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How Are We Doing?

By Henry Spira

Excerpt from recent remarks at the Animal Welfare Institute in Washington, DC.

... Many of us are familiar with former New York Mayor Ed Koch who used to walk the streets and never tired of asking: "How'm I doing?": That's not an uncommon question. It's asked in focus groups and in telephone surveys by everybody from politicians to toothpaste manufacturers. This is also a question we need to ask of the animal protection movement: "How are we doing?"

By some measures we've done very well. Since Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, there's been a total revolution in people's thinking. Thanks to the involvement of people like yourselves, there's an acceptance by the overwhelming majority of the public that the suffering of animals does matter. And over the past couple of decades, there's been an estimated 50% reduction in the number of laboratory animals used. There's a whole new scientific discipline of in-vitro, non-animal, toxicology which has entered the scientific mainstream. And there's also the public perception that the movement is enormously powerful and successful.

But, the reality is that this success has only impacted on 5% of the problem. And this is not recognized by the general public, nor by many activists. With regard to the 95% of animal suffering, things are actually getting worse. If we look at the entire universe of animal pain and suffering, the gains of the 1970's and the 1980's have only been a drop in the bucket. And as regards the 8 billion farm animals, their confinement is becoming ever more intense and their numbers are massively increasing, because the U.S. is now exporting the products of factory farming to foreign lands.

In the 1960's, 2 billion farm animals were slaughtered every year. Now it's 8 billion. And in earlier years, their confinement was less intensive than it is now.

Unlike cosmetic testing, factory farming is not being massively challenged by the animal rights movement. Most of the animals are being kept out of the loop of our campaigns. I had assumed that after the lab animal victories there would be the farm animal victories. But it hasn't worked out that way.

We need to live up to the public's perception that we are fighting *all* animal suffering. The movement cannot claim to be relevant and successful while 8 billion animals continue to suffer.

And, in fighting against intensive confinement animal agriculture, we are fighting not only to liberate farm animals. We are also fighting to protect our environment,--the land, water and air. And we're protecting food for the billions by not wasting resources.

With this in mind, I again urge the animal protection community to place more energies on factory farming and take the necessary steps to address the massive suffering. To begin to knock zeros off the eight billion farm animals who live and die in misery. This gathering has the people who can make it happen. Who can make it possible to proudly answer the question of "How are we doing?"