

NEWS RELEASE by CZS - REACTION TO GOVERNMENT REPORT WILD ANIMALS IN TRAVELLING CIRCUSES

The RSPCA, Animal Defenders International and the Born Free Foundation have reacted badly to the conclusion of an independent inquiry into the welfare of circus animals. The three organisations were represented on the Parliamentary Circus Working Group, set up in June 2006 to look into the welfare of non-domesticated animals in circuses.

The government had previously stated that it would ban certain species of animals from travelling circuses, based on scientific evidence. The academic panel advising the group concluded that there was no scientific evidence to justify such a ban. Accepting the report, Environment Minister Hilary Benn said "The government will now want to hear reactions to the report and consider its position."

The RSPCA, Animal Defenders and Born Free were highly critical of the report and in particular complained that the remit of the working group was too narrow. A spokesman, speaking on behalf of the Circus Zoological Society, claimed all three organisations were behaving like bad losers. They had each sent representatives to the working group and were aware of its remit from the start. In addition they had nominated members of the academic panel each of whom had signed off the report. "If you play a game and lose you shouldn't complain that the rules are unfair," he said, pointing out that the members of the academic panel were all highly qualified zoologists or veterinary scientists.

The Circus Zoological Society has consistently campaigned in support of the use of animals in circuses and submitted material to all MPs and Peers when the Animal Welfare Bill was passing through Parliament. It strongly believes that the welfare of circus animals can be ensured by strict and properly enforced regulation. Assuming that the government adopts the report, the circus that stands to benefit most is Martin Lacey's 'Great British Circus' which boasts of being 'Britain's Biggest Animal Circus' with lions, tigers, camels, llamas, horses, ponies and dogs. Martin is the President of the CZS.

Mr Lacey hailed the working party's findings as "A victory for common sense," adding "For too long the public and politicians have been misled by carefully planned, slick propaganda emanating from these wealthy organisations. The government should listen to these impartial scientists rather than people who have no scientific background or even practical knowledge of animal husbandry." He added that his future plans included taking not one but two big cat acts out on tour as well as instigating an extensive breeding programme with his animal stock.

NEWS RELEASE BY CIRCUS ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY - 23/11/2007