

In a July story on the appointment of an HSUS staffer to run Louisville's animal services program, a reporter with the city's daily newspaper described our organization as "controversial," amplifying the views of some agribusiness and commercial dog breeding officials who'd pinned that label on our lapel.

It irritates me to have a credible news outlet invoke that term in a piece about the appointment of a capable HSUS staffer to lead the effort to drop euthanasia rates in the city. As applied in this case, it was a false note, since our adoption and spay/neuter work is as mainstream as it gets.

But on another level, there's nothing wrong with The HSUS being deemed controversial among individuals involved in factory farming, trophy hunting, large-scale commercial dog breeding, sealing and whaling, and many other sectors that cause harm to animals. Being controversial is precisely the point. In Latin, "controversy" means "to turn things around," and that's our goal.

But controversy is the starting point, and not the endgame. We want to move toward broad acceptance of our ideas. And there's no better example than the recent agreement between The HSUS and the United Egg Producers to embark on a plan to provide more space for egg-laying hens, add nesting areas and other enrichments to their housing so they can behave like birds, and establish a national labeling program so consumers can make informed choices. Together, we're committed to passing federal legislation to achieve these objectives.

This precedent-setting agreement is the first to nudge an entire sector of animal agriculture to broad reform and support for federal legislation. Once very "controversial" among large-scale egg producers, The HSUS is beginning to gain cooperation and acceptance of some of our core beliefs.

In this way, today's "controversies" quite often become tomorrow's social norms. Dogfighting and cockfighting—not to mention seal killing, whaling, and other abuses—were also once viewed as acceptable. Now they're anything but that.

The history of our nation has been characterized by struggle over a host of social concerns. It was reformers who led the way in abolishing slavery, outlawing child labor, providing for women's suffrage, and ending segregation. In the early stages of these movements, they were labeled as cranks or even heretics. Over time, though, their ideas triumphed and they became heroes, embodying the noblest principles of justice, courage, and vision.

As I write in my book, *The Bond: Our Kinship with Animals, Our Call to Defend Them*, we cannot suspend our broader social values of decency and mercy in our conduct toward animals. We must treat our power as a call to responsibility. We must logically apply our anti-cruelty principles in a world where animal abuse is still widespread.

A lot of our work isn't the least bit controversial—our raids on squalid puppy mills, our veterinary programs that bring relief to dogs and cats on impoverished Indian reservations, or our lifesaving care centers that treat and rehabilitate horses and wild animals by the thousands.

But The HSUS does so much more. In addition to confronting cruelty and demanding that people act with conscience in all of their dealings with animals, we are driving reform and showing a new way forward. It's what we've done with the egg industry, and it's what we're doing with the seal hunters. We must help people find new and better ways of conducting themselves.

But we can't do it alone. Every movement needs the backing of people of conscience. And in you, and the millions of others who support The HSUS, we have the key ingredient in driving change. Every one of you is critical if our ideas are to prevail.

As Robert Chenoweth, then chairman of the board, said at The HSUS's first annual meeting in 1955, the humane movement "needed a national society that would stand, absolutely, on humane moral principles—an organization that would unequivocally, vigorously, adamantly oppose any and every kind of cruelty, no matter by whom committed and without concern for who might be offended or alienated."

Mr. Chenoweth's vision was right in 1955, and it's still right more than a half century later.



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