

PROPOSAL FOR RADIO/CASSETTE ADAPTATION OF
ANIMAL FARM BY GEORGE ORWELL FOR
INDEPENDENT LOCAL RADIO,
SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS.

Written by Tim Crook and Richard Shannon.
June 1987.

There is strict copyright on the ideas and
adaptation set out in this document.

There have been two notable radio versions of this famous satirical work by George Orwell. He was involved himself in the first radio adaptation which was broadcast by BBC radio's The Third Programme in 1947. Here a narrator was used to bind the structure of the story together. In the second radio version broadcast by the BBC the horse character Clover became the narrator.

In the present adaptation for broadcast on Independent Local Radio and sale by cassette by Macmillan with their study guide, the central narrative bind is provided by the cynical all-knowing donkey Benjamin who in terms of dialogue says little but in terms of perception, understanding and intelligence, is clearly the best candidate for carrying the author's voice along the dramatic thread of the story.

The play can be easily divided into five ten to twelve minute episodes making a total of sixty minutes for the Macmillan study cassette, and can also be easily edited into a 47 minute commercial radio play. Other edited structures are possible such as ten six minute episodes.

The radio ambience of the scenes can be enhanced with exciting stereo sound effects of real animals in a farm setting.

Radio Adaptation of Animal Farm
Part 1.

Each episode or omnibus programme of all the episodes can be introduced with a theme tune sung by the cast called 'Beasts of England.' IRDP will commission a composer to provide a tune which is close in rhythm and melodic line to the Red Flag, or International.

THE OPENING SONG IS SUNG BY THE CAST TO A BACKGROUND OF HORSES NEIGHING, DOGS HOWLING, HEN AND FIG NOISES.

Beasts of England, Beasts of Ireland,
Beasts of every land and clime,
Hearken to my joyful tidings
of the golden future time...

STIRRING AND SWELLING OF ANIMAL NOISES.

Soon or late the day is coming,
Tyrant man shall be o'erthrown,
and the fruitful fields of England
shall be trod by beasts alone..

FADE OUT SONG.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: Farmer Jones ran Manor Farm badly- just like any other human being. One night

(SOUND OF HENS)

after shutting the hen houses he staggered across the yard drunk

BURPING AND STAGGERING SOUND ON GRAVEL. THEN LOUD SNORING.

and joined Mrs Jones in bed. There was a stirring and fluttering through the farm buildings.

SOUND OF OLD BOAR SNORTING.

Old Major, our stout and elderly prize boar, had called a meeting. He'd been struck by a dream in his old age. Why he couldn't keep it to himself I don't know. For myself, an old donkey like me would have preferred to sleep in my straw. Dreams and meetings only cause trouble. Gives people ideas. I kept mine to myself.

Anyway we all gathered.

SOUND OF HENS.

Hens perching on the window sills.

SOUND OF PIGEONS COOING.

Pigeons up in the rafters.

SOUND OF SHEEP AND COWS.

Sheep and cows behind.

PIGS SOUNDS.

The pigs...

SOUND OF HEAVY HORSES WALKING IN.

and my old friends Boxer and Clover turned up..and finally Mollie.

MOLLIE: Oooh is there a party on? Has anybody got any sugar?

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: Our foolish white mare came mincing daintily in and flouncing her mane and silly red ribbons.

Only our raven Moses gave it all a miss. He continued sleeping behind the back door. That's what we all should have done.

LOUD CHEEPING OF DUCKLINGS.

CLOVER: Oh Oh Oh Haha! Look at that Benjy. The silly ducklings. They've lost their mother. Isn't that funny. Haha!

BENJAMIN: What's funny about it?

CLOVER: Oh I don't know. Haha! It's just funny. Oh Benjy you never laugh.

BENJAMIN: I see nothing to laugh at.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: Eventually

LOUD HOGGING AND SNORTING SOUND.

Old moses started pointing out the obvious.

MOSES: (SPEAKING AS IF TO AN AUDIENCE) Now comrades. Let us face it. Our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery. That is the plain truth. Why then do we continue in this miserable condition? Because nearly the whole produce of our labour is stolen from us by human beings. There comrades is the answer to all our problems. It is summed up in a single word. Man.

LOUD QUACKING FOLLOWED BY SQUEALS OF PIGLETS AND CLUCKING OF HENS.

You cows that I see before me. How many thousands of gallons of milk have you given during this last year?

COWS MOOING.

Every drop of it has gone down the throats of our enemies. And you hens..

SOUND OF HENS STIRRING.

How many eggs have you laid this year, and how many of those eggs ever hatched into chickens?

All gone to market to bring in money for Jones and his men.

You clover!

CLOVER: Me? Oh! Haha!

MAJOR: Where are those four fouls you bore who should have been the support and pleasure of your old age?

CLOVER: Oh I'm not that old! Haha!

MAJOR: Each was sold at a year old. You will never see one of them again.

No animal escapes the cruel knife in the end.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: I have to admit he was getting rather morbid.

MAJOR: You. You porkers. Every one of you will scream your lives out at the block within a year.

LOUD PIG SQUEALING.

To that horror we all must come.
You boxer!

BOXER: Me? (EMBARRASSED) Oh yes.

MAJOR: The very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power Jones will sell you to the Knacker who will cut your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds!

LOUD CRESCENDO OF ANIMAL SHOCK AND REACTION.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: I thought he was going a little too far. Nothing hurts more than the truth. That's why I never say much.

LOUD QUACKING FOLLOWED BY SQUEALS OF PIGLETS AND CLUCKING OF HENS.

You cows that I see before me. How many thousands of gallons of milk have you given during this last year?

COWS MOODING.

Every drop of it has gone down the throats of our enemies. And you hens..

SOUND OF HENS STIRRING.

How many eggs have you laid this year, and how many of those eggs ever hatched into chickens?

All gone to market to bring in money for Jones and his men.

You clover!

CLOVER: Me? Oh! Haha!

MAJOR: Where are those four fouls you bore who should have been the support and pleasure of your old age?

CLOVER: Oh I'm not that old! Haha!

MAJOR: Each was sold at a year old. You will never see one of them again.

No animal escapes the cruel knife in the end.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: I have to admit he was getting rather morbid.

MAJOR: You. You porkers. Every one of you will scream your lives out at the block within a year.

LOUD PIG SQUEALING.

To that horror we all must come.
You boxer!

BOXER: Me? (EMBARRASSED) Oh yes.

MAJOR: The very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power Jones will sell you to the Knacker who will cut your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds!

LOUD CRESCENDO OF ANIMAL SHOCK AND REACTION.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: I thought he was going a little too far. Nothing hurts more than the truth. That's why I never say much.

MAJOR: Is it not crystal clear, then, comrades. That all the evils of this life of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings! What then must we do? Why-work night and day, body and soul for the over-throw of the human race.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: Oh dear he was beginning to play with fire.

MAJOR: That is the message to you comrades. Rebellion! It might be in a week, or in a hundred years. Pass on this message of mine to those who come after you so that future generations shall carry on the struggle until it is victorious!

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: The rest of his speech was loaded with more subversive slogans.

MAJOR: All men are enemies. All animals are comrades.

LOUD CRESCENDO OF ANIMAL APPLAUSE AND NOISES.

MAJOR: Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings is a friend.

LOUD CRESCENDO OF ANIMAL APPLAUSE.

No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, touch money..

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: Animal Utopia! It didn't sound all that different from the way we were.

MAJOR: No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal!

LOUD ANIMAL APPLAUSE.

BENJAMIN: Then he began singing an old childhood song.

FADE UP 'BEASTS OF ENGLAND.'

BENJAMIN: And we began joining in. Well, all except me. But they wouldn't do with just one rendition. They had to go on and on. Five times in all and they would have sung all night but for drunk Jones.

JONES: EH? BURPING AND STAGGERING WALK.

BENJAMIN: Who thought there was a fox in the yard..

LOUD BLAST.

BENJAMIN: And let off a shotgun blast and there was quiet once again; but only for a short while.

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: Three nights after the revolution speech old Major died. Well I wasn't surprised. All that rebellion nonsense can't have done his health any good. I hoped they'd forget it all, but the pigs were too clever for their own good. The real trouble makers were Napoleon...

LOUD GRUNTING NOISE

The only Berkshire boar on the farm; always getting his own way and Snowball; a real dreamer and..

LOUD SQUEALING SOUND

finally an obnoxious fat porker called Squealer. Kept on skipping from side to side and whisking his tail. Really got on my nerves. Had a big mouth too.

SQUEALER: Comrades. We are gathered today to appreciate the great principles of animalism created by our much lamented prize boar Major.

SNOWBALL: Augmented and developed by other comrade pigs

SQUEALER: Thankyou Snowball..

NAPOLEAN: (LOUD RUDE GRUNTING) Specially comrade Napoleon!

SQUEALER: Of course! (LOUD THUMPING OF PIG TROTTERS FROM SIDE TO SIDE) Of course! Particularly Comrade Napoleon. Well the time has come for rebellion!

HENS: What for? What for? Master Jones always feeds us. If he goes we'll starve. We'll starve. Yes we will! Yes we will! Yes we will!

SQUEALER: (SQUEALING WITH TROTTERS SKIPPING FROM SIDE TO SIDE.) Comrades. Comrades. After we've over-thrown the imperialist Mr Jones we shall work together in collectivist harmony and none of us will starve!

HENS: Yes we will! Yes we will! Yes we will!

LOUD AGGRESSIVE SNORTING AND GRUNTING.

BENJAMIN: At this point Napoleon shifted his heavy hulk onto one of the hen's feet and they changed their tune.

HENS: No we won't! No we won't! No we won't!

LOUD EFFEMINATE NEIGHING FROM MOLLIE.

MOLLIE: Excuse me for asking, but will there still be sugar after the rebellion?

SQUEALER: (LOUD SQUEALING) Comrade Snowball will answer Mollie's question.

SNOWBALL: We have no means of making sugar on this farm. Besides you do not need sugar. You will have all the oats and hay you want.

MOLLIE: (NEIGHING) Ohhh! And shall I still be allowed to wear ribbons in my mane?

SNOWBALL: Comrade. Those ribbons that you are so (SARCASTIC) devoted to..

LOUD ANIMAL CACKLING.

are the badge of slavery. Can you not understand that Liberty is worth more than ribbons?

MOLLIE: Ummmmm! (NOT SOUNDING VERY CONVINCED.)

BENJAMIN IN NARRATION: Moses the tame raven was getting on the pig's trotters with another load of nonsense...

MOSES: (INTERSPERSED WITH RAVEN NOISES- CROW LIKE SOUNDS)
We're all going to sugar candy mountain. (CROW-LIKE SOUND)
We're all going to sugar candy mountain! (CROW-LIKE SOUND)
Where it's Sunday 7 days a week! (CROW-LIKE SOUND)
Clover in season all the year round. (CROW-LIKE SOUND)
Lump sugar and linseed cake growing on hedges. (CROW-LIKE SOUND)
Lump sugar and linseed cake growing on hedges. (CROW-LIKE SOUND)

LOUD RAPTUROUS SOUND OF CONTENTMENT FROM MOLLIE.

MOLLIE: How nice!

BENJAMIN: I reckon it would have all died down but that old drunk Jones let things go. The fields were full of weeds; animals were going hungry.

On hay day Jones went on the booze. His lazy men went shooting rabbits instead of feeding the likes of us. What a load of idiots!

SOUND OF STAGGERING LEGS ON GRAVEL AND HUMAN BURPING.

Jones staggered back and went to sleep on the sofa. Another night of hunger!

ANGRY COW SOUNDS.

And it was the cows who lost their cool.

SMASHING WOOD SOUND.

They smashed down the storshed door and everyone went on a binge

GLUTTONOUS SOUND OF ANIMALS EATING.

And when the drunken Jones woke up...

SOUND OF LASHING WHIPS.

JONES: Oooi! Get out! What do you thing you're doing.

BENJAMIN: He and his men got what was coming to them.

KICKING AND BUTTING. SOUND OF BEING BEATEN UP. LOUD AGGRESSIVE UPROAR FROM ANIMALS. DOGS GROWLING, BARKING. COWS MOOING AND SQUEALING FIGS.

BENJAMIN: I've never seen five grown men run so fast.

THUNDERING FEET.

Down the path and out of the gate. Mrs Jones stuffed her make-up and clothes into a carpet bag and Moses

LOUD FLAPPING OF WINGS AND CROAKING LOUDLY.

flapped after her.

MRS JONES: Get off! Get off you horrible bird!

STAMPEDE OF ANIMAL FEET.

BENJAMIN: All the animals galloped around the boundaries. Back to the farm buildings. I tell you. If there'd been a human being left anywhere he would have been reduced to bonemeal.

CRACKLING FIRE SOUND.

They started making silly gestures. Reins, halters, blinkers, degrading nosebags, whips.. all of them into the bonfire.

DEEP SPLASHING SOUND DOWN A WELL.

And the castration knives all down the well.

MOLLIE: Oh oh! What are you doing with those? Don't! Oh no Snowball don't!

WHOOSHING SOUND OF FIRE.

SNOWBALL: Ribbons are clothes. A mark of a human being. All animals should go naked.

MOLLIE: Ooooh! Really!

BENJAMIN: And even my old mate Boxer threw the small straw hat he wore to keep the flies out of his ears into the flames.

BEGIN TO FADE UP THE SINGING OF BEASTS OF ENGLAND.

They all began running round and round the farm again, leaping into the air and singing that infernal song and the farm was theirs.... for the time being.

FADE UP BEASTS OF ENGLAND.

END