



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Brightlingsea residents end the exportation of live animals through their town (Battle of Brightlingsea), 1995

16 January

1995

to: 25 October

1995

Country: United Kingdom

Location City/State/Province: *Brightlingsea, Essex*

Goals:

To ban the exportation of live animals through the town of Brightlingsea.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings
- 133. Reluctant and slow compliance › Demonstrators walked at a slow pace in front of lorries to prevent them from ending up at their destination on time
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › Protesters block road in attempt to prevent lorries from passing through the town
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 032. Taunting officials › Protest directly outside of police station
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › Protesters block road in attempt to prevent lorries from passing through the town

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › Protesters block road in attempt to prevent lorries from passing through the town
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › A small boat sails to meet incoming ship carrying livestock to stop it from entering the port

Methods in 4th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › Protesters block road in attempt to prevent lorries from passing through the town
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › Protesters weld and handcuff themselves to a bus with no wheels to prevent lorries from passing by

Methods in 5th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › Protesters block road in attempt to prevent lorries from passing through the town

Methods in 6th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Demonstrators stand on the roof of the community center to show their support in banning the exportation of live animals
- 048. Protest meetings
- 162. Sit-in › Demonstrators sit in front of the lorries and refuse to move
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › Protesters block road in attempt to prevent lorries from passing through the town

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Environment

Group characterization:

- animal rights activists (local and international)
- local residents

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

B.A.L.E. - Brightlingsea Against Live Exports

Partners:

Bernard Jenkins - MP

Anne Macintosh - MEP

External allies:

CIWF - Compassion in World Farming

Involvement of social elites:

Carla Lane - An English television writer popular in the 70's and 80's. She is also recognized for her involvement in animal rights activism.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Animal rights activists
- local residents

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Masked demonstrators
- Masked demonstrators (exit)
- People from surrounding municipalities
- Sea Sabs
- Sea Sabs (exit)

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Animal activist group
- Animal activist group

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: *Approximately 1 month 2 weeks*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Wharf Owner - Ernest Oliver

Exporter - Roger Mills

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Masked demonstrators threw water bombs, bottles and eggs injected with chemicals in one protest. Not sanctioned by leadership.

Spontaneous violence from campaigners in one protest in which beer bottles and stones were thrown at Lorries; police and locals brawled. Not sanctioned by leadership.

Repressive Violence:

Police were rough with campaigners and there were several minor injuries

Roger Mills hit a campaigner with his vehicle and was charged with dangerous driving

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Although the campaigners succeeded in prohibiting the use of their port for exports of live animals, companies still continued to transport live animals elsewhere.

The exportation of live animals had been a subject of great debate in Britain during the early 1990's. Britain's harbors were being utilized to transport live sheep, cattle, and veal calves across Europe, but there were few laws protecting the rights of these animals as they were being exported. Animals were forced into cramped living quarters and could be without food or water for up to 24 hours while in cargo ships.

Animal welfare organizations such as Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) were trying to increase awareness of these issues and attempting to limit the deficiency of water and food to eight hours. As a result, Britain's main ferry operators refused to ship live animals. This left companies scrambling to find other ports to export their cargo from. They began to transport their livestock through ports in small towns such as Brightlingsea.

The growing tension had already reached surrounding seaports in Dover, Plymouth and King's Lynn where demonstrations against live animal exportation were not uncommon. When the residents of Brightlingsea learned their port would be shuttling Lorries of the defenseless animals they decided to take action. A group entitled Brightlingsea Against Live Exports (BALE) was spontaneously created under the direction of sisters Maria Wilby and Francesca D'Silva and would lead the people in their protests. The organization emphasized the use of peaceful tactics while attempting to prohibit the passing of any vehicle retaining live animals. Their first action in the campaign took place on 16 January 1995, the day the first shipment of livestock was to arrive.

The ad hoc plan was to cut off the trucks by blocking the road. As Brightlingsea was a small town there was only one road leading from the wharf and this single three mile path happened to be very narrow. The approximately 500 protesters who arrived that day effortlessly blocked the street and the convoy was turned around. This small victory marked the beginning of a long nine month effort to ban the exportation of live animals. What made this campaign unique was the diverse demographic present at the protests. The bulk of residents that arrived together with BALE and animal activists were middle class women, their children and retirees.

The exporters and wharf owners did not give up after this rally. They proceeded again two days later when they were better prepared. Hundreds of county police traded their uniforms for riot gear and came alongside the Lorries. The number of demonstrators had increased as well but they were no match for the callousness of the police officers. Those sitting, standing and laying down in front of the trucks were thrown off of the street and several people were arrested. Several hundred complaints were lodged against the officers that day.

Protests continued every day as ships arrived with more livestock. Despite their best efforts, the demonstrators were unable to turn back any more convoys. BALE held regular meetings at the community center to update the town and establish the best ways to obstruct the livestock trucks from coming into Brightlingsea. Police were also in attendance every day keeping the crowd away from the oncoming vehicles. It came to be that officers allowed the residents to walk beside the Lorries. The campaigners used this tolerance to their advantage and promenaded slowly in front of the trucks as a way to prevent them from arriving at their destination on time.

The seemingly unimportant town of Brightlingsea was beginning to attract attention from across Britain. People from nearby municipalities and activists from around the country travelled to Brightlingsea to join the campaign. One zealous set of individuals smuggled a large bus with no front wheels onto the road and handcuffed and welded each other to it. They left only enough room for small vehicles to go by. Constables quickly arrived on the scene wielding metal cutters and a tow truck to move

the obstruction away.

Though the majority of newcomers abided by the peaceful rules set out by BALE, some took matters into their own hands. Such was the case a third of the way into the campaign when masked demonstrators entered the scene throwing water bombs, bottles and eggs injected with chemicals. Their brief appearance in Brightlingsea has been described as one of the low points for the campaign.

The demonstrators' patience was being tested as time progressed and no other convoys had been turned around. A small group convened to try a new tactic. Going by the name "Sea Sabs", the faction chose to stop the ship from docking and delivering the livestock at all. This consignment was particularly poignant as it consisted of veal calves. The people did not approve of the abuse of young and vulnerable baby animals. The Sea Sabs used two small boats to drift in front of the huge vessel. Several swimmers joined in their attempt to cut the ship off but police quickly thwarted their plans. The ship docked and more live animals were exported into Europe.

Near the end of the campaign, the ocean tides were changing, resulting in later protests. There were more residents available to participate in the demonstrations in the evening which led to less control. On one particular night emotions heightened between the exporters, police, and protesters and a slight riot ensued. Beer bottles and stones were being used as impromptu missiles and several brawls developed between police and locals. The situation eventually calmed down and no one was seriously injured. This was another despondent time for BALE and the rest of the movement.

Exporters made the decision to stop using the Brightlingsea port for their shipments near the end of October. Their reasons cited were the huge cost of dealing with the campaign and the chaos that stemmed from it. 25 October 1995 was a significant day for the townspeople of Brightlingsea as it was the last day that exporters would ever use their port for the shipment of live animals. The efforts of the campaign had paid off and there was a great celebration for the Battle of Brightlingsea was over.

Research Notes

Influences:

The campaign in Brightlingsea was influenced by several other campaigns supporting the ban on exportation of live animals in surrounding ports in Dover, Plymouth, Sussex and King's Lynn as well as Coventry Airport. (1)

Influenced ongoing campaigns to continue and Britain has currently suspended the exportation of live animals while they converse with major animal rights activists (2)

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