

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Figure Out What You Care About...

On April 22, HSUS President John A. Hoyt delivered the following message on the steps of the U.S. Capitol before 350,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C., for Earth Day 1990.

Planet Earth is hurting, and it is we, the people, who are causing her pain.

By our voracious consumption we are fast depleting those resources that for centuries have been the wellspring of our existence.

Planet Earth is bleeding, and it is we, the people, who are inflicting her wounds.

By our rapacious life-styles we are ravaging her beauty and destroying her integrity, which have sustained and inspired us for generations past.

Planet Earth is dying, and it is we, the people, who are hastening her demise.

By our unwillingness to hear her cries or heed her pleas, we are portending a disaster of cataclysmic proportions upon the pages of time.

But it need not be so, for the gift of life is ours to return if we want and will it to be so. Someone recently coined a phrase which should, I believe, become the watchword of this Earth Day and every day. It goes something like this:

Figure out what you care about,

And live a life that shows it.

And if we do, it is we, the people, who can return to Planet Earth the vitality and beauty that has marked her uniqueness among all the planets of the heavens.

We can, if we care, consume with conscience.

We can, if we dare, foster regeneration.

We can, if we share, extend to future generations the gift of life that has been ours to enjoy.

And, so, I urge you,

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And live a life that shows it.

But it is not just ourselves who are impacted by our deeds and actions. For good or ill, we speak and act for all creation

—the lilies of the fields,

—the birds of the air,

—the creatures of the forests,

—the mammals of the seas.

These are our brothers, our coinhabitants, and how we act and live affects their fate also.

Too easily have we destroyed other life for our own avarice and adornment. Too carelessly have we plundered Earth's other creatures as if they had neither purpose nor feelings beyond our own designs for them. Too recklessly have we brought to the point of extinction creatures as valuable and unique as ourselves.

And yet, it is we, the people, who are the voice of the voiceless, the preservers of the plundered, the redeemers of the ravaged. It is imperative, therefore, that you—

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Yet it is not enough that we care, or even that we act, to alter how we think and live. We must also become empowered to develop a common agenda and a concerted action—to insist that those who deliberate our fate and that of the Earth itself, whether in the halls of government or the seclusion of board rooms, do so in response to our aspirations and demands. It is not enough that we have elected a few to govern the many; we must also empower the many to direct the few.

Across the face of eastern Europe, we are witnessing the power of the people as never before in all history.

Such a power, I contend, need also be ours. It can, it must, and it will, if with determination and resolve we

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Is Planet Earth doomed? Not at all! Is despair tomorrow's dawning? Not on your life! For I am confident that we, the people, do care; that we, the people, are committed to take whatever action is necessary to make Earth Day Every Day—today, tomorrow, and in the time of our lives.

And so, let us pledge here and now, once and for all, to

Figure out what we care about,

And live a life that shows it.

