



UK INDEPENDENCE PARTY
& *EDD Group in the European Parliament*
Reg. Office: 2 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA
Tel. & Fax 01322-278878

4th September 2002

The Editor
The Guardian

BY FACSIMILE

Dear Sir,

David Fickling (Report, 4th September) is correct to highlight concerns over the export of live sheep from Australia. He mentions the M/V Cormo Express and voyage in 1990 during which 10,000 sheep died. I was the Chief Radio Officer on that particular voyage, and I can assure your readers that the carnage was far worse than the statistics revealed.

The actual number dead was in excess of 12,000 from a cargo of 71,000, or almost 17%. On its previous voyage, it lost 7,000 out of 63,000, or 11%. The radio department was responsible for keeping such statistics.

The problems began with poor weather in the Tasmanian Sea. Many sheep developed gastro-enteritis, and refused to eat, thus slowly starving themselves to death. Initially, the sheep were killed with the humane livestock killer to prevent further suffering. However, the ship carried only 500 rounds, and when these were exhausted, ships officers and crew took turns in cutting the animals throats.

Conditions on the livestock decks were truly atrocious. Faulty air-conditioning meant that manure set rock solid immediately in to 140° temperatures, quickly reaching the animal's bellies and preventing them from moving or reaching water or fodder troughs. Again, all officers and crew were involved in shovelling manure, but 44 men could do little to alleviate the animals suffering given the scale of the problem.

Over 4,000 sheep died whilst customs formalities were completed in Jeddah. The carcasses were piled on the sheep decks for disposal after sailing. After 6 days in such temperatures, the stench was truly appalling, and the vessel's crew were forced to throw carcasses overboard in the Red Sea as the 'hogger', a devise which pulped the carcasses and sprayed them overboard, became clogged.

Throughout the voyage, the ship's officers & crew, and the two NZ MAFF vets who accompanied the sheep, did their best to prevent needless suffering. In the absence of proper regulation, and with the regular falsification of death figures by ship owners and agents, ensuring animal welfare is a task left to crews, who have no training and little experience of live cargos. Despite their best efforts, they continue to find themselves overwhelmed by the scale of the task. It is time for more humane regulations, without a doubt.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Croucher'.

Mark Croucher
Economic Affairs Spokesman
U.K. Independence Party
(& former Chief Radio Officer, M/V Cormo Express)