

1. How did the anarchist movement respond to the arrests?

There was little, if any, political response to the 32 raids of organisers, remands, or support for those on bail and the eventual 12 people sent to prison.

Corporate Watch had a presence in court, documenting the case and produced a report 'Corporate crackdown on animal rights'. Anarchist newssheet, Schnews, also covered the case. There was also the odd article or update on Indymedia.

However there was no organised support campaign for any of the defendants, or any anarchist commentary on the situation, or solidarity with those harmed by the state. The animal liberation movement itself was running scared and also failed to support those involved, other than the longstanding practical support of the ALF Supporters Group and the Vegan Prisoner Support Group, who both give outstanding support to prisoners.

2. Do you think the arrests pointed out weaknesses within the animal liberation movement? Which failures made possible for the mediatic pressure to reach its aim, to fragment the struggle and isolate prisoners?

The arrests pointed out several weaknesses in the animal liberation movement (however if they had used the same tactics against any other political movements in the UK, I suspect patterns of harm would have been similar). The main weaknesses I felt, as an anarchist, included:

- * The movement being quite centralised - a small group of people were doing a significant amount of work. "Core organisers" were easy to identify because small numbers of people were doing above ground work - street stalls, demonstrations, talking at info nights, as well as underground work, such as ALF attacks on homes of company directors connected to HLS. It is amazing that even with a huge amount of sustained police attention, they failed to accurately identify people's roles and generate enough evidence of illegal activity. However the fact that many people were doing both, put everyone at risk.

- * The decline of local groups - The animal liberation movement, had moved from a network of active local groups, to one where local groups did a lot of work on national campaigns, such as SHAC and Save the Newchurch Guinea Pigs, for example. The inability to sustain energy in both areas meant that movement-building was not invested in as much as it should have been. Meaning that, over-time local groups declined, when they traditionally were the lifeblood.

Ongoing repression meant that new people were either scared of repression, or people didn't want to work with them/trust them, and so the movement rested on the shoulders of fewer and fewer people.

- * The impacts of the internet - I actually think the internet also played a huge role from taking people from local groups and from the streets, on to social networking sites to talk about political theory rather than engage in political struggles.

- * Burnout & turnover - SHAC was also an incredibly fast paced campaign. There wasn't a huge culture of self-care or sustainability, and so there was an ongoing problem with high turnover, with people dropping out over and over again, or leaving because of internal issues.

- * Sustained misinformation - SHAC was effectively isolated from potential supporters through a sustained campaign of misinformation. Bodies like NETCU (National extremism tactical coordination unit) were very strategic in ensuring the mainstream media portrayed SHAC as extremists. This 'issue management' approach meant that we were isolated as radicals, while potential supporters were encouraged to move to more liberal positions, accepting reformist, 'non-violent' and defeatist tactics.

* The perception of animal liberation struggles from other movements - I think SHAC gained a lot of respect from other movements, campaigns such as Smash EDO, were inspired by the economic sabotage approach of SHAC, and many around the world recognised that the ALF were the most active form of militant direct action taking place in the UK, if not in Europe. However, despite this respect for tactical decisions, many still do not have solidarity with non-humans. They think the struggle should wait until after the revolution, or that campaigning for fluffy bunnies not part of fighting for total liberation and against all forms of oppression.

3. The activists have been charged of conspiracy. Are there special buildings, or sections, for this accusation, or are they imprisoned with the common convicts?

Conspiracy to blackmail is considered a serious offence, so most of us started our sentences in high security prisons and then had to work through the prison system to access more 'freedoms' in lower category prisons. Other than greater attention to our post and communication, we were treated the same as other prisoners, and didn't receive the brutality that others experience for their political beliefs, e.g. Like Basque prisoners in Spanish prisons.

4. Is there in the UK a sizeable fascist infiltration within the animal liberation movement? How do the activists react?

I wouldn't say 'sizeable fascist infiltration'. A big situation blew up when I was in prison but I don't accurately know what happened. I think someone didn't think it was problematic to have a BNP (British National Party) organiser attend a demonstration. Other people reacted saying it was unacceptable. The sad part is that those who 'called out' the person and those connected to them were labeled as troublemakers and not supported as fully as they should have been.

There are some very dodgy groups like 'Non humans first', that have extremely problematic politics. I think fascist infiltration could become a growing threat if the movement is not aware of it, and those who think it is ok to be 'apolitical' still dominate our movement.

However there have also been some very positive signs - for example at the International Animal Rights Gathering in 2013, organisers from the UK, were pro-active in challenging the fascist relationships to the movement and gathering in Belgium, and a huge number of UK organisers are involved in both animal liberation and anti-fascist struggles.

5. Which kind of action do you consider most useful and substantial to be carried on by us, here in Italy, as a support to your cause?

The vivisection industry in the UK, if not in Europe, are starting to become very arrogant and defiant, that the state will protect them and that they've 'won'. Sustained pressure on the industry from abroad, while the UK recovers from repression, is really important.

Projects like 'SHAC made history' have also been hugely welcomed and inspiring. They are so necessary! Efforts to organise info nights about the ongoing repression of the Blackmail 3 and SOCPA7 are also important (because none of this repression is over!)

Above all, I think other movements need to learn what can happen when a movement is not taking repression seriously. Its cumulative effect hammered us. Building links with other radical struggles and taking an anti-state view point I also feel is really important. Relationships are the key to resilience.

6. How's the state of the movement in the UK nowadays, and what are your future

prospects?

The state of the movement at the moment is pretty heartbreaking, but not beyond recovery. Those with radical ideas are increasingly isolated, and more and more people are adopting liberal approaches to social change, such as converting people to veganism (as a sole tactic). There is a total blindspot around power relationships, how change happens, and histories of social struggles.

Some parts of the movement are doing really great - for example Hunt Sabotage or 'hunt sabbing'. It's a beautiful example of decentralised, direct action, and its thriving. There has been strong resistance to the badger cull, bringing many new people into the movement. More hunt sab groups are starting and continuing to save foxes and other wildlife despite police and hunt violence.

A new project called 'Free to Fight' is starting, that aims to increase the resilience to repression in the UK. The main focus is on the animal liberation movement, however as an anarchist collective, they also intend to do political education with other struggles and movements. They want to ensure anyone affected by repression is supported within the movement, especially before and after prison.

7. Bristol is, as it has always been, the core of many radical struggles. Tell us about the town, its social pattern and what makes it so different from the rest of the UK.

I don't know why Bristol breeds so many radicals but I think one of the reasons is because there is sustained above ground anarchist organising. There is Kebele, an anarchist social centre, which hosts a regular vegan cafe, gives spaces to groups to meet and organise in, and is a venue for regular political events. As well as initiatives like the Anarchist Bookfair. Its also one of the only cities in the 'west country', the south west of the UK (meaning a lot of people move there from the surrounding areas). The west country has a long history of resistance to capitalism and enclosure, as people are more connected to the land. Generally, if you want a job, career, marriage and mortgage, you move east! If you want nature, community and a healthy dose of insurrection, you move west!