

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate
Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
Bil Anifeiliaid Gwyllt a Syrcasau (Cymru) | Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales)
Bill
WA 17A
Ymateb gan : Chris Barltrop
Evidence from : Chris Barltrop

Thank you for allowing these further comments. I must be brief.

1. Whips: it's not practical for trainers to go close to each animal when working with a group. Whips are not weapons but extensions of a trainer's arms, used as a sort of semaphore of taught cues. Like a fly fisherman, a trainer has great control over where the tip of the lash lands; you can touch an animal gently to signal to it, even when it's moving as part of a group. A whip won't crack if it touches an animal; whip-cracking is for show, adding drama.
2. Activist language: words are misused to arouse emotions. As examples: 'Breaking-in an animal' uses that word as we used to say we were 'breaking-in' a new pair of shoes, not to say damage is done. 'On the road' expresses 'on tour', not literally travelling day and night, day in and day out.
3. Language is also often pejorative to the circus people, who are characterised as untrustworthy 'travellers' with all the prejudice that can bring.
4. Although they like to be thought of as 'charities', activist organisations are commercially-operated. Because circus life and practices are an 'unknown' and are easily misrepresented, kind-hearted animal lovers donate heavily to anti-circus campaigns. A glance at Company Accounts shows virtually nil expenditure on animals; income goes on salaries, office suites, political lobbying, and publicity to generate further income. It's in their commercial interest to condemn.
5. There is often confusion between 'animal welfare' and 'animal rights' (AR), a philosophy whose stated aim is to end all contact between humans and animals. The AR philosophy opposes the provision of better welfare, arguing that animals should not be in human care at all. Proselytising animal rights activists shout down 'welfarists', denying others a right to their views.
6. Leading on from that point, and noting some of the comments of the activists on the 26th September panel, the AR agenda clearly states they wish to move on from circuses to ban all human/animal activity. Where will that leave Welsh falconers and pony-trekking businesses, farmers and horse-riders and zoos, Welsh film-makers? They and more are targeted; the 'activist' panel said so. There's an economic and social cost to consider in endorsing these ideas. This is a dangerous path to take, it will affect far more than circuses.
7. Since exactly similar activities will continue but which are not circuses, this proposed legislation is discriminatory.

8. I note mention of 'sanctuaries'. I do not believe that transferring animals from the professional care in their circus 'family' to organisations which, by the nature of their setting-up, are not 'animal people' and whose husbandry will perform be inferior. The 'sanctuary' mentioned is a commercial operation.
9. Finally, it is officially acknowledged by DEFRA that there is 'no welfare problem with circus animals'. The arguments against circuses are theoretical; the circus people are practical professionals, masters of their craft. I hope you will recognise that.