A New Moral Imperative

by Oliver M. Evans

Oliver M. Evans, 69, a founder and former president of The Humane Society of the United States, died on December 16. Mr. Evans, a native of Montclair, N.J., was a director or officer of HSUS throughout its 21-year history. He was serving in that capacity at the time of his death.

In recognition of his outstanding leadership to the humane movement and his personal dedication to animal welfare, The HSUS headquarters building was dedicated to his memory on October 10.

The humane movement is in full support of the position taken by these three eminent persons. Their facts are beyond question and their logic incontestable. There is a daily outpouring in the media of concern and alarm over man’s survival. But the humane movement holds there is another even more important dimension to this acute problem than their appeal for an environment in which survival is possible.

Will the preservation of a world environment that can support billions of humans abate the greed, the rampant hatred, or the horrors of modern war that afflict mankind? Will the mere guarantee of the environmental conditions of survival contribute to the formation of mature, considerate people rather than of warped personalities driven by uncontrollable and irrational emotions? Obviously not. In fact, these emotional problems are most acute in advanced industrialized countries where affluence and technological superiority; which world conditions cry out. There must be a turning away from the primary in our society of hard competitive striving for materialistic affluence and technological superiority; technology must be controlled to serve compassionate, benevolent purposes.

Although governments of men of good will in western societies can bring a reasonable share of the goods of this world to every one of its members, to bring peace and security and to add quality to life, benevolence must play a major role. Its value must be recognized and its precepts widely practiced.

In an important part of our humane programs, grants and scholarships are given to scholars to enable them to undertake studies in science, philosophy and theology designed to win acceptance and support of our credo among intellectuals.

Concurrently, curriculum materials for primary and secondary schools are being developed by professional experts. In the early grades these materials are designed to instill in school children attitudes of active benevolence to all creatures and, in the later grades, to offer reasoned and logical proof that the principle of active benevolence is morally right and necessary for the survival of western society’s significant values. The use of these materials is expanding rapidly.

This moral imperative, this credo, embraces and supports all the traditional goals of the organized humane movement. In fact, it places animal welfare work in its proper perspective as part of a tremendously important basic crusade for a better world instead of being a minor activity of a few sentimentalists. Active benevolence means a positive contribution to one’s fellow men and fellow animals alike.

The humane movement provides a philosophical answer and positive programs ...