

The rights of animals

Janet George is confused and misleading when she says the anti-foxhunting debate is "not about cruelty to foxes but about animal rights" (February 28).

For most of us the argument is about cruelty and rights; it is about causing unnecessary pain and suffering to an advanced, social animal. On a Utilitarian view the fox ought to be treated as morally equal to humans because it has a similar interest in avoiding pain; like cases should be treated alike. I guess that this is the commonsense view held by the majority who do not support foxhunting and is the basis of a "right" of foxes not to be treated cruelly.

The animal liberation movement goes further, believing that the alleviation of pain and suffering are not in themselves enough and that both humans and animals are the subjects of a life which is important to them. To avoid injustice, all individuals ought to be treated equally, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, or species. The equality of Utilitarianism is not the equality they seek. What has value for the Utilitarian is the satisfac-

tion of an individual's interests, not the individual whose interests they are. Animal liberation requires the abolition of the use of animals in science, the end of commercial animal agriculture and a ban on hunting for sport.

Ms George's claim that the majority who oppose foxhunting are not aware of the true aims of animal liberation, therefore their opposition to foxhunting is misguided, seeks to deceive by faulty reasoning.

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"Much so-called hunt 'sabotage' is actually terrorism" claims Janet George. Hang on a minute . . . all genuine hunt sabotage is fairly innocuous stuff and seeks to avoid confrontation. The tactics promoted by the Hunt Saboteurs Association have three notable characteristics: they require an understanding of how hunting takes place, promote an avoidance of confrontation (too much risk of getting our heads kicked in), and can be carried out without infringing the law.

The reason why bloodsports enthusiasts are so disenchanted with seeing the police stand by and do nothing to get rid of we irritable yobboes is because nothing illegal is taking place. When it does everyone can rest assured that the police move swiftly and forcefully to arrest the perpetrators. Last Saturday, for instance, at the Surrey Union foxhunt, the police searched around 50 people for offensive weapons and confiscated a large sack full of items such as powerful catapults and bludgeons. Two people were also arrested for acts of violence, one of which led to a police officer being injured. So clearly the police will act at hunts when action is warranted. Oh yes, I forgot to mention that all these people were "stewards" drafted in by the hunt to intimidate us. No saboteurs were arrested.

As far as suing the police goes, is it really so outrageous that we should seek redress for the wrongful arrests and false imprisonments that we undergo with regular monotony?

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