

The Center For Consumer Freedom

May 17, 2004

Senator Orrin Hatch
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hatch,

Thank you for holding a public hearing to investigate the disturbing trend of animal rights activists choosing criminal violence over peaceful protest.

To add appropriate context to today's testimony, I would like to share some unusual findings that the Center for Consumer Freedom is in the process of making public. They highlight the extent to which supposedly "mainstream" animal rights charities—many of which enjoy federal tax-exempt status—have an undeniable hand in encouraging and funding violent activity:

- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has donated over \$150,000 to criminal activists -- including the terrorist Earth Liberation Front (ELF), and individuals jailed for arson, burglary, and attempted murder. When asked by eight different media outlets to explain the purpose of a \$1,500 gift to the ELF, PETA officers and spokespersons gave eight different and contradictory answers.

Since 2000, rank-and-file PETA activists have been arrested over 80 times for crimes committed during PETA protests. Charges included felony obstruction of government property, criminal mischief, assaulting a cabinet official, felony vandalism, performing obscene acts in public, destruction of federal property, and burglary. Last week, PETA vegetarian campaign director Bruce Friedrich was convicted of Criminal Trespass in Kentucky. Friedrich has previously publicly advocated "blowing stuff up and smashing windows" in order to win "animal liberation."

As recently as last year, PETA's payroll included convicted Animal Liberation Front felon Gary Yourofsky, whom the group paid to lecture public school students about strict vegetarianism and animal rights. And PETA's websites—several of which explicitly target children—openly advocate vandalism and other illegal activity.

Despite all of this, PETA maintains its 501(c)(3) federal tax exemption.

- While the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is generally less confrontational than PETA, it has its own connection to organized violence. Until last year, when the Center for Consumer Freedom brought it to light, the HSUS was quietly funding the operation of an Internet service which distributed the Animal Liberation Front's official "communiqués" claiming responsibility for criminal activities. HSUS—and its \$65 million annual income—are completely tax-exempt.
- The case of Daniel Andreas San Diego is a chilling story of animal-rights terror, involving two 10-pound shrapnel bombs detonated in 2003 using the same materials found at the Oklahoma City blast site. The FBI's investigation uncovered substantial connections between this federal fugitive and two above-ground groups: California-based In Defense of Animals (IDA), and a violent group called SHAC. IDA is a tax-exempt charity. SHAC is in the process of applying for that status. In addition to its undeniable connection to the Chiron and Shaklee bombings, SHAC has been responsible for car bombings, death threats, physical assaults, and countless other acts of intimidation.
- Substantial connections exist between PETA and SHAC, largely flowing through the inventively named Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), PETA's quasi-medical front group. PCRM has been publicly censured by the American Medical Association for its outrageous misrepresentations of medical science. To date, PETA has passed over \$1.3 million to PCRM, all of it tax-exempt. PCRM president Dr. Neal Barnard is president of the PETA Foundation, the vehicle used to move much of this money. Working with the president of SHAC, Barnard has co-signed letters targeting biomedical research firms in the U.S. and abroad.

Last year at the "Animal Rights 2003" national conference, official PCRM spokesman Jerry Vlasak publicly advocated the murder of doctors who use animals in their research, saying: "I don't think you'd have to kill -- assassinate -- too many ... I think for 5 lives, 10 lives, 15 human lives, we could save a million, 2 million, 10 million non-human lives." Vlasak reinforced this idea in April, telling a national cable network audience that violence is a "morally justifiable solution" for activists.

A disturbing current of violence runs beneath the surface of "mainstream" animal rights groups in the United States. And some of these tax-exempt charities are providing "material support or resources" to groups and individuals whose activities fit the U.S. Criminal Code's definition of "domestic terrorism."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Berman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Richard Berman
Executive Director
Center for Consumer Freedom