The Best—and Worst—of Times
We must “live softly” if we are to have a future

Dicken’s hundred-year-old observation about the best of times and the worst of times is especially descriptive of this moment in history. Careful thinkers and casual thinkers know these are perilous days and watershed times. Living softly and with sensitivity is of reasons why these are perilous days. Newspapers, television, and radio confront us with the issues of global warming, habitat destruction, and natural-resource depletion, as well as the burgeoning problems of pollution. Even the planet’s atmospheric envelope is threatened by the dissipation of the ozone layer. These are the worst of times in so many ways—and we know it.

These are also the best of times. Maybe it takes a supreme optimist to have the audacity to put such an optimism in print, but I am totally convinced that great Earth-saving strides can be made by those who are energized by the realization that adversity can lead to possibility in life. Such optimism was especially manifested at the Earth Summit in Brazil (see page 12). The Earth Summit brought together more creative energy to deal with our global crisis than anyone could have hoped for. Better yet, the government institutions and leaders who have the opportunity to work towards a mandate for action. It is inspiring to note that no other event in history has mobilized power for change like the Earth Summit in Rio, and I am especially pleased that we had the opportunity to press our animal-protection agenda in such a productive environment.

There are other reasons why these are particularly good times to facilitate our efforts in animal protection. Reactionary thinking and ignorance notwithstanding, there is a general awareness that life has continuances: That which is good for one form of life enhances all. Protecting animals is enabling. Not doing so is demeaning not only to oneself but also to the interdependence of Creation, upon which survival depends. This is a particularly good time to spread our message regarding the imperative of creating a humane society. All life depends on us.

Finally, we may be on the brink of ending the tragic waste of life and the unlimited suffering of millions of companion animals caused by the pet-overpopulation crisis. Through the tireless efforts of thousands of animal-lovers around the country, some communities are beginning to report a decline in the number of animals who do not leave shelters alive. There are many reasons for this trend. The HSUS, with the help of many local leaders, is working to document the phenomenon in order to provide a road map to success for all to follow. For those charged with the responsibility of euthanasia in shelters, and for all who have worked relentlessly on this issue, let’s honor these are the best of times.

Many of you will be reading this issue of the HSUS News at the HSUS conference in Boulder, Colorado, October 28 through October 31. Attending the conference is a great way to learn about the work of the society and be energized by people who share common goals and visions. Another way to keep up to date with the programs you enable through your dedication and contribution is by reading this publication. We value you, your interest, and your comments.