people going to their deaths in wagons'.⁶⁷

A much smaller group saw this anthropomorphism and were critical of it, their responses ranging from the mildly rebuking to the near offensive. As a teacher from Cornwall (who was anti-exports) wrote:

There must be thousands of people, mostly women I suspect, and mostly middle-aged and over, who were brought up on Beatrice Potter and Little Grey Rabbit stories ... I sometimes wonder if that childhood background unconsciously urges them to join demonstrations against the shipping of live animals and other cruelties.⁶⁸

In less measured tones a man from Kent commented:

I have absolutely no sympathy with those who have been protesting at the ports and airports ... I believe there is a great deal of misplaced sentimentality and a touch of anthropomorphism in the animal demonstrations.⁶⁹

A very small group, 3 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men, clearly identified themselves with the protesters, usually via some form of membership of a loosely 'green' or 'pro-animal' group. It was only here that we found a sense of a clear notion of animals' rights. A retired school teacher from Croydon was in favour of 'full political rights' for animals and showed how attitudes, even among the elderly supporters of respectable organisations, had changed in the years before 1994. 'For years the RSPCA have campaigned legitimately at ENORMOUS [*sic*] expense and look where it got them. So the demos have not been in vain'. She added that she believed in direct action 'but I am too old and too cowardly'.⁷⁰ However, such views were very rare.

When we come to look at actual comments on the demonstrators and their actions, a number of factors are revealed. First there was a very wide degree of support for the demonstrations, often using emotional language. A retired policeman from Brighton wrote, 'I have the greatest admiration for those brave souls who protest at the export of live animals, making me wish I had their courage'.⁷¹ At least in part this support comes from the recognition that those who are protesting were like 'them': ordinary, middle class and even middle aged. 'Its amazing seeing middle-class women more or less creating an affray', wrote a 61 year old women from Sheffield.⁷²

⁶⁵ M-O 1995, R 1418, 73, Derby ret. decorator; B 36, w, 80, Essex, ret. typist.

⁶⁶ M-O 1995, W 571, w, 57, W. Yorks, Sales Assistant.

⁶⁷ M-O 1995, S 2207, w, 52, Brighton, Librarian; M 1171, w, 38, Glasgow, housewife.

⁶⁸ M-O 1995 S 2190, w, 74, Cornwall, ret. teacher.

⁶⁹ M-O 1995, K 1515, m, 73, Kent, ret. civil servant.

⁷⁰ M-O 1995, A 1292, w, 62, South Croydon, teacher.

⁷¹ M-O 1995, R 1389, m, 81, Brighton, ret. policeman.

⁷² M-O 1195, B 1512, w, 61, Sheffield, teacher.

A librarian from Watford was 'so proud of the ordinary people, who have taken part in the protests'.⁷³ A secretary from Warwick went further.

What has made an impression on me is that so many ordinary people of all ages, from all professions and even now different religious denominations have spoken out and physically demonstrated against this trade.⁷⁴

Or, in the words of a 74 year old man from Peacehaven, 'this looks like a new form of protests, elderly people getting angry, there's go in the old ones yet and there is [*sic*] a lot of them. Watch this in future'.⁷⁵ Some (as in the Shoreham book) make a link between Britishness and protest; 'I am proud of the British – not the bomb brigade, but the steady protesters, standing out in the rain and risking their health and possible injury'.⁷⁶

These and similar views open up two other factors about the trade and those who demonstrate against it. First, there was a degree of anti-EU feeling in the respondents. Ten per cent of women and 14 per cent of men linked the live export trade to anti-EU sentiments. These range from relatively mild complaints, which echo both the MAFF and NFU positions, to the extreme expressed by a 61 year old women who wrote from London with the lamb wars still in mind: 'no live animals should be exported, because as soon as they are, they are out of British control and the French ratbags can set fire to them or do whatever they like with impunity'.⁷⁷ In a way though, what was interesting is that so few 'blame' the EU or more generally 'foreigners'. This was, after all, at least in part, both the line of government and the farmers' organizations.

The second area which caused problems is 'anti-extremism'. Again, rather surprisingly, only 12 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men mentioned fears of extremists taking over demonstrations, although it was a significant number. This fear of extremism was, however, very high in those who supported the continuation of live animal exports, especially (if impressionistically) among the men, and often given as a reason for their support of the continuation of live exports.

Those who supported the continuation of live exports, even in a modified form, were a small group, 21 per cent among women respondents and 18 per cent among men. Those who wished the unmodified situation, i.e. the situation as it was in early 1995, to continue were much smaller still in numbers: seven per cent of women but 14 per cent of men. This is a very difficult group to discuss. Few amongst them were able to mount a real defence and those who did, were often linked to agriculture. A woman farmer from the Welsh borders mounted a fine defence of small farms and local production, while accusing protesters (and the authors of the directive and hence this paper) of being unrealistic and sentimental about country life. However, even she was far from uncritical.

If supermarkets hadn't taken out the small butchers, farmers would slaughter their lambs locally. Why has veal got to be white anyway? ... the French realise proper meat is not all the pre-packed stuff ... *But* I wish they would accept lamb on the hook and not live.⁷⁸

⁷³ M-O 1995, B 2260, w, 47, Waterford librarian.

⁷⁴ M-O 1995, H 1263, w, 46, Warwick secretary.

⁷⁵ M-O 1995, T 2741, m, 74, Peacehaven, Sussex ret. carpenter.

⁷⁶ M-O 1995, J 2631, w, 54, Lancing, Sussex, classroom assistant.

⁷⁷ M-O 1995, B 1665, w, 61, London, clerk.

⁷⁸ M-O 1995, H 1709, w, 70, Oswestry farmer.

A 39 year old farmer's wife from Cornwall made many of the same points, and argued in detail that cheap food policies since the war were largely to blame.⁷⁹ There was also a good deal of sympathy, amongst this group, for farmers' problems in a fairly general way, as a radiographer from Gloucestershire wrote. '[Exports] do not put me off farmers – I just feel sorry for their predicament – it puts me off the European Community even more'.⁸⁰ This point was taken further by an uncharacteristically virulent statement of support for farmers by a retired aircraft engineer from Middlesex.

I think farmers do a thankless task raising animals for food and growing crops ... They should be given every support instead of being harried by Brussels directives, the MAFF snoopers interpretations of those directives and the activities of animal rights terrorists and rent-a-mob.⁸¹

This points, unfortunately, to the other area of 'support' for exports, those who saw the demonstrations as simply being about 'lawlessness' and had little positive to say about the exporters' case. A not untypical example of this view comes from a women technician in Cheshire. 'I think the trouble about shipping animals to Europe has just been caused by a vocal minority. The vast majority of people are not bothered about it'.⁸²

III

In this paper we have concentrated on the issue of live animal exports and middle-class opinion. If our group is in anyway representative – and we would argue that it is – then there were definite winners in the argument about the rights and wrongs of the export trade. The majority of our group were, at the time of the survey, against the export trade. This was true of both men and women. The fact that so few objected to the extremists also suggests, along with other evidence, that those who demonstrated in the winter of 1994–5 had widespread support. This was despite a good deal of media talk of 'extremist infiltrators' to the extent that the reporting in the *Times* occasionally seemed to be talking about somewhere else.⁸³ The relatively small group who 'blamed' the EU also suggests that a lot of the defence of the British trade mounted by the farming press, the NFU and MAFF, was unsuccessful in winning the public's mind.

In general terms both the response of our group and our brief examination of the campaign leading to the ferry ban and the subsequent demonstrations, suggests that in the short term the groups involved made a very successful job of mobilising middle-class opinion both as consumers and as protesters. This was given the ultimate compliment in the editorial of *Farmers Weekly* on 13 January 1995. Under the headline, 'No longer enough to defend veal exports from legal position', the editorial concluded:

Meanwhile, now is the time for farmers and those who claim to represent them to add their voices to what has become a one-sided debate. Defending livestock exports – simply on the

⁷⁹ M-O 1995, H 1820, w, 39, Cornwall, farmer's wife.

⁸⁰ M-O 1995, B 2154, w, 62, Glos, radiographer.

⁸¹ M-O 1995, B 1442, m, Staines, aircraft engineer ret.

⁸² M-O 1995, J 931, w, 49, Cheshire, technician

⁸³ See for example the report of 8 Jan. 1995, pp. 1–2, under headline 'Anarchists and fanatics hijack animal demos'.

basis that it is a legal trade – is no longer sufficient. Farmers, animal welfarists and, indeed, consumers need and deserve more positive guidance.⁸⁴

A sharp contrast to the anodyne defence of the trade some seven months earlier!

However, the complexity of the material does raise some doubts about this simple interpretation. The opposition to live animal exports continued to be on welfarist rather than rights grounds. There was little evidence that that recent arguments in favour of animal rights had made much headway among the M-O respondents since their criticism remained based on 'humane' grounds. Also, slightly oddly, concern centred on the 'British' issue of live transport. The issue of veal crates, which was perhaps seen as a rather distant issue, never caught the public's attention. Very few of the M-O correspondents made any mention of veal crates at all.

In contrast to these arguments, it is clear that many of those who took part in the demonstrations had taken animal rights' campaigners arguments on board. The attitudes of those involved at Shoreham, even the 'moderates', as expressed in their writing and in press comment, do appear to show a recognition of arguments about the 'nature' of animals. Similarly this group, or part of it, was been willing to carry on the campaign even in the face of defeat which came in the Summer of 1995.

What then about the 'losers'? To the extent that our group gave very little support to exports in February 1995, it is, at one level, clear that the 'farming lobby' had lost the battle, as indeed the *Farmers Weekly* leader quoted above admitted. At the time, the very little public support voiced on behalf of the farmers was coming very much from their own people. For instance, the 20,000 signatures collected by the FUW and the ubiquitous Richard Otley in September and October 1994 nearly all came from farmers, auctioneers and dealers.⁸⁵ Again, the very limited amount of material from our group would support this. One of the few active agriculturists in our group wrote, 'I think a great deal of what the animal protesters are saying needs to be listened to and acted upon'.⁸⁶ But it was more serious than that.

A large part of our group, though still probably a minority, said that the whole issue had affected their attitudes to farming and the countryside. Farmers were often seen as heartless and profit-led. 'Farmers only see animals as objects which provide an income – they don't see them as having feelings' wrote a woman from Preston with an awareness of some of the animal rights issues.⁸⁷ Nor did the free enterprise pirates help. A retired typesetter wrote from Surrey

The main item which maddened me about this was the clever dicks who tried to make a fast buck when the legitimate ferries and road haulers [sic] refused to transport the animals. Their only concern was their pockets and it was sickening to see some of them quoting their rights and saying they were not breaking any laws.⁸⁸

The fact that, albeit late in the day, the NFU and even *Farmers Weekly* said something similar is little comfort.

The evidence from this group in relation to general changes in the environment was unambiguous. This is seen more clearly in answers to other questions in the directive, but it was also

⁸⁴ *Farmers Weekly*, 13 Jan. 1995, p. 5.

⁸⁵ *Farmers Weekly*, 7 Oct. 1994, p. 14.

⁸⁶ M-O 1995, H 1820, w, 39, Cornwall, farmer's wife.

⁸⁷ M-O 1995, C 1713 w, 46, Preston receptionist.

⁸⁸ M-O 1995, H 1806, m, 69, Surrey, typesetter ret.

explicitly linked by many to live animal exports. A teacher from rural Staffordshire, having detailed a history of post war agriculture dominated, as he saw it, by profit and pesticides, ends his writing for M-O, 'sadly though, the chief change I have seen in my life is that farmers are no longer in sympathy with the land'.⁸⁹

The NFU and the farming lobby may argue, as they often do, that urban views of the countryside are sentimental and romantic but what people believe, especially when they form a majority, does matter. As *Farmers Weekly* put it in February 1994, just before the crisis over exports blew up, 'In an age when image matters more than reality, UK farming has become a vulnerable industry'.⁹⁰ In the short term the 'farmers' won. Live exports were revived, although not on passenger ferries, and all the breast beating was forgotten. Then in the spring of 1996 exports of calves were stopped by an even worse crisis – the discovery of the possibility of a link between BSE and CJD – although sheep exports continued.⁹¹ But it was not BSE which made the end of the export ban a hollow victory; it was the increasing sense that British farming had forfeited the trust of the British public.

⁸⁹ M-O 1995, m, 50, Stone, teacher.

⁹⁰ *Farmers Weekly*, 11 Feb. 1994, p. 5.

⁹¹ Between 5 July and 4 October 1996 435,600 sheep

were shipped out of Dover on specially chartered vessels. Our thanks to Tim O'Brien of CIWF for these figures.