

Step 6 23-03-09

It's wonderful to see that our message on expressive politics concerning animal rights has found such resonance, even in other countries. Last week The Bihar Times ran an interview with world-famous politician, environmental and animal rights activist Maneka Gandhi. In this interview, this former Indian minister voices her dream of being able to represent a Party for the Animals in Indian parliament.

From her interview:

“Animal welfare needs to become part of our political agenda. This is not such a distant dream. Environmental protection has already become a huge political issue. Obama’s opposition to oil drilling in the ocean won him the crucial environmental vote. Since his film, ‘An Inconvenient Truth’, Al Gore carries more political clout than when he was Vice President. All European countries have Green parties. Holland has an Animal Party. The Dutch ‘Party for Animals’ leader Marianne Thieme, 34, is a jurist who until recently was president of an animal protection agency. Her growing frustration over the lethargic attitude of established parties to animal issues provided the motivation to secure animals a voice in politics. Well known Dutch authors and opinion leaders have joined the party and a growing number of Dutch people are questioning why selfish economic interests should prevail over ethical considerations when it comes to animal and environmental protection. In its first election, the party has already won 2 parliamentary seats out of 150 (the Indian equivalent would be 12 seats, which is larger than most parties in Parliament today. The party’s priority is to end all animal suffering. It wants a constitutional amendment, guaranteeing animals the right to freedom from pain, fear and stress caused by humans. India may not yet have a party for animals but there are plenty of reasons why animal welfare should be on every election manifesto. ”



*Maneke Gandhi*

Read the complete interview here:

<http://www.bihartimes.com/Maneka/politicalagenda.html>

The political agenda that Maneka Gandhi advocates is something we continuously try to establish in Dutch parliament. Christian Democrat Atsma, who is the most critical of us, often heaves a sigh and complains that “these days, every day in parliament concerns animals”. And Social Democrat Harm Evert Waalkens regularly says “You determine the agenda, we determine the result”. These sentences express the pain of the incumbent politicians who dislike the idea of a new political ideal with a planet-wide scope. We could of course make the point at every debate that these parties are also single issue parties that care only about Westerners and their money. The inordinate amount of attention currently given to the credit crisis hides the fact we're dealing with the smallest possible

crisis imaginable – what will happen to our wallets. There are more crises to come that will have a far greater effect on our lives, the climate crisis, the food crisis, the fresh water crisis, the biodiversity crisis, the raw materials crisis (including the finite supply of phosphates), the animal disease crisis and the moral crisis that turns people into perfectly irrational creatures. They say people are always three meals away from war, and I believe that is true. According to the U.N., in 2017 70% of the world's population will be suffering from a shortage of clean drinking water, and the British Science Council predicts a huge food and drinking water crisis by 2030.

That is why we desperately need all other countries to establish their own political parties that address these kinds of issues and who make it clear that we need to live our lives differently. Even if there is an electoral threshold to overcome, a Party for the Animals can be an excellent way of stimulating people to think during an election. Because people are used to political parties focusing on humans, it's a real shock to the system when a Party for the Animals participates in an election. It's a name that evokes emotion – indignation, hope, anger, happiness or irritation – and these emotions cause movement – without movement there can be no change.