SPEAKING ON THE PLANET'S BEHALF

Jan A. Hartke, HSUS vice president for the environment, was a featured speaker at the National Conference of Lieutenant Governors, held in Washington, D.C., on April 11. In his address, Mr. Hartke considered the environmental impact of President George Bush's new energy strategy. Mr. Hartke then called for a sustainable energy policy that would focus on renewable, efficient forms of energy, such as hydrogen, wind, and solar power.

"We need to set a goal, as we did to get to the moon, but this time we need to develop an energy strategy that will save the planet and the diversity of animal and plant life from catastrophe," Mr. Hartke said.

"The so-called greenhouse effect could greatly accelerate the rate of extinction, which is already at an unprecedented level. There is no question about the need to develop non-polluting energy sources and clean fuels; it is high time for leadership."

The lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania, Mark Singel, who has taken a central role in making his state an innovator in the kinds of energy technologies supported by environmentalists, commended The HSUS for its contribution to the national debate on a vital issue.

GROUNDING WILD BIRDS ABROAD

Birds that are captured from the wild and transported to the United States for sale as pets suffer tremendously during the process. In 1989, 14 percent of the birds imported died either during transport or shortly after arrival. Over the past
The HSUS has asked KLM to stop shipping all wild birds.

six months The HSUS and its activist members wrote to airlines around the world and asked that they stop shipping wild-caught birds. We were victorious in November, when Lufthansa Airlines, then the largest shipper of wild-caught birds to the United States, agreed to honor our request. In announcing the company’s decision at a Brussels press conference, Graf Henckel von Donnersmarck, general manager of Lufthansa, said, “We have a moral obligation to avoid this immense animal suffering caused by the transport of exotic birds.”

Next we turned to KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, currently the largest shipper of wild-caught birds to the United States, and asked it to discontinue the practice. After receiving hundreds of letters from concerned HSUS members and others, KLM invited representatives of The HSUS and European organizations that protect birds (including the Environmental Investigation Agency, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to a meeting at its headquarters in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. That representatives of several European governments joined us in attending the meeting reflects the growing international concern about the trade in wild-caught birds and the cruelty inflicted on such birds during transport.

At the meeting, HSUS representatives provided extensive information on wild birds’ in-transit mortality and its causes. We again asked KLM to stop shipping wild birds, and, to our disappointment, the company rejected our request. However, KLM agreed to work with The HSUS and other organizations to generate a list of bird species that have high rates of mortality during transport and said that it would stop shipping birds of those species. That falls far short of the precedent set by Lufthansa Airlines, which put animal welfare before profits and stopped shipping all wild birds.

Please help The HSUS apply pressure to KLM. You can do so by writing to Mr. Pieter Bouw, President, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, PO Box 7700, 1117 ZL Schiphol Airport, The Netherlands. Insist that KLM has a moral obligation to stop shipping wild-caught birds. Contact The HSUS for the names and addresses of other airlines that ship wild-caught birds or more information on the issue, including a description of our current efforts to win the passage of a federal law that would end the importation of such birds for the pet trade.