

Title:

The politics of animal rights--where is the Left?

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Abstract:

Describes protests which began in 1993 against the live export of veal calves to Europe, police actions, media treatment, and shifting political attitudes of the participants; Great Britain. Partly based on a sample survey taken in Brightlingsea, England.

[Carmen's note: Here's the part that mentions the Brightlingsea survey. Let me know if you'd like the Full Text.]

A sample survey of Brightlingsea residents was commissioned by the Town Council, and carried out by Eric Tannenbaum of Essex University's Government Department during May 1995. [8] Among other things, this survey attempted to discriminate between morally based and 'NIMBY' opposition to the export trade. They found 71 per cent opposed to the trade wherever it took place, with a further 6 per cent opposed to it if it went through Brightlingsea. Of course, it would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that this 6 per cent represents the NIMBY vote, and it would also be wrong to overlook the role of 'localist' sentiments for the other 71 per cent. This is a complex issue to which we will return. For the moment it is important to note the huge majority feeling against the live export trade. Only 8 per cent were reported as not being at all opposed. A subsequent qualitative study, involving more open-structured interviews with protesters confirmed the clear implication of the sample survey that opposition to the export trade crossed the political spectrum. The regular public meetings organized by BALE-Brightlingsea Against Live Exports, a local ad hoc organization formed just before the first convoy of live animals was turned back in January 1995, but later disbanded under the threat that the police would use the Public Order Act against the protesters--drew huge attendances, and were addressed by, among others, politicians of both the Right and the Left. All of this, together with the initial media coverage suggests that the moral case for animal welfare is close to a national consensus, and that it is not, as a public issue, identified with the Left or the Right. Its status in this sense as 'non-political' has, arguably, been of considerable importance in maintaining the wide public support, both locally and nationally, that the protests have achieved.