

North American Animal Liberation Press Office Newsletter

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Case History: How One Raid by the ALF at the University of Iowa Made a Difference

This month's newsletter features a highly instructive summary of and commentary on the amazing events that have unfolded at University of Iowa since the bold ALF raid on the laboratories of the Psychology Department in November 2004. As documented by a witness with direct knowledge of the ongoing scientific fraud and duplicity at UI, this is an edifying case study in how "researchers" distort the actions of the ALF to the press and public, cloak themselves in a veil of secrecy, seek shelter in the long arms of the state when their lies are exposed, and run from debate when challenged by credible opponents. It is yet further documentation about the immoral treachery and scientific fraud of vivisection, and why the ALF feels compelled to take the extraordinary actions it does. By liberating animals, destroying nearly a half million dollars worth of property used to torture and exploit animals, by taking video footage documenting extreme animal abuse that was released to national media, and precipitating a productive ongoing critical debate over animal torture and fraud at UI and vivisection in general, this was by all means a highly significant and successful strike by the ALF.

11/14/04 In the late Saturday night or early Sunday morning hours of November 14, 2004, the ALF carried out one of the most daring raids this country has seen in many years. The ALF broke into the third floor psychology laboratory on the University of Iowa campus in Iowa City, IA and liberated 401 animals-- 88 mice and 313 rats.

11/14/04 UI seals off Seashore Hall and calls in a Haz-Mat team to address the damage. The building is closed to all students, faculty and staff indefinitely. Researchers began to float the lie in the media that the ALF created a dangerous chemical spill. This whopper allowed them to keep independent witnesses away from the scene and to demonize the ALF as hooligans or terrorists rather than taking brave and risky action to liberate animals from conditions of severe abuse.

11/14/04 Mid-afternoon: Reporters begin contacting local animal rights activists for information about a possible theft of laboratory animals from Spence Labs in Seashore Hall. The reporters are operating on limited information from the police scanner and from interviewing personnel who discovered the scene. The reporters state that hundreds of animals are missing, that chemicals have been spilled and that slogans have been spray painted on the walls. Referring to his notes, one reporter says, "The letters A-L-F were spray painted on the wall." He then asks a local animal rights activist, "Do you know what that stands for?"

11/15/04 News of the liberation breaks. It is the lead story on every news station and makes the front page of all the local papers. The UI makes concerted attempts to downplay the possible role of the ALF and refuses to acknowledge the missing animals. The UI consistently portrays the event as a chemical spill and suggests that chemicals were spilled randomly throughout the building.

11/16/04 Noted for his Cartesian dinosaur-like qualities and pompous egomania, extreme vivisector Mark Blumberg is quoted in a news article saying "What they did to the animals was worse than what they could accuse us of doing. There were animals that drowned because of this. It was horrible. How they think that they're doing something that is for the benefit of animal rights is beyond me."
<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041116/NEWS02/411160393/1001/NEWS>

Similar statements were made by the head of the Psychology Department, Greg Oden, who deceptively stated that some animals who were left behind after the raid died because support equipment malfunctioned as a direct result of the raid.

These claims, especially Blumberg's, are dubious. First, check the source: this is a man who co-authored a paper titled "Do Infant Rats Cry?" Blumberg's idea of humane care apparently consists of taking baby

rats away from their mothers, subjecting them to cold temperatures, and then measuring their cries. Blumberg suggests that these cries are really more like "sneezes" or "grunts" and are just the rat pup's physiologic response to being cold. He assures himself and anyone who bothers to read his useless research that the cries of baby rats are not signs of distress. Second, Blumberg, who for public relations purposes appears to be seized with sudden concern for the well-being of the animals he tortures and kills, is contradicted by the November 18, 2004 meeting minutes of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) regarding the break-in at Spence, which state:

"Chemicals were spilled in some office and laboratory areas of the buildings with vials broken, computers smashed and several pieces of equipment destroyed or damaged. The animal housing areas were mainly trashed with just litter. Some animals were left behind and they appear to be fine. Office of Animal Resources (OAR) caretakers were allowed into the building to check on the animals and make sure they were fine."

Thus, according to the IACUC, which UI officials have repeatedly assured the public provides zealous oversight and humane care for all animals killed at UI, the animals that were not liberated were unharmed.

Blumberg's suggestion that animals were harmed by the ALF is a common tactic that animal abusers use in the wake of a direct action. In order to cover up their role as active participants and instigators of animal abuse, vested interests always suggest that the animals are worse off after a visit by the ALF. This of course ignores the fact that in the hands of someone like Blumberg, an animal would be hard pressed to be much worse off.

As IACUC meeting minutes from October 24, 2002 reveal, following a site visit by the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC), the IACUC determined that "a new position of Animal Research Compliance Monitor is necessary to assure regulatory compliance in all animal research facilities and laboratories on the University of Iowa campus."

Apparently, a recent visit by AAALAC revealed some serious compliance problems at UI: "The site visitors found one lab performing a 2nd survival surgery that was not approved on the protocol. This was in the laboratory of Dr. Mark Blumberg. Dr. Sjolund informed the lab personnel that all surgical procedures (or any other unauthorized procedures) were to 'cease and desist' in this lab until further notice. Dr. Sjolund and Dr. Cooper subsequently met with Dr. Blumberg and permitted his lab to resume surgeries on neonatal rats, but the restriction remained in effect for adult rat surgical procedures."

The IACUC imposed several conditions on Blumberg before his full rat torturing privileges could be reinstated and admonished Dr. Blumberg (who was present at the meeting) with the following feather slap on the wrist:

"The IACUC will also inform Dr. Blumberg that this situation is considered a major violation of animal welfare regulations and subsequent violations could result in additional sanctions including the withdrawal of IACUC approval for his laboratory to conduct animal research."

Another common misconception perpetuated by media was the suggestion that the liberated animals were "released." They are probably referring to the fact that the animals were taken from their cages, but the public thinks this means either (1) animals were released inside the building, or, (2) animals were released away from the site -- either in an open field or some other terrain that would conceivably be strange or unfamiliar to the animal. Opponents then latch on to this information, particularly the latter suggestion, citing the fate of the animals (in this case domesticated rodents) who are ostensibly left to fend for themselves in a strange and frightening world. Even though this was clarified in the ALF communiqué sent out following the raid, this distorted detail was something opponents capitalized on as a way to denigrate the freedom bestowed on these animals following the break-in.

11/18/04 UI President David Skorton responds to the ALF communiqué claiming responsibility for the liberation. Droning on and on, Skorton recites the familiar denunciation that all University officials are required to read in response to direct action which exposes the institutionalized violence that takes place within the confines of its walls. His response reads like a page from the American Medical Association's playbook, which implores extreme vivisectionists to continue manipulating the general public's fears about health in order to assuage moral and ethical objections to animal research.

http://www.uiowa.edu/president/messages/e-mail_111804.html. He receives an email from Dr. Steven Best, taking him to task for claiming that there is "no possible intellectual defense for ALF actions." Best reminds him of the noble history of property destruction and civil disobedience in the US, and suggests he curl up with Terrorists or Freedom Fighters? Reflections on the Liberation of Animals for some good intellectual defenses of animal liberation.

11/23/04 The ALF releases a videotape of the break-in. The footage is shown on all local news stations and is the lead story. This is the first time that the UI has even had to acknowledge the hideous experiments being conducted on its campus. This is also the first time the public has been able to see the real victims at the heart of this story. Many animals can be seen with electrodes protruding from their skulls, and many of the animals are grossly disfigured by the researchers' hideous delusions about the nature of "research" that allegedly is medically important and scientifically necessary and progressive. The video footage is a sharp contrast to the UI's version of events because it shows a well-planned, well-executed animal liberation plan. The footage makes it clear that the raid was no random act of violence or a chaotic chemical spill, but rather a carefully orchestrated and daring nonviolent act of liberation.

12/3/04 Two students publish opinion pieces in The Daily Iowan that challenge the University's ongoing attempt to portray it as an innocent victim subjected to an unfair and undeserved attack. Both opinion pieces address the philosophical motivations that drive activists to carry out direct action and question the legitimacy of a belief system that can characterize property destruction as violent without even addressing, much less condemning the unprincipled destruction of animal lives.

<http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2004/12/03/Opinions/>

[In.Defense.Of.The.Animal.Liberation.Front-820645.shtml](#).

<http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2004/12/03/Opinions/>

[Harriet.Tubman.Also.A.Terrorist-820660.shtml](#).

Both students were later contacted by the FBI. One student, well-intentioned but naïve about the repressive nature of federal law enforcement officials hell-bent on defending animal exploitation industries, agrees to answer limited questions in the presence of her attorney. Following that meeting she feels certain, based on particular and repeated lines of questioning, that the FBI has been monitoring her email. She refused to provide agents with names of any other activists she knew and made it clear to them that she would only answer limited questions that pertained to her own participation in legal activities related to animal rights. This activist made the mistake of assuming that FBI agents are reasonable human beings who can be made to understand that animal rights activists are just trying to get people to quit torturing and killing animals for profit and sadistic pleasure. Having learned from her experience the importance of refusing to answer any questions from law enforcement officials, she quickly contacted other area activists and provided them with information from the National Lawyer's Guild about the right to refuse to participate in these law enforcement fishing expeditions.

This makes something clear -- in the aftermath of a direct action, law enforcement officials always contact local AR activists. It is thus imperative that members of the ALF have absolutely no contact with local activists through any medium whatsoever. The importance of this fact cannot be overemphasized. In the wake of a direct action, well-intentioned but uniformed local activists may find themselves suddenly faced with the pressures that law enforcement officials bring to bear. It is imperative for everyone involved that these activists are not in possession of any information that can be of use to law enforcement officials. It

has also been determined that the FBI is taking the trash from local activists' homes hoping to find clues about the raid.

The second student was prepared when the FBI showed up on her door step early one morning. She told them she was under no obligation to answer their questions, assured them she had no knowledge about the break-in, and said she did not want to answer additional questions. Interestingly, one of the agents told her that they were interested in some of her email "posts" and then quickly corrected himself saying he meant "opinions." Whether intentional or not, this comment left the activist with the impression that her activities and internet posts were being monitored on the web, an illegal tactic certainly not novel for the FBI who brought this country great things favored by the Constitution like COINTELPRO.

12/9/05 UI administrators take out a full page ad in The Daily Iowan to condemn the student opinions that ran on 12/3. The UI also emails all faculty, students and staff a copy of the "Open Letter the University Community" wherein UI officials claimed they were "disturbed and disappointed" by student editorials that attempted to justify the raid.

12/13/05 Newspapers report that Seashore was broken into and vandalized for the second time in less than a month. No group claims responsibility for the action and officials do not believe there is any connection between the two break-ins.

12/27/04 Two UI student groups send an open letter to the UI inviting it to participate in an open public debate on the scientific merits of animal research with Dr. Ray Greek. Despite repeated invitations to UI researchers and national pro-vivisection organizations, not one single proponent of animal research was willing to appear.

1/10/05 The Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences (FBPCS) sends a letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller whining about the UI break-in and passing off their vested interest propaganda claiming that killing animals is necessary in order for vivisectioners to keep getting paid. In their letter they employ the familiar self-serving doublespeak -- they claim to be afraid when it suits them and feign courage in the form of a furious defense of their status quo. They stridently claim that they will continue in their heartless pursuit of killing animals and publishing worthless pseudoscience babble. <http://www.thefederationonline.org/FBI.pdf>. The FBPCS also sends a suck-up letter to the NIH thanking it for pouring funding into the coffers of animal killers at the UI.

<http://www.thefederationonline.org/NIH.pdf>.

1/20/05 Dr. Steven Best, Chair of the Philosophy Department at University of Texas, El Paso, presents a lecture titled "The New Abolitionism: Civil Rights, Animal Liberation and Moral Progress" (for the text of this talk, see: http://www.drstevebest.org/papers/vegenvani/new_abolitionism.htm). The event is well-attended by students, faculty, press, researchers, UI administrators, and plainclothes law enforcement officials. The crowd is too large for the planned venue and has to be moved to a ballroom that can accommodate the 130+ crowd. Dr. Best's talk was extremely well-received, even by numerous UI researchers who had come with claws drawn to attack every word. A couple of researcher extremists and terrorists, however, including one that looked like Jerry Garcia on too much Cherry Garcia, verbally accosted Best after the lecture, acting like a demented quivering, incoherent, squealing, babbling madman in desperate need of a straightjacket and padded room.

Following the lecture, Mark Blumberg approached one of the event's organizers wherein the following exchange was overheard. When Blumberg was asked how many animals he had killed during the course of his career, he glibly stated "Oh, hundreds and hundreds." And then he smiled, apparently relishing the memory of all those baby rats crying out for the warmth and comfort of their mother's nests and the countless deaths he has meted out over the years. When asked "And how many humans have you saved?" Blumberg contemptuously huffed "None. I am not trying to save humans. And that just goes to

show how little you know about what we are trying to do." Thus, in his own words, Blumberg admits that his research has not benefited humans, nor is it intended to.

2/2/05 In an article published in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Gazette, a reporter attempts to discredit the ALF's claims about animal research at UI. The article ("Animal treatment claims against UI lab examined," 1A February 02, 2005) said that following the break-in, the ALF "alleged professor Amy Poremba was doing research on eight rhesus monkeys kept on the fourth floor of Spence Labs." According to this news article, "Her research proposal says the only animal she is using in research is the Norwegian rat. Poremba declined to comment for this article, but UI spokesman Steve Parrott said no primate research was going on at Spence Labs when the ALF break-in happened."

Once again UI officials were attempting to mislead the public by implying that Poremba does not use primates in experimentation. But Poremba is clearly involved in primate experimentation as evidenced by her recent publication in Nature entitled "Species-specific calls evoke asymmetric activity in the monkey's temporal poles" (listed on the website of UI's Psychology Department). Further, documents filed by the University of Iowa with the United States Department of Agriculture unequivocally indicate that the University uses primates in experimentation. Whether primates were being experimented upon during the time when the ALF broke into Spence Labs or whether the primates were housed in that building is not the issue. Clearly, UI would say almost anything to divert public attention from the truth.

2/11/05 An Ohio-based national watchdog group, Stop Animal Exploitation Now (SAEN), holds a news conference in front of Spence Labs to announce an official investigation into the treatment of primates at UI. SAEN issued a statement that read in part: "The careers of these scientists reveal a tragic irony: Under the guise of alleviating mental suffering in humans they induce distress, injure and kill animals who are intentionally bred to be docile. In order to learn the truth about the use of primates at the University of Iowa, Stop Animal Exploitation Now has launched an investigation. Our goal is to provide the people of Iowa with the truth about the animal experimentation underway at this University. It is clear that through the use of half-truths, misleading and false statements UI officials have tried to obscure the truth. We will not allow this to continue unopposed." FBI agents videotape the news conference and UI sends out armed personnel from the Department of Public Safety to close off the sidewalk and guard the building against the representative who stands calmly in front of the building reading a prepared statement and answering questions from the media.

2/12/05 In news coverage following SAEN's press conference, UI researcher Gary Van Hoesen attempts to divert public attention away from his research with evasive vituperation:

"Calling out supposed NIH-funded animal experiments, Stormont targeted researcher Gary Van Hoesen, a UI professor of anatomy, cell biology and neurology, for his research on macaque monkeys.

'This is not about science,' she said about research she called a 'senseless waste of lives and tax dollars. This is about money -- attracting hundreds of thousands of dollars to UI's coffers.'

However, Van Hoesen said he has not used monkeys since 1982. He now conducts research on the human brain related to Alzheimer's disease. He called Stormont's comments about money and science 'shortsighted.'" (UI target of animal rights group. Kristen Schorsch, Iowa City Press-Citizen, February 11, 2005. Available at <http://www.all-creatures.org/saen/media-20050211-4.html>)

By suggesting that SAEN's criticism was unfounded, Van Hoesen deliberately misled the public about the true nature of his research. Van Hoesen has received funding from the National Institutes of Health for research involving nonhuman primates since 1979. His most recent abstract states: "This renewal for years 21-25 describes experiments aimed at understanding the structural organization of the mesocortices that form the limbic lobe of the human and non-human primate brain."

But Van Hoesen's lies and extremist rhetoric are perhaps best illustrated by an article he recently co-authored which describes in chilling detail his most recent act of violent vivisection:

"A total of 10 hemispheres (from seven brains) from adult macaque (both *Macaca mulatta* and *M. fascicularis*) monkeys were studied. Four were contralateral to hemispheres injected with tracers outside the isthmus region for other investigations. The remaining six hemispheres were from normal monkeys. The animals were anesthetized with Nembutal (75 mg/kg) and perfused transcardially, in sequence, with 0.9% saline and 0.5% sodium nitrite, 4% paraformaldehyde in chilled 0.1 M phosphate buffer (PB, pH 7.2). The brain was then placed in 10, 20, and 30% sucrose in 0.1 M PB (pH 7.2) until it sank. Killing and surgery were performed according to The University of Iowa institutional review standards informed and enforced by US Department of Agriculture guidelines." (Ding, S.L., Morecraft, R.J. and Van Hoesen, G.W. The topography, cytoarchitecture and cellular phenotypes of cortical areas that form the cingulo-parahippocampal isthmus and adjoining retrocalcarine areas of the monkey. *Journal of Comparative Neurology*, 456:184-201.2003.)

As is often the case, the media deferred to the supposed 'learned scholar' and neglected to independently fact check Van Hoesen's patently false claims. Perhaps Van Hoesen ought to conduct an experiment on himself to determine why some primates feel the need to lie and falsify information in order to cover-up the fact that they earn their living by killing primates.

Of course, AR critics latched on to this story, claiming it was emblematic of the alleged tendency among AR activists to falsify or exaggerate facts in order to garner media attention or public sympathy about the plight of animals in laboratories. Unfortunately, what vivisectioners do to animals in the name of research is, by itself, so hideous and morally repugnant that AR activists don't need to exaggerate the truth in order to convey those facts.

However, at least one AR opponent was forced to concede that the only false information that was being disseminated was being proffered by Van Hoesen himself:

SAEN: Animal Research? Must Be The Money!

Brian Carnell

Update/Correction: Thanks to Rick Bogle for pointing out that there are serious problems with the Press-Citizen's reporting above that Van Hoesen has not done any research on monkeys since 1982. Van Hoesen is, in fact, listed as the last author on a number of studies that involve research on monkeys in recent years. Van Hoesen is probably correct that he hasn't personally done any research on monkeys, and his name is probably being add [sic] as the last author due to convention of adding senior researchers and program heads on research that comes out of their department (Van Hoesen is the director of the Alzheimer's disease program at the University of Iowa). But Stormont was being completely reasonable, in my opinion, in assuming that Van Hoesen was conducting research on monkeys since his name was attached to a number of such studies, and the Press-Citizen and/or Van Hoesen was being grossly unfair and deceptive in depicting Stormont as being ignorant or relying on outdated information. AnimalRights.Net regrets reproducing the Press-Citizen's deceptive characterization of Stormont. [http://www.animalrights.net/replyform\\$80870](http://www.animalrights.net/replyform$80870).

Note to vivisectioners: this is why AR activists find it impossible to accept your claims about the so-called "humane treatment" of laboratory animals at face value. Bold lies such as the one outlined above can only lead AR activists, and the public at large, to wonder what else you are lying about.

3/18/05 UI officials estimate that the break-in caused \$450,000 in economic damages. UI also stated that the figure could increase.

<http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/mathscience/>

2005-03-18-lab-trashed_x.htm?POE=TECISVA. UI reports that insurance will not cover the damages.

3/23/05 In an opinion piece in The Daily Iowan, a student chastises UI for refusing to participate in a debate with Dr. Ray Greek on the merits of vivisection. The student justly accuses the UI of being hypocritical -- claiming it stands behind its research, but refusing to hand over records or allow anyone to see what is going on inside of the labs. <http://www.dailyiowan.com/>

[news/2005/03/23/Opinions/](#)

[Sinning.Bravely.In.The.Name.Of.Science-900272.shtml](#).

3/24/05 Dr. Ray Greek presents a lecture on the UI campus dealing with the scientific merits of the animal model. Plain clothes law enforcement personnel conduct surveillance, photographing and videotaping audience members and the speaker throughout the lecture.

That morning a letter is printed in The Daily Iowan that personifies the misleading nature of the rhetoric of extreme vivisection and their public relations campaigns which predictably trot out the tired claims that they are saving babies and curing cancer:

"I do not need to see a laboratory animal dying of cancer to know that I'd trade the lives of a hundred for the knowledge that will save my friend, a 31-year-old woman fighting breast cancer, the same disease that took her mother's life 20 years ago.

I do not need to see a hypertensive pregnant mouse to know that I'd trade the comfort and the lives of a thousand for the knowledge that would have predicted my preeclampsia and allowed my doctors to treat it before it became life-threatening and forced the delivery of my first child at 24 weeks of gestation.

I have seen pain and suffering. I have seen the death of an innocent being. I choose to value human life and accept the sacrifice of rats, pigeons, rabbits, guinea pigs and others, whose death means life for our families and friends." <http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/24/Opinions/>

[Letter.To.The.Editor-901484.shtml](#).

3/25/05 On the heels of Greek's lecture, a letter appears in The Daily Iowan attempting to explain the failure of the animal model as a valid paradigm for studying human disease: "Without a thorough grasp of how pervasive species differences are, researchers cannot tout the similarities as a basis for human medicine. Therefore, it is disingenuous to conflate the specter of human pain and suffering with the promise of relief from the sacrificed lives of lab animals. They will never predict our conditions accurately. Those who believe they do are choosing to ignore the very science their careers are based upon."

<http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/25/Opinions/>

[Letters.To.The.Editor-902779.shtml?page=2](#).

Yet another letter states responds to the reader who would so willingly sacrifice the lives of thousands of sentient beings to save her own: "And should one be motivated by an active conscience rather than solely by what is inaccurately perceived as necessary, it will suffice to consider the arrogance that informs Kenyon's use of the word "sacrifice." The animals humans brutalize each day in the name of scientific objectivity no more wish to relinquish their lives than the murdered peasants of My Lai or Fallujah. Though the word "sacrifice" does not necessarily imply that they go willingly to their deaths, it is unpardonably loaded with arrogance." <http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/>

[2005/03/25/Opinions/Letters.To.The.Editor-902779.shtml?page=3](#).

3/28/05 Linda Maxson, Dean of the UI College of Liberal Arts & Sciences responds to the student op-ed on 3/23 and claims that "[the student's] insistence on debate rather than inquiry is emblematic of the intellectual failure of those who oppose animal research." Strangely, she also states that "Most laboratory animals are bred specifically for the purpose of animal research. They are not - nor were they ever intended to be – pets." Apparently for Dean Maxson, it is morally acceptable to torture animals if they are not someone's "pets"! But that never stopped vivisectioners anyway, as they acquire many of their "research" animals by stealing cats and dogs from peoples' homes.
<http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/28/Opinions/>

Setting.The.Record.Straight.On.Animal.Research-903932.shtml

It is also important to note that Maxson embraces a common public relations tactic that UI has employed in virtually every statement it has issued that deals with the issue of animal research. In a cunning act of rhetorical conflation emblematic of this PR strategy, Maxson repeatedly refers to the actions of the campus organization and then states "Those who wage an illegal and unethical campaign of intimidation and destruction do not advance the cause of animal safety or human welfare."

At every opportunity, the UI has attempted to conflate the actions of campus AR groups with those of the ALF. This is a useful strategy. The UI has consistently portrayed the ALF as a violent terrorist organization, so when they conflate campus AR groups with the ALF they attempt to suggest that all AR activists are misanthropic lawbreakers. This allows the UI to reflexively deflect criticism and avoid the inquiries posed by the campus groups.

<http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/28/Opinions/>

Setting.The.Record.Straight.On.Animal.Research-903932.shtml

3/30/05 The first of several letters appears in The Daily Iowan responding to the Dean's incredulous claims peremptorily dismissing any debate on the merits of animal research and her unprincipled defense of vivisection:

"Maxson stated that "insist[ing] on debate rather than inquiry is emblematic of the intellectual failure of those who oppose animal research," that "debates are not forums for communicating information or achieving understanding," and that "skilled debaters can 'demonstrate' that the Earth is flat by suppressing factual evidence to the contrary."

Those are remarkable assertions. We have long used courtroom trials as forums for litigants to debate the gravest of issues and for juries to then render their verdicts. Political candidates at all levels ordinarily must face their opponents in a debate, and any candidate who refuses to do so justifiably faces an uphill battle on election day.

[...]

Wanting to debate is not emblematic of intellectual failure. It is disappointing to see one of our campus leaders argue to the contrary."

<http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/30/Opinions/Letters.To.The.Editor-906114.shtml>.

3/31/05 In response to the Dean's outrageous and poorly reasoned op-ed, several letters are printed. One letter states "Obviously, Maxson has great confidence that the public would fully support the research that is going on if people know what is truly happening. If that is the case, then she should invite [the student]

to make an unexpected visit to as many labs at the UI as she wants, take as many pictures and videos as she pleases, and then hold a press conference to inform the members of the public on how their tax dollars are being spent."

Another letter derides Maxson's revisionist version of history, stating "I was shocked by Maxson's apparent poor mastery of the facts surrounding animal research in the United States. Reports from whistleblowers, undercover investigations, and evidence gathered during lab break-ins have been the primary motivating evidence behind every regulation now in place. At every step, the industry and its supporters have rallied in opposition and defended the most heinous examples of abuse and the scientists involved."

[http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/31/Opinions/](http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/31/Opinions/Letters.To.The.Editor-907603.shtml?page=2)

[Letters.To.The.Editor-907603.shtml?page=2.](http://www.dailyiowan.com/news/2005/03/31/Opinions/Letters.To.The.Editor-907603.shtml?page=2)

As of this writing, the University of Iowa has not opened its laboratory doors to the norms of transparency fundamental to science and ethics. What more could they be hiding?

Ann Nonymous

Wis. Professor to Test Stun Guns on Pigs

washingtonpost.com

By RYAN J. FOLEY

The Associated Press

Monday, March 28, 2005; 11:16 PM

MADISON, Wis. - A professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison plans to study whether stun guns alone can kill pigs - or whether other medical factors must be at play - as part of an effort to understand why 70 people have died in North America since 2001 after being shocked by Tasers.

Led by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, outraged animal rights activists are calling for an end to the two-year study by John Webster, a professor emeritus of biomedical engineering.

Police hail stun guns as a nonlethal way to restrain unruly suspects. But critics blame the weapons for dozens of deaths, and police departments are reviewing how they use the devices, which shoot two small darts carrying about 50,000 volts of electricity to temporarily paralyze people.

Webster wants to test his hypothesis that Taser-related deaths were the result of heart failure fueled by drug use and other medical factors, not electrocution by the devices. To do so, researchers will begin in the next month studying how Taser electrical currents flow through 150-pound pigs.

Of three groups of pigs in the study, one will be given cocaine, one will be shocked with the devices, and one will be given both cocaine and electric blasts. Some will be subjected to Webster's "SuperTaser," up to 30 times as powerful as the model police use. All pigs will be on anesthesia so they won't feel pain.

"If the hypothesis is correct that Tasers do not electrocute the heart, then why are people dying in custody after they have been shot by Tasers? The people on our team have hypotheses why that's true and we intend to answer that question," Webster said. "Our goal is to save lives."

Animal rights activists say the study, funded by a \$500,000 U.S. Department of Justice grant, is cruel and unnecessary. They plan protests on the UW-Madison campus starting this week.

"Shocking more pigs is only going to add their numbers to the Taser-related death statistics," Patti Gilman, whose brother died after being shot with a Taser in British Columbia in June 2004, wrote in a letter to the school. "Robert's death never should have happened. And neither should these experiments."

In a letter to PETA this month, UW-Madison Chancellor John Wiley said the study could have a significant impact on the use of stun guns. He said researchers have no other alternative than to use pigs, whose hearts are more like humans than any other species.

In Wisconsin, the state Department of Justice convened an advisory committee to create guidelines for police training and use of Tasers. On Tuesday, the committee is scheduled to hold its first public hearing in Stevens Point, where Webster will be among four presenters.

Webster said his research could lead to advice for how police should use the devices, standards for how powerful stun guns can be, and instructions for emergency room physicians on how to treat those who have been shocked.

Webster suggested some of the Taser-related deaths were from a rare condition known as malignant hyperthermia, in which bodies essentially overheat. He will test that theory on swine that have been specially bred to have the condition.

Other suspects may have died if potassium that is released into the blood stream after muscle contractions caused by a Taser shock reached the heart, Webster said. Cocaine use might be another factor, he said.

Webster's research is the first independent look at how Tasers affect pigs' hearts. Research published in January sponsored by Taser International, the Scottsdale, Ariz.-based maker of the devices, found that 15 times the charge from ordinary stun guns was needed to electrocute the heart of even the smallest pigs studied.

Taser said Webster is well-qualified to study the devices, which it says are safe. The company says Tasers are being used by more than 7,000 law enforcement, military and correctional agencies in the world.

"We welcome Professor Webster's research as it can provide continued independent research concerning the safety of our life-saving Taser technology," said company spokesman Steve Tuttle.

Taser research on animals dates to 1989, involving dogs, bulls and pigs, but Webster's study is the only known such research now under way, according to PETA.

While all the pigs will be filled with anesthesia, they will be euthanized after the experiments, said Webster, who predicted about 30 pigs would be used. The research could create a computer model that would eliminate the need for more animal testing, he said.

"I think this is an outstanding example of one of those questions that can only be answered using animals," said Eric Sandgren, a UW-Madison professor who heads a committee that oversees animal

research. "Boy, there's been a lot of deaths from this. If the alternative is to go back to using bullets, let's find out how to make this safe."

That's a worthy goal, but researchers should instead study humans who have survived Taser shocks and autopsy reports of those who died, said Laura Yanne of PETA. She promised an "unprecedented" protest on Tuesday, but would not release details.

"Subjecting pigs to cruel experiments is not the way to go on this. It's so obvious," she said. "This is a half-million dollar boondoggle."

On the Net:

Taser International:<http://www.taser.com/flash.htm>

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals:<http://www.peta.org>

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Former prof, Penn slapped with civil suit

By Nicholas Joy

March 18, 2005

Former professor Tracy McIntosh will be the focus of a second lawsuit. And this time, Penn is fair game, too.

McIntosh was sentenced earlier this month to between 11 1/2 and 23 months of house arrest for the sexual assault of the niece of a close friend.

The victim -- whose name is being withheld by The Daily Pennsylvanian because of the sexual nature of the crime -- has filed a civil suit against McIntosh, Penn, the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania doctor Arthur Asbury and the Department of Neurosurgery's lab manager Robin Armstrong.

The victim's lawyer Jack Meyerson said that part of the reason his client was pursuing a civil case was to draw attention to Penn's alleged failure to supervise and contain McIntosh -- the former director of the Head Injury Center.

"The criminal case did not touch upon Penn's actions or inactions," Meyerson said. "We allege that Penn took part in a conspiracy to cover up both what they knew about McIntosh's history and to keep information from the district attorney."

But University spokeswoman Lori Doyle strongly denied the accusations and maintained that Penn had acted in a fully legal manner.

"The allegations in the complaint are absolutely baseless and outrageous," Doyle said.

In the complaint filed with the Court of Common Pleas, the plaintiff's attorneys allege that McIntosh took advantage of his close relationship with the victim's uncle to arrange an elaborate plan to seduce his victim, who is 27 years his junior.

The victim, a 2002 Brown University graduate, was preparing to move to Philadelphia to enroll in Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine as a member of the Class of 2007.

What started as an invitation to discuss a part-time job offer turned into a night of bar-hopping that included the use of marijuana and, the suit alleges, the use of a lab substance as a date rape drug.

The complaint also claimed that the defendants "and others conspired and agreed to obstruct justice and hinder the criminal investigation and prosecution of [McIntosh] by withholding material evidence."

Such evidence included McIntosh's "history of acts of sexual harassment and his repeated abuse and mis-use of his position of prestige and authority at the Medical School to make sexual advances to women workers, students and colleagues."

Penn officials wanted to retain McIntosh as a professor to avoid losing the "millions of dollars of grant money" that his research brought in, the complaint says.

Doyle said the complaint is off base.

"There was no cover-up or conspiracy to protect Dr. McIntosh. In fact, Penn at no time had any reliable information of sexual misconduct relating to Dr. McIntosh that it failed to investigate or act upon."

"Penn has a strong sexual harassment policy which was not deviated from in this case," Doyle added.

Nembutal, according to court documents, "was used by persons working in the lab to anesthetize and kill rats" but could "also serve as a 'date rape' drug."

The suit states that the victim, after ingesting the drug unknowingly, became severely ill and was sexually assaulted in McIntosh's office.

Those charges were not allowed to be heard in the criminal case, but are again present for the civil action.

The case is still in its early stages, but both McIntosh and Penn could be liable for a monetary judgement should they lose. The sum would be decided by a jury, but Meyerson said that punitive damages will be sought.

The civil trial is projected to take place in September 2006, a distant date that Meyerson said was indicative of the slow pace of civil cases.

"Civil cases move more slowly than criminal cases," Meyerson said. "We are limited to monetary damages, while a criminal case could have and may still result in prison or jail."

Under the knife

A new battle emerges over dissections in the classroom. Are they an unforgettable and effective tool for science, or do they just teach violence and a loss of respect for life?

LancasterOnline.com

By Ad Crable

Lancaster New Era

Published: Mar 22, 2005 1:36 PM EST

LANCASTER COUNTY, PA - During his 28 years as a biology teacher at Penn Manor High School, John Laskowski had his students dissect wild salmon, brown trout, frogs, gall flies and the embryos of chicks. A number of his students have become doctors, and Laskowski thinks his dissection lab just may have provided the spark that pointed them in that direction.

"There are certain things in life we have to see real," he says. "A lot of kids later remember that dissection lab. Maybe it's because they didn't like it, but they all remembered it. Those experiences are very meaningful."

Dissection in the classroom has been a fixture since the 1920s. Both the National Science Teachers Association and the National Association of Biology Teachers endorse it as an effective learning tool.

So what's wrong with cutting up a frog, cat, fetal pig, worm or insect and peeking inside?

Plenty, say animal-rights groups who would like to see dissections banned. Among their complaints:

- Killing and dismembering wildlife breed an attitude that animals are disposable and is at odds with the concept of respecting all living things.
- Rather than instill an interest in science, dissections often turn students off as they are "repulsed by the first gratuitous exercise in cruelty."
- Animals suffer because of it. A large, inhumane warehouse industry exists to breed animals for laboratory use. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals estimates 20 million frogs, cats, mice and others are annually sliced and diced in schools in the name of science.
- Some animals used in the classroom are taken from the wild, endangering local populations. Others are former pets.
- In this technological age, dissection is an anachronism. Realistic and cheaper alternatives exist, such as models and computer programs, to impart the knowledge without killing an organism.

"The same objectives are met, and in a better way, with alternatives," says Kathleen Conlee of the Humane Society of the United States.

"We have over 20 scientific studies that show students learn better with alternatives than dissections."

HSUS and PETA are on the front line in the battle to get dissection out of the classroom.

They and other groups have not made headway in getting dissections banned from public education, but they can claim success in getting a growing number of states to pass laws that give students the right not to participate in dissections.

Beginning with this school year, Virginia became the ninth state requiring schools to give students a chance to opt out of dissections and be given an alternative.

Pennsylvania took such a step in 1992.

Public or private students from kindergarten through high school don't have to capture or dissect any animal or body part. They don't even have to participate in a classroom project to incubate eggs.

And the school has to let parents know at least three weeks in advance of any such activity. Any student or parent who doesn't want to participate must be given an alternative way to glean the lesson and his or her grade can't suffer for the refusal to go along with the rest of the class.

The animal-rights groups are stepping up the campaign to force the issue.

When the Virginia law was passed, HSUS sent letters to 300 school districts, making sure they knew what was expected of them.

The HSUS and National Anti-Vivisection Society offers to loan alternative software to schools.

In an Internet Web site aimed at kids, PETA urges students to speak up in class and fight dissection. "It's easy and you have the right," the PETAKiDS Web site says. "Thousands of students have done it, and you can, too. You may be the first person at your school to refuse — so do it! Express yourself and be a trend-setter, trail-blazer, and animal hero."

If a student is meeting resistance, the Animal Legal Defense Fund will guide him or her to an attorney.

PETA is not afraid to play the mass murderer card. The group's Web site notes that in his last interview before his death, "Jeffrey Dahmer said that he became fascinated with blood and guts when his school gave him a knife and dead animal to cut apart in biology class."

Not everyone is buying the argument. Five states in the last seven years have rejected bills to provide mandatory alternatives to dissections.

The National Association of Biology Teachers endorses guidelines to ensure the proper care and use of animals. But dissection should not be banned, the organization says.

"No alternative can substitute for the actual experience of dissection or other use of animals," is how the group's board of directors put it. "NABT urges teachers to be aware of the limitations of alternatives."

Dr. William Lewis, a veterinarian with Smoketown Veterinary Hospital who recently dissected a road-killed 5-foot black snake in front of wide-eyed kids at the North Museum, is all for giving kids a choice when it comes to dissections.

But he adds, "I definitely think everybody should be given the opportunity if they want to do it."

He thinks rubber models and interactive computer programs lack something.

"It doesn't give you the full effect. Models don't bleed and that's one of the critical parts of learning in my profession. When you have the feel of it, hands-on, things feel different from one thing to another. In an actual dissection, every sense is involved, from sight to touch."

Local biology teachers report that few students opt out of dissections.

Stephen Shaw, a West Lampeter Township teacher in York County, dissects a road-killed deer annually for his middle school students. He has a jar of twin deer fetuses in his classroom and has revealed body parts of foxes, turkeys and snakes in class.

He says holding up a model or having everyone hunch over a computer just wouldn't drive the anatomical points home in the same way.

"It's an excellent activity on discovery," he says.

And he adds, "How do people think their doctor gets trained? If I had my valves replaced, I certainly hope he had some experience on the real thing."

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Psychologists test monkeys' theory of mind

From the Yale Daily News

Published Wednesday, March 23, 2005

BY MAGGIE WITTLIN, Contributing Reporter

The study of cognitive science is just monkey business, at least when the experiment subjects are Rhesus monkeys.

Jonathan Flombaum GRD '08, a graduate student in psychology, and Laurie Santos, a psychology professor, recently conducted a series of experiments testing whether Rhesus monkeys can understand what another being can and cannot see, and concluded that monkeys do possess this ability.

The researchers ran six experiments with the same basic setup, Flombaum said. In each trial, two identically dressed experimenters stood equidistant from a monkey. Each experimenter had a grape in front of him, but while one experimenter could see the grape, the other could not because his body was turned away from the grape or there was a barrier in front of his eyes.

In every experiment, the monkeys spontaneously, without training, stole the grape from the person who could not see the fruit, Santos said.

"Contrary to what we might have thought based on other experimental evidence, monkeys do seem to reason about what individuals can and can't see," she said. "They do share our ability to reason about the minds of others."

Santos said the capacity to infer what other people can see by where they are looking and whether their sightlines are obstructed is part of what psychologists call "theory of mind."

"[Theory of mind is] the ability to understand that another individual has his or her own mental states -- his or her own beliefs and intentions," said David Leiberan '06, who conducted some of the studies.

Humans constantly use theory of mind, Santos said, often without realizing they are using it. For example, when people watch a soap opera, they interpret the events in terms of the mental states of the characters, she said.

Flombaum said the question the experiment explored was whether monkeys had theory of mind abilities.

"For a long time it really seemed like monkeys and apes didn't know much about not only what others can know but what they can see," he said.

Previous studies of monkeys' theory of mind were not conducted in environments simulating natural competitive situations, Flombaum said.

Cayo Santiago, an island off the coast of Puerto Rico, is home to 800 research monkeys, Santos said. The monkeys have experience with humans and the food they eat, as the island is frequently used for research. The island is inadvertently set up so the monkeys are in competition with the researchers for the researchers' lunches, she said. The Yale group capitalized on the pre-existing competition to test when the monkeys thought they could steal food from the experimenters.

Flombaum said the group is currently determining whether monkeys can infer mental states more abstract than sight, specifically whether monkeys can infer beliefs.

When psychologists test whether toddlers can represent beliefs, Leiberan said they test whether the children understand that another person can have false beliefs by using an experiment called the Sally-Anne test. In this test, the child watches a puppet show with two characters, Sally and Anne. First, Sally watches as Anne places a cookie in one of two containers. Sally then leaves the room, and Anne moves the cookie into another container. Sally reenters the room, and the children are asked where Sally will look for the cookie. Until age four, Leiberan said, children say Sally will look in the second container. He said they are not able to deduce that Sally has the false belief that the cookie resides in the first jar.

The group used a similar experiment on the monkeys to deduce whether monkeys can understand false beliefs, Leiberan said. The group built a ramp with two boxes, one higher on the ramp than the other. In the test, the experimenter placed a grape in the top box and, invisible to the monkey, triggered the grape to roll down the ramp.

In one condition, he said, the monkey saw the experimenter watch the grape roll down the ramp. In the other condition, the monkey saw that the experimenter did not watch the grape as it rolled down the ramp. In this experiment, the monkeys only tried to steal the grape from the bottom box when the experimenter had not seen it roll down the ramp, Flombaum said.

"This was our way of exploring whether monkeys understand that another being, even of another species, can have a false belief, and we find that they are able to understand this," Leiberan said.

Sheep might be dumb ... but they're not stupid

Studies show that farmyard animals have a range of emotions and a sharp intelligence

Mark Townsend, environment correspondent

Sunday March 6, 2005

Observer

The following correction was printed in the Observer's For the Record column, Sunday March 13 2005:

In the article below, we said that studies in Oxford showed that a Caledonian heifer called Betty had managed to bend a piece of wire to construct a hook and retrieve food from a jar. Betty is, in fact, a New Caledonian crow, a creature perhaps better adapted to bending wire than a cow.

Cursed with a maddening cluck and a comic strut that would put John Cleese to shame, the chicken, headless or not, is thought by many to be one of the world's daftest animals. Yet new research reveals they are in fact rather clever.

Evidence that the humble hen can master complex tricks that would make most dog owners proud is among a wealth of research to be unveiled at the largest conference ever staged to investigate animal sentience.

The findings, seen by The Observer, offer compelling evidence that creatures caricatured as mindlessly dumb can feel emotions usually associated with humans, such as jealousy, love and loss. Some are crafty enough to hatch machiavellian plots worthy of those who stalk the corridors of Whitehall.

Sheep, ridiculed for a non-questioning herd mentality, possess a sharp sense of individuality and can recognise the faces of at least 10 people and 50 other sheep for at least two years. Scientists at the Babraham Institute in Cambridge also discovered that sheep react to facial expressions and, like humans, prefer a smile to a grimace.

Further studies which reinforce the notion that sheep are more like us than previously believed involved tests showing they mourn absent individuals. Scientists claim such findings are increasingly challenging the belief that farmyard animals have no 'sense of self', a notion that could have profound implications for the way Britain's creatures are farmed.

Pigs were similarly found to have a cerebral capacity beyond the popular preconception of a farm animal. Researchers at Bristol University found that pigs are masters of deceit, deliberately misleading other pigs if it would result in more food for themselves.

Chickens command an extraordinary degree of self-control over food. They are willing to delay gratification if they think a larger portion will be offered in due course.

Other research that threatens the longevity of the phrase 'headless chicken' found that the creatures boast a greater sense of spatial awareness than young children. In tests, chickens could learn tricks such as opening doors and navigating mazes with a speed usually the preserve of dogs and horses. These findings suggest that the character of Ginger, the sharp-witted chicken who leads her colleagues to escape from a farm in the 2000 film *Chicken Run*, may not be as ironic as its makers intended.

The results that may most perturb animal welfare groups are those that suggest chickens can feel pain. Tests found that those known to be experiencing some form of discomfort or lameness chose food laced with morphine when given the choice. By contrast, chickens who were fully fit chose feed that was not spiked with an analgesic.

Another creature similarly viewed by modern society as little more than a benign food source - the cow - is also shown to be an astute animal capable of solving riddles with an intellect more traditionally associated with an ape. Studies at Oxford University found that Betty, a Caledonian heifer, instinctively bent a piece of wire, using a gap in her food tray to create a hook that allowed her to scrape food from the bottom of a jar.

Scores of scientists and government delegates from 43 countries will attend the London conference in 10 days' time to discuss whether society's attitude to animals needs re-examining. They will also hear how wood mice build their own signposts, using sticks and stones to mark sites where food is abundant or marking short-cuts back to their burrow.

The reputation of parrots as purveyors of a broad vocabulary is also reinforced with one study documenting how a grey parrot mastered 1,000 words and learnt to communicate in a manner that would shame some British adults. Parrots have an intellect comparable to a five-year-old human, and the conference will hear how potential parrot owners must weigh up buying one as if they were adopting a 'small child'.

The conference comes at a time when the food industry is being forced to address mounting consumer concern over the structure of Britain's food industry and factory farming.

Among those speaking are officials from McDonald's and the World Bank's private sector arm, whose responsibilities include livestock investment. Leading theologians will also argue that Christian and Islamic faiths need to update their attitudes towards animals by bestowing an intrinsic value similar to that given to people.

Joyce D'Silva, chief executive of animal welfare group Compassion in World Farming Trust, which is organising the two-day summit, said: 'Government and business will have to address animal sentience because consumer concern about the treatment of animals will increasingly influence spending patterns in the coming decades.'

Tomorrow a cross-party parliamentary group on animal welfare will unveil its report into the use of animals in the development of vaccines for humans. The report, which will reopen the debate on the worth of vivisection, calls for the urgent development of new ways of testing vaccines without using animals. Currently 1.5 million animals are used in the European Union each year in the development of vaccines.

Not just parrot fashion ...

Fish are renowned for having a three-second memory; however, evidence suggests they can be highly manipulative and cultured.

Parrots, when shown two different objects, can use language to describe differences in their colour, shape and texture.

Sheep can carry the mental image of another sheep or person for two years.

Chickens feel intention and expectation and can tell people apart.

Pigs may use a sophisticated form of consciousness to deceive other animals for greater personal reward.

Elephants make graves by breaking branches to cover their dead colleagues. They have a large hippocampus, the part of the brain that stores mental maps.

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Professor withdraws from project to protest research on pigs

Posted on Tue, Mar. 29, 2005

RYAN J. FOLEY

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. - To protest a study that would subject pigs to electric shocks, a University of Wisconsin-Madison professor on Tuesday withdrew from a project she planned with the man leading the Taser research.

Terry Young, a professor in the Department of Population Health Sciences, told university administrators she would no longer participate in a study with John Webster, a professor emeritus of biomedical engineering.

The two had collaborated on a research grant proposal to develop a monitor worn by mid-life women to measure symptoms of hot flashes. The proposed study asked for \$250,000 from the National Institutes of Health, which was to decide on the funding in June.

Young said she was troubled by Webster's separate study on whether Tasers can electrocute pigs' hearts, which begins in the next month as an effort to understand why suspects have died after being shocked by Tasers. The study calls for up to 30 pigs to be shocked by Tasers and fed cocaine.

"Had I known of Dr. Webster's recently publicized experiments with Tasers on pigs, I would not have considered any collaborative association with him, as I strongly object to these experiments," Young wrote to UW-Madison Chancellor John Wiley.

Young said Webster's planned research on pigs "is abhorrent to me because of the cruelty to which these animals will be subjected."

Wiley has defended Webster's pig research, saying the study could influence the national debate over the safety of stun guns. Several police departments are reviewing how they use them after a string of suspects died in police custody after being shocked.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which is pressuring the university to end the two-year study, hailed the move by Young, a veteran UW-Madison professor of 21 years.

"It's a big stand for somebody to take," PETA spokeswoman Holly Mattern said.

The plan for the one-year monitor study called for Webster to work with engineers to develop the device, which would measure symptoms of hot flashes. Young, an epidemiologist who specializes in sleep disorders, was to recruit a focus group of women to wear the devices.

Webster could not immediately be reached for comment. A spokesman said university officials were still reviewing Young's letter.

ON THE NET

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals: <http://www.peta.org>

One Says His Research Transforms Lives

REDNOVA NEWS

It doesn't look anything special. It's just a concrete skeleton of a building, surrounded by hoardings, like any construction site. It could be a new block of flats.

But this half-built concrete shell sits in a street full of science departments at the heart of Oxford University. This is the site of the university's proposed pounds 18m Biomedical Research centre, planned as a world-leading scientific facility which will conduct experiments using laboratory animals. After intense animal-rights campaigns against farms raising cats and guinea pigs for laboratory experiments, and a bitter battle with animal-testing firm Huntingdon Life Sciences, this building is now the latest focus of the furious animal rights debate. An Oxford professor says it will be a "national disaster" if the building is not completed. Anti- vivisection campaigners say it will be a "charnel house" of animal suffering.

From the start, the project has been the centre of controversy. Last year, animal rights activists broke into the headquarters of one of the contractors who were reportedly supplying concrete to the site. Construction vehicles were wrecked. According to anonymous internet postings, the Animal Liberation Front claimed responsibility. "All electrics and oil lines cut, tyres slashed; fuel and oil tanks contaminated..." the postings read. Estimated cost: pounds 250,000."

The main building contractor, Walter Lilly, pulled out of the project last summer, after shareholders in its parent company, Montpellier Group plc, received forged letters - purporting to be from the company chairman - which advised them to sell their stocks because of threatened reprisals from animal-rights groups. When the letters were made public, Montpellier's share price slumped.

Work stopped last July. As the site has lain idle, Oxford University has been in secret negotiations to find another contractor to complete the work. The university said last week that it remains "totally committed" to the completion of the building and that work will resume "as soon as possible" - but given that it had hoped to restart work in January this year, the suspicion must be that finding a new contractor is not proving an easy task. Last November, the university obtained a wide-ranging injunction against the ALF and other campaigners, preventing them from harassing or contacting its staff, contractors, and students. The injunction limits protests to four hours a week, by up to 50 people only, on a small area of pavement opposite the building, in Oxford's South Parks Road.

Meanwhile, proposed amendments to the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill (which mean that animal-rights activists may face up to five years' jail for inflicting "economic damage" on medical research companies) have been described as "sinister" by campaigners, who fear they could be used to stifle even peaceful protest.

Early last year, plans to build a similar multi-million pound centre at Cambridge University were abandoned after major protests and concerns about the costs of protecting staff. The focus has now moved here, to Oxford. There is passion, and utter conviction, on both sides.

Oxford Professor of Neurosurgery Tipu Aziz - one of Britain's leading brain surgeons, and one of the very few professionals willing to speak out publicly on the need for the centre - says that it must be built.

On the other side is lifelong animal-rights activist Mel Broughton, 44. He and Robert Cogswell founded SPEAC (Stop Primate Experimentation at Cambridge) to protest at the Cambridge labs. Now renamed "Speak - the voice for animals", it is the leading group in the campaign to stop the Oxford centre.

Here, Professor Aziz and Mel Broughton set out their opposing views...

PROFESSOR TIPU AZIZ

In his office in Oxford, piled high with files, books, research papers, computer monitors and more files, all jostling with each other for space and threatening to tip each other on to the floor, Professor Tipu Aziz flips open his laptop, and runs a video.

"This is the sort of people we take on," he says. "This has been an obsession of mine for 20 years."

The video shows an elderly man, sitting in a wheelchair, with constant and uncontrollable shaking in both arms. He has Parkinson's Disease. "His joints are as stiff as wood," Aziz murmurs. "He's totally expressionless and unable to move. But this gentleman, mentally, is absolutely normal. And yet he's locked, so to speak, in this wheelchair."

Since 1991, using brain surgery techniques which he helped to pioneer, Aziz has operated on more than 1,000 people suffering from Parkinson's Disease and other uncontrollable movement disorders. The operation instantly stops the convulsions and unlocks their joints - as if by flicking a switch. The procedure, he says, has transformed their lives. It involves permanently inserting two electrodes deep inside the brain to a precise spot: the sub-thalamic nucleus. Wires are passed under the skin to a pacemaker and battery inserted in the chest. Only the battery needs replacing - about every five years.

Many others whom Aziz has treated in this way have suffered years of constant pain: stroke victims, who may develop hypersensitivity in an area of the body; phantom limb patients (who may "feel" incessant pain in a missing limb after amputation); patients with nerve damage whose constant pain cannot be alleviated by drugs.

"Starting to cry on the operating table - with these patients it actually happens quite often," says Aziz. "Suddenly, after years and years of this terrible pain, when you put an electrode in the brain and turn it on, the pain is gone. They can't believe it."

The operation - which is now estimated to have helped some 30,000 Parkinson's sufferers around the globe - was developed by Aziz and others through experiments on monkeys. It had extraordinary and tragic beginnings.

Aziz recounts how, in the late 1970s, a US psychiatrist was presented with a patient - a man in his twenties - in a catatonic state and totally unable to move. After all other therapies had failed, the psychiatrist prescribed him L-Dopa - the standard drug for Parkinson's Disease. The patient got up and walked.

It emerged that he was a chemistry graduate, who, by modifying pethidine, had tried to create a recreational drug which would circumvent the US drug laws, with disastrous results. Soon eight other people - friends or "customers" of the chemist - were hospitalised in a similarly catatonic and paralysed state. When one of them died, his brain was examined and was found to show damage identical to Parkinson's Disease. Here, suddenly, was a rogue drug which could "create" Parkinson's.

"In 1983 it was given to monkeys for the first time by a researcher in San Francisco - and these monkeys developed signs of full-blown Parkinson's," says Aziz. That led to an explosion of studies of these

monkeys." The research showed that the sub- thalamic nucleus - which no one had previously considered as an element in Parkinson's - was over-active and the driving force behind the symptoms of the disease.

Aziz runs another video clip on his laptop, of the groundbreaking experiment he did in 1989. It shows a monkey in a cage, utterly immobile after being injected with the "Parkinson drug". Then the monkey makes a tiny trembling movement. "You can see that the monkey is absolutely unable to move, and when he tries to move he has a tremor," says Aziz. "To test the hypothesis that surgically modifying the sub-thalamic nucleus should benefit Parkinson's disease, we did the surgery in this animal. And this is the monkey just a short while after surgery." He then runs a second video clip, where the animal is seen jumping around in its cage. "That's normal behaviour; and it certainly doesn't look distressed," says Aziz.

Aziz and his team at Manchester University published their results in the early 1990s. Then, after further tests on monkeys, researchers in France went on to prove that the same effect might be achieved by the less hazardous method of using permanently- implanted electrodes. This is now the operation that has helped Parkinson's Disease sufferers around the world. Aziz personally performs up to three of the operations a week, either at the Radcliffe Infirmary or at Charing Cross Hospital in London.

"The effects are miraculous; and we have transformed people's lives," he says. "I have no qualms about what I have done, and what I do."

His research continues: into a possible vaccine against Alzheimer's, into multiple sclerosis tremors, and into the theory that the brains of Parkinson's sufferers may be "repairable" using a modified virus. Aziz uses on average two monkeys a year for his research. "Monkey studies are an integral part of my work," he says. "Every time I see one of my patients, that justifies it."

The anti-vivisection campaigners' charge that such animals suffer greatly is, he claims, "complete misinformation".

"We do the same operation on these monkeys as we would do on a human patient," says Aziz "and I know what my patients feel like after surgery. They can tell me whether they're feeling distress or not. And I don't believe that a monkey feels any different, so I'm quite happy with what I do. The experiments we do are not `torturing' these animals. These monkeys will come up to us, let us put the radio control over the pacemaker to alter the rate of stimulation, and then they go off and do their own thing while they're videoed. That's our experiment."

Born in the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) into a family with a long history in medicine - his father was a specialist in tropical diseases and discovered a cure for river blindness - Aziz spent his early childhood in the US, then returned to Bangladesh when his parents separated. After 10 years without schooling - because of the turmoil caused by the war of independence with Pakistan - he came to England in 1973 to complete his education. He arrived, aged 17, with just three O-Levels.

After completing A Levels , he studied physiology at University College London and then medicine at King's College London. This was followed by a Fellowship at the Royal College of Surgeons, and a doctorate at Manchester University (where his groundbreaking animal research was carried out). Coming to Oxford in the early 1990s, he is now Professor of Neurosurgery, and combines teaching and research with his work as a neurosurgeon at the Radcliffe Infirmary and Charing Cross Hospital. He has little time for anything but his work.

"I'm usually in my office or my labs at 6.30am, and leave for home at 8-9pm. I'm here seven days a week," he says. "Years ago I used to microlight - but it's hard to find the time to do things like that now. This work is my life."

Aziz expects to be one of those working in the new Biomedical Research Centre. "Britain has always been at the forefront of both clinical and basic research, and is a world leader. If this centre isn't built it will

be a national disaster. For Cambridge not to have gone ahead was one disaster, and this will just be the straw that breaks the camel's back of British bio-medical science. And it's not that the campaigners will achieve anything by preventing its completion, because this research will go abroad. If that happens, we'll lose our best brains - they will follow the laboratories and facilities."

In the past, Aziz has been a target for hate mail. "We got quite a lot at the beginning," he says. Nonetheless, he feels the centre is so vital that - unlike most others - he is prepared to speak publicly about it. He says he's "not particularly" concerned for his safety, but adds he does take some (unspecified) precautions. "There are certain things that one does," he says. "You keep an eye on who's around. Especially round the laboratories, one is very conscious of who's walking in and out, and passing by." He describes some campaigners as "terrorists".

"There are people who have attacked the homes of scientists in the past, and even workers on the construction site. These are ordinary people earning a day's wages, and they're having their houses attacked. Is that the act of a protester, or is that the act of a terrorist? They have attacked people economically by bombarding shareholders with threats of what will happen if they don't sell their shares. That is economic terrorism. And they have used bombs. I don't see any difference in their practice from that of a political terrorist. The dangers to the country are no less: harm to people, harm to property, harm to the economy, and a big threat to people's future health. So they are terrorists and they should be treated as such."

He claims that many of the arguments of the campaigners are flawed. One of their key assertions is that animal research is now an obsolete science which could be more reliably carried out by new scientific methods such as DNA techniques and computer modelling.

"That is pure ignorance," counters Aziz. "We can only use computer modelling in a limited way, because we can put into computers only what we know. We cannot put in what we don't know. To test a hypothesis in a biological system one has to go back to the whole functioning model in an animal, prior to man. As a surgeon, the conclusions that one draws from a primate are directly transferable to man, and that is the pursuit of my research."

Campaigners also say that animal research often gives misleading results which can then prove dangerous to humans. "That is selective misinformation," claims Aziz. "In that case you have to deny the benefits of penicillin, of general anaesthesia, of cardiac surgery and neurosurgery. All of that has its provenance in animal research. What worries me is that a lot of these protesters are youngsters; they don't realise how much they've benefited from animal research."

MEL BROUGHTON

The police are filming us from across the street. Two process servers in fluorescent jackets are waiting to hand out injunctions to anyone who steps out of line. Steve, 59, is struggling to keep aloft a massive banner. "BORN TO DIE" it reads, with a picture of a monkey in a cage, holding its head in its hand, covering its eyes.

"There's tea and sandwiches over there. Help yourself," says Steve cheerily, nodding towards a pile of bags on the pavement. "We're not these terrorists that people make us out to be. We've got this Draconian injunction against us, but we're just ordinary folks. I'm a family man, self-employed van driver, I live in Oxford, I know everybody here - they're peace-loving people who don't like cruelty and needless experiments on animals."

It would be hard to argue with Steve about the "ordinary folks" bit. Today, the group of about 25 protesters includes Sheila 61, a PA in a surveyor's office; Lyn, 37, a midwife; Rachel, 34, a marketing consultant; Christine, 39, an admin supervisor; Angela, 59, a retired librarian; Max, 60, a senior officer with a local authority in the Midlands. As they're chatting and drinking tea, Mel Broughton picks up a megaphone. He

aims it towards the half-built lab. What follows is a succinct manifesto of what he and the protesters believe.

"We have learnt," his voice booms out, "that a professor recently applied for a licence to conduct brain experiments on primates. We've seen the licence application. Monkeys will have electrodes fitted into their brains, and will be deprived of food and water. They will be strapped into a chair for up to 18 hours a day.

"The reason given for this research is to study obesity and hunger in human beings. But we know why people get fat. We know why we feel hungry. Why do this to sentient creatures when you already know the answers?"

His amplified voice ricochets off the buildings around us. "This university," he continues, "is telling the world that this building will be a monument to scientific research into curing diseases in human beings. This is not the case. But the benefit to the researchers, the pharmaceutical industry and the vivisection industry is massive. The technology already exists to carry out safe, beneficial research which will help people suffering from disease, and does not involve inflicting pain on animals who have no choice and are completely at your mercy.

"Oxford University," Broughton shouts in conclusion, "you should be ashamed of yourselves for relying on this pointless, cruel and callous treatment of sentient beings, and conning people into believing it's for their benefit. Because we've seen the research papers - and we know it's not." He puts the megaphone down. The police are still filming.

Broughton doesn't want to be seen as any kind of messianic leader, but people on the pavement here say he has been an inspiration to them. As a co-founder of Speak, he makes the trip to Oxford from his flat in Northampton every Thursday, the only day the injunction permits him and the other protesters to be here.

"There's this view of animal-rights campaigners that the only people who get involved are either complete lunatics or bunny huggers," he says. "The vivisection industry continually tells the public that we don't know what we're talking about and that we're just 'misguided animal lovers'. I think that's a deliberate move on their part to try to portray us as people who don't have an intelligent argument."

Broughton's passionate conviction - shared, it should be said, by a section of the scientific and medical professions - is that animal experimentation is outmoded, 19th-century science. He and other campaigners - such as Europeans for Medical Progress - say that advances in DNA techniques, computer modelling, tissue culture, and stem-cell research are far more reliable methods of testing drugs and finding cures for diseases. They cite a long list of supposed "wonder drugs" which tested safe on animals - and were later withdrawn after proving harmful to humans. Animals, they say, have repeatedly proved to be unreliable models for results in humans. "We're not anti-science," Broughton insists. "I'd be more than happy to see this lab built - but to find cures for human disease using safe, scientific methods. This is about human health as well as about animal suffering."

Broughton has been a committed animal rights campaigner for nearly three decades. Over a mug of black coffee - no milk, he's vegan - he explains how he got here.

"People ask me why I feel like I do, and it's difficult to answer," he says. "But even when I was a kid I felt the same. I was always looking after injured birds and things. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew I would look after them - other kids used to bring them round to the house. I didn't always save them, but I tried. I was maybe 12, 13..."

His father, now 71, was a painter and decorator; his mother a care assistant in an old people's home. (They, too, are committed campaigners, and are both here on the demonstration today. "We got into this through Mel," says his father, Peter. "I'm very proud of him".)

Aged just 15, he set off for Scotland to work with Operation Osprey. "It was something I'd always wanted to do, and it was fantastic: out in the middle of nowhere, in a tent, with binoculars, doing shifts guarding the osprey nests," he recalls. Later, he worked in animal sanctuaries, and at a country park. Mainly, though, he has combined animal-rights campaigning with his work as a gardener, doing landscaping and garden maintenance for local authorities and private customers.

He has campaigned against zoos, circuses, factory farming, and live animal exports. In the late 1980s he was arrested at an amusement park in Morecambe while trying to release a dolphin. A decade later, he was in jail.

Travelling to an animal-rights action, he was stopped by police. "Incendiary devices" were found in the car. Sentenced to four years for conspiracy to cause explosions, he was released in June 2002 after serving two years, eight months.

"I've always been very upfront about this," he says. "Though I didn't actually do anything - because I was caught - I don't regret the fact that I was on course to take that kind of action. I've served my sentence, and I don't regret anything. I'm also very clear that I'm not involved in illegal actions now, and will not be in the future. But I'm not apologising." He explains this by saying that history shows that most campaigns for major change have had to go through a stage of direct action, before moving on to legal methods to achieve their aims. That, he insists, is what he's now doing.

He says he coped well during his jail term. "I took the chance to educate myself; do things I never did at school. I took Open University courses in social science and philosophy, read a lot of books. I found a lot of sympathy inside - but a lot of the general prisoners found it very difficult to understand that I was inside for something I'd done for no personal gain. And it is something you do ponder," he smiles.

He lives alone in Northampton, with his rescue-dog Bella. Most of his time is devoted to the campaign, run by him and Robert Cogswell with other supporters.

"This was always my life, but now it takes up so much of my life that it's very difficult," says Broughton. "In fact survival is very, very hard. My flat's nothing special - two rooms - and I live as frugally as I possibly can to make sure I can campaign. I'm not trying to make myself out to be a martyr because this is my choice." One feature of his flat is an entire shelving system, full of injunctions and files from the High Court. "There are just thousands of pages," says Broughton. "I've been named on all kinds of injunctions for things I've got nothing to do with. They just stick your name on."

Oxford University's claim that 98 per cent of the animals to be housed in the new facility will be rodents cuts no ice with Broughton. He thinks this is just to make it sound better.

"I think it's extremely cynical, and it's an argument I've heard many times. The idea, I assume, is that most people view rats as vermin, and so they cannot expect much sympathy when they're experimented on. But whether it's a dog, cat, monkey, fish, amphibian or rodent, the point remains that that animal has an ability to suffer. Rodents are sociable, intelligent creatures, and they have the ability to suffer pain."

"I have no qualms in saying that the idea of this lab makes me very, very angry. Change has to come, and we have a very large role in that, by creating a platform that allows others to speak out against what's happening. I do absolutely believe that we are going to change the way society views this issue. And we are in the process of doing that. How quickly that happens is in part down to what we do, and in part down to people who are involved in science. But it is going to happen - make no mistake about that. And I personally won't give up until it does. Ultimately it has to be banned, with legislation to stop it. It will come." n

Oxford University: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/biomed/

Europeans for Medical Progress: www.curedisease.net

Speak: www.speakcampaigns.org.uk

LIFE INSIDE THE LABORATORY

Nearly three million animals are used annually in experiments in Britain. Of these, nearly 4,000 are monkeys. Campaigners have unearthed chilling details of experiments conducted in British laboratories, such as kittens which had one eye sewn shut and part of their brain exposed to research squints; and monkeys which had the tops of their skulls sawn off. A stroke had been induced, and, according to evidence presented at a High Court hearing earlier this year, the animals were then left unattended for up to 15 hours. Some were found dead the morning after the operation, others were in a "poor condition".

The Government last year set up a national centre for the "replacement, refinement and reduction" of animals in research. And Oxford University says that its new Biomedical Research facility will be "one of the best in the country, in terms of animal welfare. The University of Oxford uses animals only in research programmes of the highest quality and only where there are no alternatives," it says. "All such work is carried out under licences issued by the Home Secretary after weighing its potential benefits against the effects on the animals concerned. The University is committed to the principles of reduction, refinement and replacement; on each project it ensures that the number of animals used is minimised and that procedures, care routines and husbandry are refined to maximise welfare. The University is committed to the highest standards of husbandry and housing..."

"We expect that 98 per cent of the animals housed there will be rodents. Depending on other Home Office licences held, there may also be some amphibia, ferrets, fish and primates."

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