



Ruth the Ruthless: Activism, Welfare, and Generational Change

The polarisation of 1970s' welfare debates triggered an increasing professionalisation of British animal campaigning as well as generational clashes about the style and goals of protest. The described changes were not unique to animal campaigning. Since the 1950s, many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had begun to professionalise their organisational structures and lobbying tactics, and environmentalist organisations like Greenpeace had pioneered new forms of direct action protest.¹ The changing campaigning environment created pressure on the traditionalist RSPCA leadership to rethink its own tactics. Since the mid-1960s, the Society's Council had tried to shape emerging farm animal welfare debates with a mix of traditional backstage lobbying, strategic sponsorship of scientific research and expertise, and investment in expensive media campaigns. This strategy resulted in a number of political victories. However, the Council's parallel tendency to quell internal conflicts by expelling vocal critics and ongoing ambivalence over so-called field sports (Chap. 5) alienated many RSPCA members. Between 1970 and 1977, escalating tensions over hunting, intensive farming, and Council decisions resulted in a rise to power of the so-called RSPCA Reform Group. Members of this group oversaw sweeping organisational reforms and popularised

¹Zelko, *Make It a Green Peace*; Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson, and Jean-François Mouhout, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 81–100; Nixon, "Trouble at the National Trust".

contemporary animal rights thinking. At its highpoint, reform leadership also threatened the Society's traditionally close ties to Britain's political establishment. As a Council member, Ruth Harrison played an important role both in kick-starting the RSPCA's engagement with farm animal welfare and in triggering the internal crisis that led to the rise of the Reform Group.

BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL

Harrison's engagement with professional animal activists outside of government committees had begun unsystematically. In the years following the publication of *Animal Machines*, she spoke at numerous conferences on 'factory farming'² and also engaged in occasional publicity stunts. In 1968, she accepted a challenge from intensive farmer Alistair Nugent, nephew of Conservative politician and former NFU vice-chairman Lord Nugent of Guildford. Together with Nugent, she devised a questionnaire on 'factory farming' that was used to see if Nugent could convert 40 opponents of intensive agriculture during a visit to Nugent's farm. In the end, Nugent failed to convert a single opponent. According to the *Times*, "one woman cried when she saw the caged hens."³

Harrison also campaigned against the slaughter of non-stunned animals. Together with Muriel Dowding, founder of the *Beauty Without Cruelty* charity for eliminating cosmetics testing on animals, she asked Labour's Baroness Edith Summerskill to support a proposed ban on the 'ritual' slaughter of non-stunned animals in 1966. However, Baroness Summerskill would support the motion only if Harrison and Dowding managed to secure a promise "from the Imam that the Moslems will agree to stunning."⁴ Such a promise was forthcoming from neither Muslim nor Jewish communities. According to Dowding, politicians on both sides of the aisle were afraid to support bans for fear of losing votes.⁵ One of the few politicians to support a ban in the House of Lords was Dowding's

² "Danger in antibiotic spread", *Times*, 24.08.1968, 14.

³ "Hen 'factory' makes no converts", *Times*, 12.07.1968, 4.

⁴ FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Green Ryman Folder, Lady Dowding to Ruth Harrison (21.09.1966); see also FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Red Ryman Folder, Ruth Harrison to David (25.02.1968) [second date: 11.06.1971].

⁵ FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Green Ryman Folder, Dowding to Harrison (21.09.1966).

husband, Commander of the Battle of Britain, Lord Dowding, who was now a fervent if isolated animal protection advocate.⁶

Harrison's failure to mobilise support for a reform of non-stun regulations showed that relying on her bestseller fame would not be enough to shape the trajectory of British animal politics. To become more effective as a campaigner, she would have to find additional financial, logistical, and expert support for her work. One way of doing so was to create her own charity. In the same month that she began to lobby for FAWAC membership, Ruth Harrison started to approach renowned scientists and potential sponsors for the formation of a new research trust devoted to animal welfare.⁷ Amongst the confirmed trustees was Cambridge veterinary researcher and frequent Harrison critic David Sainsbury.⁸ Other potential trustees were Prince Phillip and E.F. Schumacher, renowned economic adviser of the National Coal Board, leading member of the *Soil Association*, and later author of *Small Is Beautiful* (1973).⁹ However, despite speaking against factory farming at a conference organised by the Ruth Harrison Advisory Group at London's Friends' House in 1966,¹⁰ Schumacher did not become a trustee. The Trust itself was registered in early 1967 as the Ruth Harrison Welfare Trust but was hastily renamed as the Ruth Harrison Research Trust to distinguish itself from general welfare trusts.¹¹

Generating funds for the new Ruth Harrison Research Trust proved more difficult than expected. In January 1968, trustees met for the first time. Ruth Harrison was elected Chairman of the Trust, and it was resolved to raise "a fighting fund" by making approaches "to possible wealthy sources."¹² Despite attracting donors like Lord Conesford and the Whitley

⁶FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Green Ryman Folder, Dowding to Harrison (21.09.1966); on the Dowdings see Roscher, *Königreich*, 247.

⁷FACT Files, DB, Appelbe, Ambrose Appelbe to Dr Harrison (19.08.1966).

⁸FACT Files, DB, Appelbe, Ruth Harrison to Ambrose Appelbe (23.08.1966).

⁹FACT Files, DB, Appelbe, Ruth Harrison to Ambrose Appelbe (23.08.1966); Ruth Harrison to Ambrose Appelbe (02.02.1967); Veldman, *Fantasy, the Bomb and the Greening of Britain. Romantic Protest, 1945–1980*, 292–99.

¹⁰Stanley Baker, "Factory farms 'no answer'", *Guardian*, 17.10.1966, 4.

¹¹FACT Files, DB, Appelbe, Appelbe to Charity Commission (17.02.1967); Harrison to Appelbe (25.07.1967); the Research Trust only seems to have been renamed Farm Animal Care Trust in 1974; "Public Notices—Charity Commission", *Times*, 13.12.1974, 26.

¹²FACT Files, MD, Minute Book, Ruth Harrison Research Trust, Minutes of 1st Meeting of Trustees, 02.01.1968, 2.

Animal Protection Trust,¹³ there was little steady income. In 1967, one supporter sagely noted, “you are going to have very little money for a very long time.”¹⁴ With *Animal Machines* fading from the public’s mind, it was also becoming clear that naming the trust the Ruth Harrison Research Trust had been a mistake.¹⁵ Discussing the issue, a correspondent noted: “If I hadn’t read your book, I shouldn’t want to give a penny to a trust with the name you quoted.”¹⁶ In 1970, David Sainsbury expressed similar concerns about the “unfortunate confusion that exists with the name of the ‘Ruth Harrison Research Trust’”:

the implication to the ‘reader’ is that this body is a distributor of funds to bodies doing work we approve of ... For some reason I find they do not associate this name with a body eagerly seeking funds, as well as promoting and, we hope, financing research.¹⁷

Some also believed that by focusing on food quality as well as on farm animal welfare, the Trust’s interests were too broad.¹⁸ As a consequence, it was decided to abandon an explicit focus on food quality and look for a new name that more closely associated the Trust with farm animal welfare. Although Harrison remained interested in environmental and nutritional issues,¹⁹ the Ruth Harrison Research Trust was renamed as the Farm Animal Care Trust (FACT) in October 1974.²⁰ In the preceding interim

¹³FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Green Ryman Folder, Lord Conesford to Ruth Harrison (08.12.1969); Mr Burns to Ruth Harrison (13.03.1969).

¹⁴FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Red Ryman Folder, Kenneth to Ruth Harrison (10.03.1967), 4.

¹⁵FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Red Ryman Folder, Kenneth to Ruth Harrison (10.03.1967).

¹⁶FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Red Ryman Folder, Kenneth to Ruth Harrison (10.03.1967), 3.

¹⁷FACT Files, DB, Dr Sainsbury, David Sainsbury to Ruth Harrison (08.07.1970).

¹⁸FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Green Ryman Folder, Ruth Harrison to Mr Lustgarten (24.11.1967); FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Red Ryman Folder, Kenneth to Ruth Harrison (10.03.1967), 4.

¹⁹Kendall, “Ruth and the Ruthless,” 2; Dex Harrison was also interested in the interface of architecture and animal welfare; FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Blue Ryman Folder, Article, “Farm Fires—A National Scandal,” *Architects’ Journal* 41/156 (12.10.1972).

²⁰FACT Files, MD, Minute Book, Ruth Harrison, FACT, Minutes of Meeting of the Trustees held on 09.05.1978 (14.05.1981), 2; FACT Files, Appelbe, Ambrose Appelbe and Partners to Ruth Harrison (29.11.1971); FACT Files, Marian Stamp Dawkins [in the following MD], Minute Book, Farm Animal Care Trust. Meeting of Trustees (11.08.2000).

phase, pamphlets already pointed to the Trust's scientific focus on farm animal welfare as its distinguishing feature:

Because farming systems and techniques change so rapidly, a specialist body, the Ruth Harrison Trust, has been formed to initiate further research and maintain an adequate educational programme for the public at large. IT IS THE ONLY RESEARCH ORGANISATION WHOSE ENTIRE ACTIVITY IS DEVOTED TO FARM ANIMALS [sic].²¹

Despite its meagre resources, Harrison's Trust soon funded nutritional research at Queen Elizabeth College and research on improving stunning techniques and poultry transports.²² Following the election of former Brambell member William Homan Thorpe as Trustee in February 1968,²³ Harrison also commissioned a Gallup Poll of farmers' attitudes towards 'factory farming' and husbandry systems.²⁴ In total, Gallup conducted ca. 1900 interviews with farmers from all over Britain. The results seemed to confirm Harrison's assertion that intensive systems were controversial amongst farmers themselves:

FACT Files, DB, Farming Survey, Enclosed in: HB Fawcett to FAWAC members, 'FAWAC. Gallup Poll Result' (Office Note 14.02.1969), 4.

<i>Total 1900 Farmers agreeing with</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Complete diet	94
Sufficient light	95
Access to daylight	72
Free movement	85
Room for wings	78
Comfort of floors	89
Access to outdoor for cattle-sheep	76
Access to outdoor for other stock	56

²¹ FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Green Ryman Folder, Draft Model Pamphlet—The Ruth Harrison Trust, 1.

²² FACT Files, MD, Minute Book, Ruth Harrison Research Trust, Minutes of 1st Meeting of Trustees, 02.01.1968, 2; FACT Files, D.B., Unmarked Red Ryman Folder Ruth Harrison to David Sainsbury (27.10.1968).

²³ FACT Files, MD, Minute Book, Ruth Harrison Research Trust, Resolution of the Trustees (20.02.1968).

²⁴ FACT Files, DB, Unmarked Blue Ryman Folder, Farming Survey, Enclosed in: H.B. Fawcett to FAWAC members, 'FAWAC. Gallup Poll Result'. Office Note (14.02.1969).

AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP: RUTH HARRISON AND THE RSPCA

Being able to commission opinion polls and supportive research was becoming increasingly important for Harrison's work within FAWAC (Chap. 8). However, her strategy of blocking FAWAC compromises on weak welfare codes also necessitated generating sufficient external public and political pressure to break regulatory deadlocks in favour of more ambitious welfare measures. Forming an alliance with an established campaigning organisation was one way of doing so. Its prestige, financial power, and corporatist ties made the RSPCA an obvious choice.

Harrison had been a member of the RSPCA since 1964, and her appointment to the RSPCA's Council in April 1969 held mutual advantages.²⁵ Harrison stood to profit from the Society's close relations to the Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare and ability to commission large-scale publicity campaigns. In turn, the RSPCA Council profited from Harrison's public prestige as the author of *Animal Machines* and her insider knowledge as the most high-profile welfarist FAWAC member.²⁶ Strategic goals aligned closely. Since the publication of *Animal Machines*, the RSPCA had supported campaigns against battery cages for poultry, crates and deficiency diets in veal production, cattle docking, and weak welfare provisions in the 1968 Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.²⁷ It had also intensified campaigns to outlaw the live export of British animals to foreign slaughterhouses²⁸ as well as against Jewish and Muslim "ritual slaughter"²⁹ without pre-stunning.

²⁵ RSPCA Archives, IF/56/6, Ruth Harrison General File, RM/A853, document: Harrison—Mrs Ruth, OBE 1988.

²⁶ The Council had not been consulted by MAFF about the nomination of Irene Walsh and was eager to expand its influence within FAWAC, RSPCA Archives, CM/57 RSPCA Council Minutes 1966–1968, Meeting of the Council, 27.07.1967, 4.

²⁷ RSPCA Archives, CM/55 RSPCA Council Minutes 1962–1966, Meeting of the Council, 21.01.1965, 2–3; 10.06.1965, 2; 17.02.1966, 2–3; CM/57 RSPCA Council Minutes 1966–1968, Meeting of the Council, 23.11.1967, 3; 25.07.1968, 2; Meeting of Council, 25.07.1968, 2.

²⁸ RSPCA Archives, CM/55 RSPCA Council Minutes 1962–1966, Meeting of the Council, 15.07.1965, 2; 21.10.1965, 2; CM/57 RSPCA Council Minutes 1966–1968, Meeting of the Council, 27.07.1967, 4; CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 24.10.1968, 4, 6–7; Meeting of the Council, 27.02.1969, 2–3.

²⁹ RSPCA Archives, CM/57 RSPCA Council Minutes 1966–1968, Meeting of the Council, 23.05.1967, 3–4; Meeting of the Council, 25.04.1967, 4–5; Meeting of Council,

Harrison's appointment triggered a flurry of RSPCA farm animal welfare activities. At her second Council meeting in May 1969, she re-invigorated the RSPCA's defunct sub-committee on intensive methods of animal husbandry, which had been founded in 1964.³⁰ At her third meeting, she proposed a resolution for the Society's upcoming general assembly according to which the RSPCA deplored battery systems in general but—pending the ban of such systems—specifically opposed the dewing-ing of birds.³¹ And at her fourth meeting, she highlighted inaccuracies in RSPCA material on animal welfare, gained a seat on the general purposes sub-committee and the new ad hoc committee on intensive farming, and successfully called on the RSPCA to establish legal precedent by securing cruelty prosecutions against intensive farms.³²

In tandem with Harrison, the RSPCA's leadership also devised a publicity campaign to prevent the parliamentary enactment of weak initial FAWAC codes “by means of press advertising and the widespread distribution of literature.”³³ Harrison accompanied the RSPCA campaign with media broadcasts and newspaper articles. In Parliament, Conservative MP and RSPCA Council member Frank Burden tabled an “amendment regretting that the codes failed to implement the recommendations of the Brambell Committee and requesting the Government to introduce amended codes in the next session.”³⁴ By the end of October 1969, the collaboration between Britain's most senior animal protection

25.07.1968, 6; for parallel controversies between liberal and orthodox parts of Britain's Jewish community see, RSPCA Archives, CM/55 1962–1966, RSPCA Council Minutes, Meeting of the Council, 11.06.1964, 3; CM/58 RSPCA Council minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 27.02.1969, 1.

³⁰ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 22.05.1969, 6; CM/55 RSPCA Council Minutes 1966–1968, Meeting of the Council, 21.05.1964, 3.

³¹ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Special Meeting of the Council, 05.06.1969, 1.

³² RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 26.06.1969, 2–3, 5; Harrison also tried to stop the Royal Agricultural Show from hosting a rodeo; RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 27.11.1969, 2.

³³ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 23.10.1969, 1.

³⁴ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 23.10.1969, 2.

organisation and most prominent farm animal welfare campaigner had resulted in a rare MAFF promise to review codes (see Chap. 8).

The honeymoon between Harrison and the RSPCA Council was brief. Probably buoyed by her recent success, Harrison triggered a significant rift among Council members in early 1970 by leaking a confidential letter on ‘field sports.’ The letter marked the most recent escalation of attempts by the British Field Sports Society (BFSS) to influence RSPCA hunting policies. After reaching a high around 1961, the mid-1960s had seen internal RSPCA tensions over hunting simmer down following the expulsion of radical anti-hunt activists like Patrick Moore, Howard Johnson, and Gwendolen Barter (Chap. 5). In public, the RSPCA would voice concerns about hunting for sport but would take little concrete action.³⁵ In November 1968, senior RSPCA executives even met with BFSS head and Conservative MP Marcus Kimball over lunch. During the meeting, the BFSS proposed agreeing on public talks on “improving standards in shooting and fishing.”³⁶ Although the RSPCA rejected this proposal, it later agreed to a public “statement about ongoing talks” and the “hope ‘for a better understanding of each other’s position’ in future.”³⁷

While relations between the RSPCA leadership and BFSS seemed to be improving, those with hunt critics were deteriorating. Since the early 1960s, the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) had intensified campaigning for RSPCA condemnations of ‘field sports’ like fox hunting with hounds or hare coursing at general meetings and with mass letters to RSPCA members. This behaviour threatened the authority of the Council. In May 1969, RSPCA Chairman John Hobhouse condemned “interference” by LACS circulars in the RSPCA’s postal election and “expressed concern that, seemingly, matters raised in confidence at Council Meetings had been imparted to the League.”³⁸ However, LACS advocacy proved popular among RSPCA members and parliamentary supporters. In the summer of 1969, 100 MPs filed a motion recognising the “overwhelming public support” for bans and urged the government “as a contribution to

³⁵ Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 171–173; Roscher, *Königreich*, 290–291.

³⁶ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 27.02.1969, 5.

³⁷ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 27.02.1969, 6; Meeting of the Council, 28.11.1968, 4.

³⁸ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 22.05.1969, 6.

the European Conservation Year” to “introduce appropriate legislation.”³⁹ Labour MP Arnold Shaw also filed a private members bill urging bans of hare coursing and hunting wild deer with hounds. RSPCA Council members like Ruth Harrison campaigned for the Society to support Shaw’s bill in line with a recent general meeting resolution to “do all in [the Society’s] power to end deer hunting and hare coursing.”⁴⁰

However, to critics’ dismay, the RSPCA failed to publicly support the Bill. Behind the scenes, this inaction had been caused by a BFSS letter threatening to challenge the RSPCA’s charity status if it “actively campaigned against coursing and deer hunting.”⁴¹ Losing charity status could have cost the RSPCA up to £300,000 annually.⁴² In November 1969, “traditionalist”⁴³ MP Frederick Burden, who had just been elected as RSPCA vice-chairman,⁴⁴ explained the threat to Ruth Harrison but stressed that the BFSS letter must remain confidential while the RSPCA assured itself of its legal status.⁴⁵ Unwilling to wait, Harrison mentioned the letter at an RSPCA Council meeting on November 27. However, a majority voted to delay campaigning and approaching UK Charity Commissioners until legal clarity had been obtained.⁴⁶

Following this delay, things escalated rapidly: in early December, Harrison mentioned the BFSS letter to the *Guardian* and claimed to be “deeply disappointed that by its inactivity the [RSPCA] appears to have taken this lying down, ... I think it best to bring the whole business into the open.”⁴⁷ At a Council meeting on December 31, she denied that there

³⁹RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 24.07.1969, 1; anti-hunt protest was also supported by newspapers like the *Times* “Outdated: Objectionable”, *Times*, 05.11.1969, 9.

⁴⁰“Blackmail over blood sports, says RSPCA”, *Guardian*, 11.12.1969, 22.

⁴¹“Blackmail over blood sports, says RSPCA”, *Guardian*, 11.12.1969, 22.

⁴²“Charity fears £300,000 fall in income”, *Guardian*, 17.05.1973, 7; according to Richard Ryder, the fears were a farce and used to stop internal opposition, Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 173.

⁴³Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 175.

⁴⁴RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 26.06.1969, 2; Meeting of the Council, 24.07.1969, 3; Meeting of the Council, 23.10.1969, 4.

⁴⁵“Charity fears £300,000 fall in income”, *Guardian*, 17.05.1973, 7.

⁴⁶RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 27.11.1969, 1, 7–8; “Jury in RSPCA case says member’s letter was not a libel”, *Guardian*, 19.05.1973, 6.

⁴⁷“Blackmail over blood sports, says RSPCA”, *Guardian*, 11.12.1969, 22; see also: “Charity fears £300,000 fall in income”, *Guardian*, 17.05.1973, 7; “Jury find that ballerina’s letter was true”, *Times*, 19.05.1973, 2.

had been a “breach of confidence on Council matters, but only of a telephone conversation she had had with Mr Burden, to whom she offered a full apology.”⁴⁸ Belying later descriptions of her as giving “the impression of a certain fragility,”⁴⁹ Harrison felt that:

the [RSPCA] chairman should have found out from [Legal] Counsel at the meeting on 17th November, what positive action could be taken to support Mr Arnold Shaw’s Bill and that as she considered that the RSPCA did not intend to take any useful action, she could best help the cause of animal welfare and those in Parliament by disclosing the threat by the BFSS.⁵⁰

RSPCA Chairman John Hobhouse countered that details of Shaw’s Bill had only been made public in early December, which would have precluded organising a full publicity campaign. A supportive letter to the *Times* by himself had not been published.⁵¹ In response, Harrison pushed for the expulsion from the RSPCA of the four BFSS members, among them Marcus Kimball, who had threatened to challenge the Society’s charity status.⁵² This suggestion met with legal objections, and the Council only agreed to explore whether subscriptions could be cancelled.

In view of this further delay, Harrison supplied a confidential photocopy of the original BFSS letter, which she had obtained from Hobhouse on December 31, to LACS chairman Raymond Rowley. Rowley broke his promise to only use the photocopy to obtain a second legal opinion and used it to disrupt the BFSS annual meeting. When asked by the RSPCA whether she had leaked the letter, Harrison refused to confirm or deny allegations and failed to appear at relevant Council meetings.⁵³ This behaviour infuriated other Council members. Elected to the RSPCA Council

⁴⁸ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 31.12.1969, 3.

⁴⁹ Kendall, “Ruth and the Ruthless,” 2.

⁵⁰ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 31.12.1969, 3.

⁵¹ RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 31.12.1969, 3.

⁵² RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Meeting of the Council, 31.12.1969, 9.

⁵³ RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 30.07.1970, 5; see also, British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, RSPCA Ryder Dep. 9856, B2/2, RSPCA Reform, 1971–1972, 2. 1974–75, RSPCA Reform Group News Letter, February 1974—Ruth Harrison, April 1974.

alongside Harrison in March 1969,⁵⁴ famed ex-Prima Ballerina Nadia Nerina described Harrison's evasions as "absolutely disgraceful."⁵⁵ In a circular letter to Council members from November 1970,⁵⁶ Nerina suggested that Harrison was "not fit to be a member of the RSPCA."⁵⁷ Reacting to this letter and growing criticism of her in the Council, Harrison decided to sue Nerina for libel in 1972. The libel suit was a grave miscalculation. In May 1973, Harrison lost her suit and was ordered to pay ca. £30,000 in court costs.⁵⁸ In his verdict, the presiding judge ruled that there was "no question of malice in Miss Nerina's actions" and that it was a tragedy that "two women of worth, devoted to animal welfare," should find themselves "at arm's length over their concern for animals."⁵⁹

Over the following months, prominent supporters like Yehudi Menuhin, Julian Huxley, the Archdeacon of Westminster, and Dame Margery Perham established a fund to pay for Harrison's legal costs and succeeded in raising £6000. Meanwhile, Harrison announced that she was taking up a job to pay for the court costs.⁶⁰ Referring to her case, RSPCA critics like the *Guardian's* Martin Walker accused the Society of misusing charitable funds to legally silence critical members.⁶¹ Harrison herself poured further fuel into the fire in 1974 by revealing that a new RSPCA-promoted humane electric stunner did not conform to British standards.⁶² Nonetheless, all attempts to cover the court costs proved futile. On June 12, 1975, the *London Gazette* reported that Ruth Harrison, "(married woman), of 34, Holland Park Road, London, . . . , occupation unknown,"⁶³ had filed a petition for bankruptcy, which had now been proven. Harrison's reaction to the bankruptcy is telling. Rather than yield her seat on the RSPCA Council, she publicly defended her actions:

⁵⁴ "Elected to Council of RSPCA", *The Glasgow Herald*, 09.04.1969, 9.

⁵⁵ "Charity fears £300,000 fall in income", *Guardian*, 17.05.1973, 7.

⁵⁶ "Jury in RSPCA case says member's letter was not a libel", *Guardian*, 19.05.1973, 6.

⁵⁷ "Jury find that ballerina's letter was true", *Times*, 19.05.1973, 2.

⁵⁸ Kendall, "Ruth and the Ruthless," 21.

⁵⁹ "Jury in RSPCA case says member's letter was not a libel", *Guardian*, 19.05.1973, 6.

⁶⁰ Kendall, "Ruth and the Ruthless," 21; Edward Carpenter, "Ruth Harrison", *Times*, 27.07.1973, 17; "Debt of honour", *Observer*, 02.09.1973, 40.

⁶¹ Martin Walker, "Open file—Doggy fashion", *Guardian*, 10.01.1974, 13.

⁶² "Humane Killer—inhumane", *Observer*, 15.09.1974, 1–2.

⁶³ "The Bankruptcy Acts 1914 and 1926—Receiving Orders", *The London Gazette* (12.06.1975), 7612.

My first loyalty must be to the cause for which I was elected, my second to the members who elected me, my third to the Council itself. At no time would I promise confidentiality at the risk of suffering to animals.⁶⁴

A NEW STYLE OF ACTIVISM: THE RISE OF THE RSPCA REFORM GROUP

Harrison's actions ended the RSPCA Council's detente on hunting.⁶⁵ Mirroring a wider turn away from the "softly-softly"⁶⁶ reformism of the 1960s, the 1970s saw younger activists shake up British civic activism in fields ranging from gay rights to environmentalism. In the case of the RSPCA, the BFSS episode made growing tensions between older 'traditionalists' in the Council and younger grassroots activists boil over. Founded in 1970, the RSPCA Reform Group criticised an allegedly elitist leadership for ignoring majority demands for decisive action against 'field sports.' At stake was not just the issue of hunting but a wider reevaluation of Council accountability and internal democracy.

Ahead of the Society's 1970 annual meeting, RSPCA Chairman John Hobhouse and Vice-Chairman Frank Burden attempted to diffuse tensions with a referendum on whether 'field sports' should be discussed. Of polled members 4028 voted against and 3836 in favour, and all resolutions regarding 'field sports' were disallowed.⁶⁷ The referendum failed to mollify critics, and the RSPCA's June 1970 annual meeting had to be closed early due to disruptions. Parts of the increasingly divided RSPCA Council subsequently tried to quell protest by expelling disruptive members and threatening legal action.⁶⁸ This approach backfired.

Emboldened by the referendum and supported by the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, the Reform Group tried to gain a foothold in the Council by vetting candidates for potential hunting affiliations and supporting campaigns of allied activists.⁶⁹ In a letter to RSPCA

⁶⁴ Quoted according to Kendall, "Ruth and the Ruthless," 21.

⁶⁵ Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 171–173; Roscher, *Königreich*, 295–298.

⁶⁶ Lent, *British Social Movements*, 97; Roscher, *Königreich*, 260–273.

⁶⁷ RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Special Meeting of the Council, 04.06.1970, 1 & 4.

⁶⁸ RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 30.07.1970, 7; Meeting of the Council, 28.01.1971, 7–8; "New attack on RSPCA planned", *Guardian*, 22.06.1970, 6.

⁶⁹ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep 9846 B2; 1, RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports to RSPCA Members, 14.04.1972.

employees, Reform Group co-founder John Bryant claimed “that hunting people ... had systematically plotted to gain control of the RSPCA.”⁷⁰ Employees should think through “facts” and “show, which Council members are biased”: “you must not hesitate to rid the Society of any Council member who tolerates a particular form of cruelty.”⁷¹ RSPCA leadership reacted with a carrot and stick policy. In Spring 1971, the Council passed a new policy statement on hunting according to which the “RSPCA deplores the unnecessary killing of any wild creature or the infliction of avoidable suffering and distress.”⁷² It also considered assessing whether wild animals could be brought within the provisions of the 1911 Protection of Animals Act and renewed enquiries into humane alternatives to fox hunting with hounds. Ahead of the 1971 General Meeting, Chairman Hobhouse also met with Reform Group members and promised an anti-blood sports motion in return for a no-disruption guarantee.⁷³ Reform Group members adapted their tactics. In preparation for the general meeting, notes informed Reform Group members to “act orderly,” “disburse” in the crowd, and use points of order to challenge “bloodsports men”: “Do not show this note to anyone else. If they haven’t a copy, they’re not one of us.”⁷⁴

With activists continuing to push for RSPCA condemnations of specific hunting practices like fox hunting with hounds,⁷⁵ tensions escalated further. Ahead of the 1972 postal votes for Council membership, it seemed likely that the Reform Group would launch a letter campaign to influence voting.⁷⁶ After considerable discussion, the Council agreed to counter Reform Group views with an explanatory letter that could be sent

⁷⁰ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2;1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, John Bryant to RSPCA Officials, 08.02.1971, 1.

⁷¹ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2;1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, John Bryant to RSPCA Officials, 08.02.1971, 1.

⁷² RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 03.03.1971, 5.

⁷³ RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 03.03.1971, 5–6, 10–11.

⁷⁴ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2;1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, RSPCA Reform Group: Note For Supporters. Re RSPCA AGM; prepared on evening of 24.06.1971.

⁷⁵ RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 05.08.1971, 12–13.

⁷⁶ RSPCA Archives, CM/60 RSPCA Council Minutes 1971–1972, Meeting of the Council, 05.04.1972, 7–8.

alongside voting papers. Because Reform Group membership was a secret, it was also decided to enhance CV requirements for Council candidates to hinder infiltration.⁷⁷ A motion to ask the Reform Group to disclose its membership was also debated.⁷⁸ However, despite these measures, the 1972 Council elections returned not only existing anti-hunt members like Harrison but also Reform Group members like John Bryant, Bryan Seager, Andrew Linzey, and Richard Ryder.⁷⁹

With much of recent RSPCA historiography either written by former Reform Group members or drawing on their accounts, the 1972 elections have been described as the beginning of a marked break in the Society's history.⁸⁰ This is an exaggeration. The election of Bryant, Seager, Linzey, and Ryder was certainly a triumph for the Reform Group. However, Council voting patterns and the continued election of many "traditionalists" clearly show that a majority of the RSPCA's leadership, Council, and membership remained "traditionalist." Rather than marking a revolution, the 1972 elections accelerated organisational transformations that were already taking place. These transformations were occurring not just in response to the much-publicised tensions over hunting but against a background of rapidly increasing demands on the RSPCA and a wider post-war professionalisation of NGOs. According to Matthew Hilton and others, this professionalisation was characterised by "the focused, professional pursuit of fundraising, marketing and advertising" and driven by the increasing importance of the "marshalling of expertise."⁸¹

With backstage decision-making on British animal welfare politics breaking down (Chap. 8), it was no longer sufficient for the RSPCA to act as a traditional charity, lobby politicians, police individual acts of cruelty, and run shelters. Instead, it had to find new ways of maintaining its influence over the rapidly expanding and increasingly crowded political

⁷⁷RSPCA Archives, CM/60 RSPCA Council Minutes 1971–1972, Meeting of the Council, 05.04.1972, 7–8.

⁷⁸RSPCA Archives, CM 60 RSPCA Council Minutes 1971–1972, Meeting of the Council, 07.06.1972, 7.

⁷⁹Richard Ryder, "RSPCA Reform Group," in Marc Bekoff and Carron A. Meaney (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, [1998] 2013), 307–308; British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2;1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, 14.04.1972 to RSPCA members.

⁸⁰Ryder, "RSPCA Reform Group," 492–493; Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 174–177.

⁸¹Hilton et al., *Politics of Expertise*, 80–81.

marketplace for animal welfare, environmentalism, and conservation in the midst of an emerging fiscal crisis and Britain's accession to European policy frameworks.⁸²

By 1972, this transition was well underway. Between 1970 and 1975, a 'traditionalist' Council under RSPCA Chairman Hobhouse oversaw ambitious reforms of the Society's campaigning and involvement with welfare scientists. In 1971 and 1972, the Society replaced existing ad hoc committees with expert advisory committees on animal experimentation and farming. Council members were still present, but the committees were mostly staffed with scientists and representatives of relevant professions.⁸³ Discussed in more detail in Chap. 10, the new Farm Livestock Advisory Committee (FLAC) began to publish detailed scientific reviews of British welfare codes.⁸⁴ For the first time in its history, the Society also began to actively sponsor scientific research and co-organised a major conference on stress in 1973.⁸⁵ Responding to growing demands for empirical data, the Society's veterinary staff conducted national and international surveys of animal welfare. Between 1972 and 1973, the RSPCA also launched a successful lobbying campaign to Stop the Export of Live Farm Animals (SELFA).⁸⁶ To support its expanding activities, the RSPCA hired new Education Officers, raised expenditure, and increased staff workloads. By 1973, headquarters staff received ca. 1000 letters, sent out ca. 700 letters—excluding mass mail outs—and answered around 300/400 telephone calls per day.⁸⁷

⁸²For an overview of other new farm animal campaigning organisations like Compassion in World Farming (est. 1967), see Roscher, *Königreich*, 260–266; 290–293.

⁸³RSPCA Archives, CM/58 RSPCA Council Minutes 1968–1970, Private and Confidential—Council and Standing Committee, 23.12.1969, 1; CM/59, RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 05.08.1971, 2; Richard Ryder, "Putting Animals into Politics," in Robert Garner (ed.), *Animal Rights. The Changing Debate* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996), 173; Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 175.

⁸⁴RSPCA Archives, FLAC Minutes, Meeting 20.07.1971, 2–3.

⁸⁵RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 26.10.1972, 10–11; Kirk, "Invention of the Stressed Animal," 256; Roscher, *Königreich*, 294–97.

⁸⁶RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Meeting of the Council, 26.10.1972, 4–5; Meeting of the Council, 07.02.1973, 1–2; Meeting of the Council, 03.01.1974, 2 & 8; RSPCA Archives, FLAC Minutes, Meeting 27.02.1973, 2; RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 01.04.1971, 1.

⁸⁷RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Statement by Executive Director at Meeting of the Council, 01.11.1973 (item 10(8(c))); "Bankruptcy warning by RSPCA chief," *Times*, 29.06.1974, 2.

Despite intensifying RSPCA welfare research and lobbying, Reform Group members continued to press for more explicit condemnations of ‘field sports’ and for the democratisation of leadership structures. In November 1972, Reform Group member Bryan Seager supported public protest against Princess Anne’s participation in a hunting excursion at the Zetland Hunt.⁸⁸ This protest had explosive potential within a Society that prided itself on its Royal Patronage. While the RSPCA Council quickly distanced itself from Seager’s protest,⁸⁹ the Reform Group escalated the situation by calling for the removal of Royal patronage should the Royal Family not distance itself from hunting activities.⁹⁰ In a sign of how polarised the situation had become, both the Reform Group’s initiative and subsequent ‘traditionalist’ attempts to expel Seager failed.⁹¹

Concerned about growing Reform Group agitation, the RSPCA’s leadership resorted to increasingly controversial tactics to reassert control. Stressing the need for “loyalty (...) to the Council,”⁹² Chairman Hobhouse and vice-Chairman Burden started to use confidentiality clauses to prevent damaging leaks to the press and discipline unruly Council members.⁹³ The move angered neutral members. Things came to a head at a Council meeting on April 4, 1973. Following the failure of attempts to expel Seager because too few Council members could attend the meeting,⁹⁴ Reform Group members tried to turn the situation into an advantage by calling for a secret vote on condemning fox hunting. Still wielding a relative majority,

⁸⁸ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Meeting of the Council, 06.12.1972, 3–4; the impact of the protest was exacerbated by initial confusion of Bryan Seager’s name on the press statement with that of Major Seager, Chief Executive Officer of the RSPCA.

⁸⁹ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2;1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, RSPCA Press Release, 21.11.1972.

⁹⁰ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2;1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, Press Statement RSPCA Reform Group, 25.11.1972; RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 06.12.1972, 3–7, 11.

⁹¹ RSPCA Archives, CM/60 RSPCA Council Minutes 1971–1972; Meeting of the Council, 06.12.1972, 3–6; Meeting of the Council, 04.04.1973, 4; Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 173; Robert Garner, *Animals, Politics and Morality* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 55–56.

⁹² RSPCA Archives, CM/60 RSPCA Council Minutes 1971–1972; Meeting of the Council, 27.07.1972, 2; Meeting of the Council, 06.12.1972, 7.

⁹³ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 06.12.1972, 3–7; Meeting of the Council, 07.02.1973, 5–7.

⁹⁴ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 04.04.1973, 4.

Chairman Hobhouse reacted by calling for drastic changes to the RSPCA's constitution. Hobhouse's camp tabled two motions for the Society's next general meeting. The first motion proposed raising the maximum number of non-elected co-opted Council members from six to ten. The second motion proposed a formal rule allowing a three quarter Council majority to eject a member from Council. If implemented, the motions would have had a significant effect on Council dynamics: in 1973, there were 24 elected Council members, 16 voting representatives of associated groups, and between 3 and 6 voting co-opted members. Co-opted members were proposed in Council and elected by a simple majority. Raising their number to ten meant that the majority of voting members on the Council could eventually be non-elected. Meanwhile, the option of expelling elected members from Council had troubling implications for the Society's democratic constitution. Despite fierce protests from attending neutral and Reform Group members, the proposed motions were passed by a 'traditionalist' majority.⁹⁵

The passage of the motions triggered a wider organisational crisis. Within a month of the April 1973 Council meeting, a members' petition with 500 signatures demanded an Extraordinary General Meeting. Although some of the petition's content was deemed defamatory by the Society's legal counsel, Hobhouse was advised to delay tabling the motions and agree to demands for an impartial enquiry of RSPCA leadership and management: "It seems to me that you have nothing to lose."⁹⁶

Established after the Society's annual general meeting in June 1973, the three-man panel of enquiry under lawyer Charles Sparrow, QC, submitted its report in late 1974.⁹⁷ The outcome was a blow to Hobhouse. Reviewers made allegations of mismanagement, called for the resignation of Hobhouse, and proposed streamlining the RSPCA's eight standing committees, one ad hoc committee, and three advisory committees, which cost at least £20,000 to service per year.⁹⁸ Other proposals included halving the number of Council members, making Council membership

⁹⁵ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 04.04.1973, 4–7; 12–13; Special Meeting of the Council, 03.04.1974, 9–10.

⁹⁶ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Special Meeting of the Council, 24.05.1973, 2.

⁹⁷ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Special Meeting of the Council, 03.04.1974, 1.

⁹⁸ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Statement by Executive Director at Meeting of the Council, 01.11.1973 (item 10(8(c))); Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 173–175; "RSPCA gets new chairman", *Times*, 16.01.1975, 2.

dependent on relevant expertise, reducing a chairperson's term of office to two years, holding a referendum on 'field sports,' and updating voting procedures at general meetings.⁹⁹ Hobhouse, who had been re-elected as chairman with a 26 to 7 Council majority in July 1974,¹⁰⁰ felt compelled to offer his resignation in November 1974 and formally resigned in January 1975.¹⁰¹ Writing to Reform Group member Richard Ryder, he felt that further confidence votes would have deepened Council rifts but complained about the panel of enquiry's "devious methods."¹⁰²

RSPCA reforms were voted on by an extraordinary general meeting in 1975.¹⁰³ One year later, a streamlined Council unanimously decided to "oppose all hunting with hounds."¹⁰⁴ The Reform Group dissolved itself in May 1975. Although their methods had been criticised by the 1974 enquiry report, Reform Group members had implemented nearly all of their core demands and had also attained senior positions within the Society.¹⁰⁵ Richard Ryder in particular emerged as an influential figure pushing for a reorientation of RSPCA campaigning. Replacing Hobhouse's vice-chairman Frank Burden in 1976,¹⁰⁶ Ryder acknowledged that the Society's public image had been damaged by leaks, perceptions of a "divided" council and member base, criticism of the Royal Family, and concerns about an excessive focus on "bloodsports (or dogs/cats)."¹⁰⁷ Ryder tried to refocus campaigning on 'positive' policies. Elected as RSPCA Chairman in 1977, these policies would include a new focus on

⁹⁹ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Special Meeting of the Council, 03.04.1974; Roscher, *Königreich*, 294–97, Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 173–75.

¹⁰⁰ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 31.07.1974, 1.

¹⁰¹ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 21.11.1974, 1; Special Meeting of the Council, 08.–09./ 15.01.1975, 16.

¹⁰² British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, RSPCA Ryder Dep. 9856, B2/2, RSPCA Reform, 1971–1972, 2. 1974–1975, John Hobhouse to Ryder, 20.01.1975; Garner, *Animals, Politics and Morality*, 56–57.

¹⁰³ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975; Meeting of the Council, 21.11.1974, 1; Special Meeting of the Council, 08.–09./ 15.01.1975, 17–18.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted according to Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 175.

¹⁰⁵ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, RSPCA Ryder Dep. 9856, B2/2, RSPCA Reform, 1971–1972, 2. 1974–1975, Stanley Cover, Announcement—RSPCA Reform Group, 26.05.1975.

¹⁰⁶ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Meeting of the Council, 31.07.1974, 2–3.

¹⁰⁷ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B1, 4, Richard Ryder to Mike Seymour-Rouse, 20.03.1976, 1.

animal rights, a more active engagement with other European animal and environmentalist organisations, and large-scale campaigns against seal hunting and Britain's decision to restart live animal exports in 1977.¹⁰⁸ Farm animal welfare was also an important focus. In 1978, the 149th RSPCA general meeting unanimously voted: "That this Society accepts a commitment to making a full scale effort as a priority, to combat the suffering caused to millions of animals in intensive farming systems, experimentation, zoos, circuses, and safari parks and other areas of mass-exploitation."¹⁰⁹

LOSING TOUCH: HARRISON AND RSPCA REFORM

Ruth Harrison was side-lined by events. Distrusted by RSPCA leadership after leaking the BFSS letter and criticised by younger campaigners for her FAWAC work, she was unable to find allies in either the 'traditionalist' or 'reform' camp.

During parliamentary discussions of revised welfare codes between 1970 and 1971, the formerly close alliance between Harrison, RSPCA leadership, and the Parliamentary Animal Welfare Group was no longer intact.¹¹⁰ On July 30, 1971, criticism by the RSPCA and Parliamentary Animal Welfare Group made Minister of Agriculture James Prior guarantee that new space standards for calf pens would enable animals to groom themselves and agree to introduce minimum iron levels in calf feeds.¹¹¹ Harrison played no role in the campaign. After unsuccessfully proposing an offshoot RSPCA Society for animal welfare in June 1970,¹¹² she was ousted as chair of the Society's ad hoc farm animals committee. When the ad hoc committee met to discuss FAWAC code reviews in October 1970,

¹⁰⁸ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846, F5/7, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, 1979–1987; B1/5 Minutes and memoranda of RSPCA Council meetings, 1971–1978; B3/2 Export of Live Animals, 1973–1978; B3/3 Export of Live Animals, 1978–1989; B1/4 Major R. Seager; M. Seymour-Rouse.

¹⁰⁹ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846, B1/5, Minutes and memoranda of RSPCA Council Meetings, Summary of Proceedings 149th Annual General Meeting, 23.06.1978; Garner, *Animals, Politics and Morality*, 56–57.

¹¹⁰ RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971; Meeting of the Council, 26.11.1970, 2; Meeting of the Council, 05.08.1971, 4.

¹¹¹ RSPCA Archives, IL/25/1 RSPCA Intensive Farming 2 of 2, The RSPCA and Livestock. Report No. V. 11. Produced by the Veterinary Department of the RSPCA for the Panel of Enquiry. February 1974, 3.

¹¹² RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 04.06.1970, 3.

John Hobhouse and Frank Burden raised concerns about Harrison's role in reviewing codes proposed by her own committee—something that had not bothered them one year earlier.¹¹³ Harrison had walked out of the meeting but subsequently denied she had resigned.¹¹⁴

Things did not improve following the foundation of the RSPCA's new Farm Livestock Advisory Committee (FLAC) in June 1971.¹¹⁵ With the main Council's attention increasingly occupied by 'field sports' controversies and campaigns against live animal exports,¹¹⁶ FLAC soon handled nearly all day-to-day farm animal welfare business. Although she was invited to join FLAC in Spring 1972 and participated in debates on new farrowing systems for pigs,¹¹⁷ Harrison found that her status as 'lay expert' counted little in a committee dominated by welfare scientists, ethologists, professional farmers, and veterinarians (Chap. 10).

Harrison's relationship with the RSPCA Reform Group was equally difficult. This was in part due to her status as a 'traditionalist' in the eyes of influential reformers like Richard Ryder.¹¹⁸ Crediting the Reform Group with rejuvenating the RSPCA and ending the dominance of older upper- and upper-middle class women,¹¹⁹ Ryder later remembered

¹¹³RSPCA Archives, Ad Hoc Committees—1969–1971, Meeting of the ad hoc Farm Animals Committee, 15.10.1970, 1.

¹¹⁴RSPCA Archives, Ad Hoc Committees—1969–1971, Meeting of the ad hoc Farm Animals Committee, 15.10.1970, 1; RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 26.11.1970, 5; Meeting of the Council, 05.08.1971, 2.

¹¹⁵RSPCA Archives, Minutes of the Farm Livestock Advisory Committee [subsequently FLAC] Meetings held between 20.07.1971 and 20.05.1975, FLAC Meeting, 20.07.1971, 1.

¹¹⁶RSPCA Archives, CM/59 RSPCA Council Minutes 1970–1971, Meeting of the Council, 01.04.1971, 1; RSPCA campaigning and BBC publicity had led to a halt of exports in 1973; SELFA campaigning was reactivated when Britain restarted live animal exports after a two-year moratorium in 1975 and confirmed its position during a 1977 enquiry; at the 1978 Secretaries' Conference, motions on the "general welfare of Farm Livestock in Britain" to improve animal housing and improve slaughter techniques were agreed on as a "sequel to the SELFA Campaign"; British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846, B1/5, Minutes and memoranda of RSPCA Council Meetings, RSPCA Secretaries' Conference, 22.06.1978, 1; see also SELFA timeline in British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846, B3/2, Export Live Animals, 1973–1978, David Wilkins document; B3/3, NFU Pamphlet "no case to answer".

¹¹⁷RSPCA Archives, Minutes FLAC, Meeting 24.04.1972, 1 & 5.

¹¹⁸Relations with other Reform Group members like John Bryant were better, British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, RSPCA Ryder Dep. 9856, B2/2, RSPCA Reform, 1971–1972, 2. 1974–1975, RSPCA Reform Group News Letter, February 1974—Ruth Harrison, April 1974.

¹¹⁹Roscher, *Königreich*, 364–365.

Harrison as “sensitive and sincere but not easy to get on with.”¹²⁰ Despite acknowledging *Animal Machines*’ significance,¹²¹ he saw Harrison as a “rather right wing” campaigner, who feared “opposition from those she saw as being in a position of authority ... Government officials, MPs, RSPCA people etc.”¹²²

As described by Mieke Roscher and Emily Gaarder, this description of Harrison is fairly typical of the gender imagery associated with ‘second-wave’ 1970s and 1980s animal activism. Since the nineteenth century, female activists had formed the majority of members in most British campaigning organisations. However, gender stereotypes had often led to a marginalisation of female voices and leaders. Whereas activists like Harrison had previously been downplayed as overly emotional ‘crazed spinsters’ (see Part III), the 1970s and 1980s frequently saw them accused of being too sentimental or timid to take on leadership roles and fight effectively in the rejuvenated ‘virile’ world of radicalised protest.¹²³

Relations between Ryder and Harrison seem to have gotten off to a rocky start. After joining the RSPCA Council in mid-1971, Ryder was approached by Harrison’s solicitors in December 1972. He was asked to provide “a written account” of a Council meeting on December 6, “particularly dealing with the way the conduct of the meeting demonstrated the attitudes and pressures brought to bear on particular members of the Council.”¹²⁴ The report would help “convince the jury” in Harrison’s libel suit against Nadia Nerina “of the difficulties under which any minority Council member works who is not willing to fall in with the viewpoint of the hierarchy.”¹²⁵ Ryder could provide evidence on:

the manner in which [the Council] suppress[es] the viewpoints wither by threats of expulsion or by in fact expelling members. I fear that in practice one such witch hunt is likely to come to a conclusion in February when the

¹²⁰ Correspondence with Richard Ryder (10.08.2015).

¹²¹ Ryder, “Harrison, Ruth (1920–2000)”.

¹²² Correspondence with Richard Ryder (10.08.2015).

¹²³ Roscher, *Königreich*, 366, 361–370; see also Gaarder, *Women and the Animal Rights Movement*, 94–116.

¹²⁴ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2/1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, Halsey Lightly and Hemsley to Richard Ryder, 14.12.1972.

¹²⁵ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2/1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, Halsey Lightly and Hemsley to Richard Ryder, 14.12.1972.

Society's hierarchy will be represented at the inquisition by a QC. This could well be useful to us in showing how the hierarchy expends the funds available.¹²⁶

Concerned about whether reporting confidential details would leave him on thin legal ice, Ryder refused. When threatened with a subpoena, he, however, agreed to provide vague answers to a list of questions prepared by Harrison's legal team.¹²⁷ Soon afterwards, Harrison failed to guarantee her support for Brian Seager ahead of the RSPCA Council's 1973 meeting to decide on whether to expel him.¹²⁸

Disagreement between Harrison and Ryder extended beyond Council politics to whether it was ethically justifiable to campaign for improvements of intensive farming or whether it was necessary to totally oppose the practice. The son of wealthy landowners and a former hunter,¹²⁹ Ryder had played a leading role in the contemporary rise of animal rights thinking and was part of the so-called Oxford Group. Consisting of students, researchers, and activists, the Oxford Group loosely came together to discuss the philosophical and ethical dimensions of human–animal relations during the late 1960s. Amongst the Group's members were Stanley and Roslind Godlovitch, John Harris, David Wood, and Michael Peters.¹³⁰ According to moral philosopher, Peter Singer, who was also affiliated with the Oxford Group, the impact of Harrison's book on members had been "enormous".¹³¹

together with my wife, Renata, I met Richard's wife, Mary, and the two other Canadian philosophy students, Roslind and Stanley Godlovitch, who had been responsible for Richard and Mary becoming vegetarians. ... They had come to see our treatment of non-human animals as analogous to the

¹²⁶ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2/1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, Halsey Lightly and Hemsley to Richard Ryder, 14.12.1972.

¹²⁷ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2/1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, Richard Ryder to Alan A. Meyer, 09.01.1973.

¹²⁸ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, Ryder Dep. 9846 B2/1 RSPCA Reform, 1971–1975, Letter: With the compliments of Ruth Harrison, Attached letter to Major Seager, 06.03.1973.

¹²⁹ Roscher, *Königreich*, 296.

¹³⁰ Roscher, *Königreich*, 267; Garner and Okuleye, *The Oxford Group and the Emergence of Animal Rights*.

¹³¹ Correspondence with Peter Singer (17.01.2015).

brutal exploitation of other races by whites in earlier centuries. This analogy they now urged on us, challenging us to find a morally relevant distinction between humans and non-humans which could justify the difference we make in our treatment of those who belong to our own species and those who do not. During these two months, Renata and I read Ruth Harrison's pioneering attack on factory farms, *Animal Machines*.¹³²

While Singer was converting to vegetarianism, John Harris and the Godlovitchs were preparing an edited volume titled *Animals Men and Morals*.¹³³ Amongst the contributors to the book's "factual" section were Richard Ryder and Ruth Harrison. In her chapter "On Factory Farming," Harrison mixed earlier *Animal Machines* material with criticism of recent regulatory changes, which promoted the spread of intensive production systems. Harrison also attacked controversial practices like the castration of calves; hatcheries' 'sexing' lines, which discarded unwanted chicks into rubbish bins, where they suffocated; and the chemical caponisation of cocks.¹³⁴ Since 1965, the government had missed several opportunities for meaningful welfare reforms: "If the statutory regulations urged by the Brambell Committee had been implemented quickly they would have proved acceptable to farmers in general."¹³⁵ Activists and consumers thus faced an ethical dilemma:

Most people accept the position of eating meat only on condition that the animal has pleasure in life while it lives and is then humanely slaughtered. In no instance can these two criteria be guaranteed today. Many people have become so repulsed by the situation that they have taken the first step towards opting out of it by becoming vegetarians. ... The vegan ... takes the most logical step towards elimination of cruelty, a step to which only a very small but gallant minority have so far devoted their lives.¹³⁶

¹³²Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation: A Personal View," *Between the Species*, 2/(3):18 (1986), 149.

¹³³Roslind Godlovitch, Stanley Godlovitch, and John Harris (eds.), *Animals, Men and Morals. An Enquiry into the Maltreatment of Non-Humans* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971).

¹³⁴Ruth Harrison, "On Factory Farming," in Roslind Godlovitch, Stanley Godlovitch, and John Harris (eds.), *Animals, Men and Morals. An Enquiry into the Maltreatment of Non-Humans* (London: Viktor Gollancz Ltd, 1971), 12–17.

¹³⁵Harrison, "On Factory Farming," 19.

¹³⁶Harrison, "On Factory Farming," 23.

However, by itself, gallant consumerism would not transform existing markets. Even if life-long vegetarians like Harrison abstained from meat consumption, the effects on overall demand would be insufficient to make intensive systems unprofitable and end animal suffering. In this situation, opposing animal husbandry per se would do far less for animals than campaigning for an improved “biologically and ethically acceptable”¹³⁷ mode of animal production.

Ryder’s chapter “Experiments on Animals”¹³⁸ was far more radical in its attack on animal exploitation per se. Employing the term *speciesism*, Ryder argued that humans and animals were situated on a moral continuum. If racist discrimination was immoral amongst humans, *speciesist* discrimination against animals by humans for the sake of experiments—and by extension intensive food production—was equally reprehensible. Four years later, Peter Singer provided further intellectual support for per se opposition of experimentation and livestock production. In his 1975 *Animal Liberation*, Singer argued that animal exploitation violated the Benthamite principle of equal consideration of interests by going against animals’ interest in not suffering.¹³⁹

Although both acknowledge the importance of *Animal Machines*, neither Singer nor Ryder agreed with Harrison’s efforts to reform an intensive agricultural system to which they were opposed in principle. Meeting her “once or twice” during conferences, Singer remembers talking to Harrison “about tactics”:

I thought she was too conservative, in terms of how to go about achieving change, ... she was for slow incremental reform, and had greater hopes for [FAWAC] than I did. I wanted more public campaigning, protests, encouragement of vegetarianism, etc.¹⁴⁰

When Ryder organised a major 1977 RSPCA symposium on the “Ethical Aspects of Man’s Relationship with Animals,” Harrison was invited but notably absent from the list of 150 signatories of the resulting declaration

¹³⁷ Harrison, “On Factory Farming,” 23.

¹³⁸ Richard D. Ryder, “Experiments on Animals,” in Roslind Godlovitch, Stanley Godlovitch, and John Harris (eds.), *Animals, Men and Morals* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1971); Garner and Okuley, *The Oxford Group*, 85–99.

¹³⁹ Singer, Peter, *Animal Liberation. A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York: Harper Collins, 1975); Singer, “Animal Liberation: A Personal View”.

¹⁴⁰ Correspondence with Peter Singer (17.01.2015).

on animal rights and against speciesism.¹⁴¹ As a committed pacifist, Harrison also rejected the occasionally violent activism of radicalising segments of the animal rights movement.¹⁴² Despite being in contact with members of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and sympathising with the emerging animal rights philosophy of thinkers like Tom Regan, Harrison was adamant in her rejection of unethical and unproductive violence.¹⁴³ According to animal welfare scientist Donald Broom:

She knew people in the Animal Liberation Front and she was very careful not to cause them any direct problems like ... passing on their names or anything like that. ..., but she didn't agree with any violence. ... she might have sympathy with what they were trying to achieve, [but] she thought it was the wrong thing to do. And she did feel that some animal research was justified, so she wasn't in favour of the more extreme actions.¹⁴⁴

Too radical for RSPCA traditionalists, whom she further alienated by publicly attacking the Society's electrothanasor for killing stray dogs in 1974,¹⁴⁵ and too moderate for the RSPCA Reform Group and younger activists, Harrison failed to secure re-election in the postal ballot for the streamlined RSPCA Council in mid-1975.¹⁴⁶ Although she remained a member of many animal protection societies ranging from the Animal Defence Society to the Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare,¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ British Library, Richard Ryder Papers, B4/1 Papers relating to the RSPCA Symposium, "The Rights of Animals", 1977, Correspondence and papers 1977–1978, Report of the Subcommittee of the Council to Enquire into the feasibility of holding a two-day symposium on the ethical aspects of man's treatment of animals, 21.01.1977; The Rights of Animals. A Declaration Against Specism.

¹⁴² Keith Tester, "The British Experience of the Militant Opposition to the Agricultural Use of Animals," *Journal of Agricultural Ethics* 2 (1989), 241–251.

¹⁴³ Oral History Interview Donald Broom (04.07.2014).

¹⁴⁴ Oral History Interview Donald Broom (04.07.2014).

¹⁴⁵ RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Meeting of the Council, 16.05.1974, 4; Meeting of the Council, 31.07.1974, 10; Meeting of the Council, 13.11.1974, 6; Statement of the Council on the Electrothanasor by JM Bryant and Mrs R. Harrison; Meeting of the Council, 02.01.1975, 4–6; Harrison and Byrant's criticism led to design modifications: RSPCA Archives, CM/61 RSPCA Council Minutes 1972–1975, Meeting of the Council, 08.05.1975, 7–8.

¹⁴⁶ RSPCA Archives, IF/56/6, Ruth Harrison General File, RM/A853, Memorandum: Archivist to HFA, 11.12.1993, 1.

¹⁴⁷ RSPCA Archives, IF/56/6, Ruth Harrison General File, RM/A853, Memorandum: Archivist to HFA, 11.12.1993, 1.

Harrison subsequently concentrated on her official FAWAC work and on strengthening her own Farm Animal Care Trust (FACT). From the mid-1970s onwards, FACT would not only fund her own campaigning but also allow her to strengthen relations with the fledgling discipline of animal welfare science.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

