

A Heritage For The Future

Address to the 1979 Annual Conference

John A. Hoyt

Each year on the occasion of this annual conference, it is my responsibility and privilege to report to you on the programs, activities, and growth of The Humane Society of the United States. Some of you will recall that my first such report was made in Warren, Ohio, nine years ago. Newly inaugurated into the arena of animal welfare work only a few months preceding that occasion, I was limited in my perspective of both the accomplishments and potential of The HSUS. Yet it was for me a thrilling experience to have been afforded the opportunity to be associated with a mission and cause I regard to be paramount in our society today.

You were then for me a new family, a new home, a new community of people whose hopes and visions I had previously shared only from a distance. Reared and immersed in the Christian tradition and having served as a clergyman in that tradition for fifteen years, I had little acquaintance with the dynamics and spirit of the animal welfare movement and almost no knowledge of The HSUS. Yet a man who knew both traditions and had successfully embraced both in his commitment to help create a society of ethical and moral integrity, dared to enlist my participation and commitment to this cause called animal welfare. In the span of one evening in the living room of his New York home, Coleman Burke persuaded me that there was no greater opportunity for meaningful and purposeful service than in the company of those who had chosen to work through the vehicle of The HSUS for the welfare of those animals we acknowledge as fellow creatures.

The nine years that have spanned the 1970 Conference and this, our 25th Anniversary Conference, have left me with no doubts that whatever the forces or influences that brought us together, it was a happening of great significance in my life. For it is with a great sense of pride that I stand before you today and count myself among those who have participated in the growth and development of this great organization. Thank you, Mr. Burke, for your faith and vision that resulted in my becoming associated with The HSUS. And thank you, dear members and friends, for your dedicated support and untiring devotion which have made The Humane Society of the United States the most effectual force within our country today for the protection of animals from abuse and suffering.

A copy of the remarks I shall make today are printed in the booklet which shall be given to you following this session. Also printed in that booklet is a brief history of the growth and achievements of The HSUS since its founding in 1954, compiled and written by Patrick Parkes and Jacques Sichel.

In that historical overview, you will read of the more significant programs and activities that have marked our growth and development. You will also be reminded of some of the people whose personal convictions resulted in the creation of this organization and whose untiring dedication influenced and molded its continued growth and development through the years.

Consequently, I shall not on this occasion recount those events in detail but, rather, seek to set in perspective the ways in which those programs and activities affect and influence the challenge and opportunity that is yet ours today.

The theme chosen for this 25th Annual Conference, *Humane-ness In Action: A Heritage For The Future*, seeks to unite our present work and future challenge with a heritage that took seriously the need for an active participation on the part of individual humanitarians. Indeed, if I were to identify the one most important reason for the vitality of The HSUS today, it would without a doubt be the principle that those who perceived the need for animal welfare reform did not perceive it as hope for the future, but, rather, as a here and now reality that claimed their personal initiative and involvement. And from that involvement came the convictions and insights that have become our inheritance today.

Rollo May, in his book *Courage To Create*, has written that, "The deeper aspects of awareness are activated to the extent that one is committed to the encounter." It is little wonder that those persons not involved in the animal welfare movement wonder at the intensity of feeling and action of those who are. It is little wonder that those who question the validity or priority of this endeavor in light of the human suffering of the world fail to perceive in this activity a dimension of profound significance for human as well as animal welfare. It is little wonder that those who observe with disdain the affection and compassion for animals we manifest should themselves remain so callous and indifferent. For unless one becomes personally involved, that is to say "committed to the encounter", he shall never know the deeper aspects of awareness such commitment creates and sustains.

We are in great debt to Fred Myers and those other founders who insisted on structuring The HSUS an organization of individuals rather than an association of organizations. We are also in their debt for effecting a process of government whereby the directors of The HSUS are chosen by the members from among their own number without personal or professional ties that would compromise their critical judgments affecting the programs and pursuits of The HSUS. Consequently, the policies and resulting programs of this Society over the years have been free from the pressures of self-interest or institutional compromises. But it is not finally the structure or government of an organization that creates its vitality. Rather, it is the dedication and commitment of those individuals who constitute its membership.

It would in the context of this address be utterly impossible to recall the names of those who in very special ways have left their mark on our present and future activities. Instead, let me tell you something of the nature and quality of their witness.

First and foremost, they were people who possessed a genuine love and concern for animals. Most owned pets or other animals, but the breadth of their concern went far beyond these personal identifications. Either they were born with or evolved a sensitivity toward animals that would not permit them to close their eyes to the suffering and abuse they observed. The animal suffering became their own in such a way they were moved to a response of protest and action.

Secondly, they were people who weren't afraid of criticism or censure. Often regarded a bit sentimental in some of their attitudes, they nonetheless confronted and accepted criticism and ridicule that would have deterred many others. They were willing to stand up and be counted, to live their convictions in public as well as private, and, when necessary, to fight for that which they believed. Though far from popular in many circles, they refused to be dissuaded in the rightness of their cause. The unpopularity of their attitudes and actions often resulted in their being dubbed "little old ladies in tennis shoes," an identification they wore with pride.

They were also people willing to make personal sacrifice for the realization of their goals. In some cases, denying themselves basic necessities of life, they would put the welfare of an animal above their own. But whether rich or poor, they gave generously of what they had to further a cause that was paramount in their lives.

In most cases, they were people who recognized the importance of *concerted* action. Whether in association with others in their own communities or as members of a state or national animal welfare organization such as The HSUS, they extended their personal dedication and witness into far reaching circles. Through personal action and financial support, they caused to come into being organized programs and efforts to complement and expand their more personal efforts.

Historically, the majority of these persons have been women. Endowed with a sensitivity and capacity for empathy which the male gender sometimes lacks or is reluctant to give expression, it has been the women of the world who have constituted the greater witness in promoting animal welfare protection.

Most were well-informed, not always from an intellectual perspective, but from an experiential identification that provided both insight and understanding. And though their responses were sometimes more emotional than rational, they knew well the reforms that were needed.

It is of this fiber, then, that The HSUS is made, a fiber that has served us well these past twenty-five years and one which must never be lost, no matter how old we become. For except we retain this same character of sensitivity, commitment, and sacrifice, we shall have lost our fundamental ingredient for effective animal welfare reform.

Indeed, I am convinced that the future shall require even greater personal involvement and action. For the forces that perpetrate cruelty in the name of science, technology, recreation, fashion, and luxury are those same forces which appeal to our interest on many other levels. The foods we eat, the clothes we wear, the recreation and entertainment we embrace, the scientific and technological advances we covet and enjoy — all these would compromise our commitment to protect animals from cruelty and suffering in subtle and hidden ways.

Personal choices and decisions shall mark the degree of our commitment to humane values each day of our lives. And though it may sometimes seem that our independent actions make little difference, it is these personal actions in concert with those of others that shall create and sustain the effectiveness of our witness.

As an organization, The HSUS has over the past twenty-five years grown in both numbers and influences. Increasingly cognizant of the strength and sophistication of those forces and

institutions we are obliged to confront, it has become quite clear that we must be equally strong and sophisticated. Thus, we have recruited and hired over the past several years staff who are professionally trained and highly skilled in their respective disciplines. We have, likewise, broadened the scope and breadth of our programming to such a degree that there is now no major area of animal cruelty and abuse we are not prepared to address. Though sometimes lacking staff time and finances to respond to every issue to the fullest extent, there are nonetheless few areas of concern affecting the protection of animals ignored by The HSUS. Indeed, when the entire range of animal welfare concerns are evaluated as a whole, The HSUS stands today as that organization most broadly influencing animal welfare throughout the country.

Fundamental to the leadership role has been a major emphasis on the ethical and moral character of our work and program. With careful attention to proper techniques and procedures, we have insisted that our first and foremost task is the enunciation of the rights of animals to be free from cruelty and abuse and the responsibility of a civilized society to insure those rights. Through numerous speeches, television and radio appearances, articles and books, various staff and board members have promoted this ethic far and wide. How fortunate to be blessed with such persons as an Amy Freeman Lee, a Roger Caras, and a Michael Fox to pronounce these ethical values clear and wide. And alongside these are several regional directors and various department heads who day-in and day-out bear witness to this same dimension of our work and program.

We have also established within The HSUS a commitment to scholarship and objective reasoning. Through the Institute for the Study of Animal Problems, we have assembled a small but effective group of scholars who are addressing a variety of animal welfare problems with a depth of inquiry and response unique to the animal welfare movement in this country. The same kind of discipline also governs various other programs of The HSUS. We have wisely recognized that except we challenge our adversaries with concrete facts and documented evidence, we shall surely minimize the validity and effectiveness of our efforts.

We have also refined and upgraded our educational programs. Through our National Association for the Advancement of Humane Education, we are providing the kind of professional training of teachers and the development of materials that will significantly enhance the promotion of humane education throughout our schools and youth organizations. Coupled with

this emphasis is our newly designed and greatly expanded *KIND* magazine for children, a copy of which you received in your Conference packet. It is our hope that this excellent magazine will vastly grow in popularity and readership in the years ahead.

The range of cruelty investigations and accompanying reforms is the most inclusive and effective of any similar organization. Through the work of a team of investigators based in Washington and throughout our regional offices, The HSUS daily investigates cruel and unwarranted abuses in such areas as wild horse and burro roundups, dogfighting, cockfighting, coursing, transportation and slaughter of animals, horse racing, zoos, rodeos, circuses, films and television productions, puppy mills, laboratory uses of animals, seal clubbing, and many, many more. While obviously not being able to cover every incident of cruelty and abuse, even some of major proportions, The HSUS provides the greatest breadth and number of investigative activities available today.

We, likewise, provide the most extensive assistance available to local animal welfare organizations throughout the country. Through our seven regional offices, The HSUS Accreditation Program, regional leadership workshops, NAAHE education workshops and teacher training seminars, our newly instituted Animal Control Academy in cooperation with the University of Alabama, and *Shelter Sense*, a publication for shelter personnel and management, The HSUS provides a wide variety of services for the benefit of local animal welfare organizations at little or no cost to those societies. It is an obligation we have increasingly assumed over the years and one we shall continue to expand in the years ahead.

Within the next few months, you will begin to notice various changes in HSUS publications and materials as well as an increased exposure of our work and programs through various media outlets. Utilizing the past several months the services of Earle Palmer Brown and Associates, The HSUS has improved and expanded our internal publications and especially our public exposure. Six newly developed television spot announcements will be aired throughout the country during the next several months. Radio spots, print ads, and feature articles will further expand our outreach to the public.

We are in the process of developing one of the finest animal reference libraries in the world. Under the direction of a professional librarian, we are collecting a wide variety of animal-oriented books, periodicals, and literature. Additionally, in con-

junction with the Institute for the Study of Animal Problems, the most extensive collection of materials on animal welfare science is being assimilated, developed, and cataloged.

We have, likewise, improved our internal capacity to provide better membership development and control, in-house typesetting and printing and other important functional services.

Through our legislative and legal department, we are constantly monitoring, drafting, and effecting the enactment of legislation, both state and federal, while at the same time, challenging through oversight hearings and legal action government policy affecting animals. There is, perhaps, no single area of work more important to animal welfare reform than this vital area. Working both independently and in association with various animal welfare and environmental groups, and on occasion with governmental agencies, The HSUS is making a vital contribution toward the protecting of animals from cruelty and abuse at both the legislative and administrative levels of government.

Nor are our efforts limited to this country. Through the International Whaling Commission, the Conference on the Law of the Sea, the World Federation for the Protection of Animals, and the International Society for the Protection of Animals, The HSUS is contributing worldwide to the protection of animals.

Beginning January, 1980, the Institute for the Study of Animal Problems will launch the *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems*, a scholarly journal addressing animal welfare science in many important areas. Negotiations are currently being conducted which would unite the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in England, the International Society for the Protection of Animals, The HSUS, and the Institute in this significant endeavor.

It is clear that the kind of leadership and programming cited above could not happen without the generous financial support of our members and constituents as well as a continued growth in our membership. Through the intensive and ever expanding efforts of our membership development office, we have realized over the past several years a dramatic growth in membership and financial support. Yet, except for our vital ongoing programs and activities which seek constantly to eradicate cruelty and suffering to animals, our fund raising efforts would surely fail.

There are several other areas of our work I have failed to mention in this review of program and activities. However, I

wish to take the time remaining to look with you for a moment into the future. Having spoken of the dedication of those who gave birth to The HSUS and their legacy to us, and having reviewed several important activities and programs of the present, what does the future hold for those of us involved in animal welfare concerns?

I make no pretense at being either prophet or seer. Yet there are a few discernible signs which I think merit consideration.

It is my conviction that over the next several years an increasing number of people will steadily join the ranks of those committed to the protection of animals. Through education, public exposure, and individual awareness of animal cruelties, personal attitudes toward animals will begin to shape more clearly definable cultural and social attitudes that will favor animal welfare reform in certain areas. Activities such as hunting, trapping, rodeos, coursing, dog and cock fighting, seal clubbing, whaling and similar activities will become increasingly repugnant to a greater number of people.

Educational institutions will slowly reflect this trend, but will not be especially receptive to formal values clarification teaching embracing animal welfare concerns. At the same time, however, changing cultural attitudes will be acknowledged and communicated.

Religious institutions will continue to ignore animal welfare issues and, as the character of these institutions becomes more conservative, animal welfare organizations will become a point of reference for those for whom the broader dimensions of ethical and moral concerns remain important.

"Animal rights" discussions and debates will embrace a wider spectrum of disciplines and professions. Such debates will influence legislative action positively in the immediate future, but will be met with increasing hostility in years to come.

As indicated previously, the more obvious and insidious cruelties perpetrated on animals will become repugnant to an increasing number of people. This, however, will result in vigorous and well-financed efforts on the part of various groups to preserve their "rights" to abuse animals through sport, recreation, and economic gain. The battle lines between the pros and cons will be much better defined and more intensely drawn.

Similar lines will be drawn between pet owners and non-owners, especially in metropolitan areas. The ownership of pets

will become more restrictive, prohibited altogether in some areas. Animal control programs will be viewed a necessary evil rather than a positive community service benefiting animals and people alike.

Animal cruelties will become more subtle and refined. Such areas as intensive rearing of food animals, laboratory and pharmaceutical uses, and animal management and predator control programs will head the list of animal abuses.

Personal attitudes and actions toward animals will be more definitive and precise. Such practices as vegetarianism, the refusal to wear clothing items such as furs and, perhaps, even leather products, and the boycotting of various practices involving the exploitation of animals will find new converts and adherents. A commitment to the protection of animals from cruelty and abuse will be increasingly an intensely personal decision.

During the next several years, the future for organizations such as The HSUS appears to be hopeful. The degree to which we are able to capitalize on this positive climate is dependent on our continued effectiveness, integrity and faithfulness to animal welfare concerns. For people will make discriminating choices between similar groups though they share common goals and values.

What the long-range future holds, I shall not presume to imagine. But of one thing I am sure. The road ahead will not be easy. The values we hold will be constantly under attack from many quarters. And the ultimate success of our effort shall depend on the degree and genuineness of our commitment. Nothing shall be given; it must surely be won. It is a battle that will require persistent and tenacious devotion to those values we cherish.

So wherein lies the hope that we can succeed? It lies, I think, among those persons who have chosen to accept the proposition that all life has intrinsic value and is, therefore, deserving of those same considerations we generally reserve for mankind. It lies with those who, at least in their better moments, are able to view themselves and humans in general as only one part of a very complex and marvelous world, rather than its god. It lies with those who, though they have by no means settled the issue of any creature's value to the whole of creation, at least acknowledge that man has no right, either divine or otherwise, to exploit creation for his own benefit.

It lies with those whose vision for a better world is not merely restricted to a better world for themselves, but rather for the sake of the world itself. It lies with those who understand that being truly human means being truly humane, and that in the wanton and needless destruction of anything, man overtly acts to destroy himself, not simply as another creature, but as a human being.

It lies with those whose understanding of animal welfare does not begin or end with their own pet, nor in the rescuing or preserving of any one particular creature or species, but who embrace the whole of animal creation as deserving of an advocate for their ultimate well being and care. It lies with those who, though tender in spirit, realize that such a grave issue will not be settled on the basis of sentimentality, but on the basis of a rationality which comprehends that man, though he may be creation's only reasoning creature, is not thereby its only purposeful creature.

It lies with those who understand that no crusade for right and justice comes easily, but requires a commitment to do battle in the political and social arenas of life where those decisions that sustain or destroy life are finally resolved.

I submit, finally, that the greatest task facing the humane movement today is the task of assisting man in the recovery of his own humanity. For unless he is able to affirm himself as one with the world he is intent upon destroying, it will matter little that we have acted to protect a few million animals.

We are the children of creation. To us has been passed the awesome responsibility of preserving its inherent value and worth. How we perform this task will determine for all time to come the value and sacredness of this trust.

If we profane it, as so often we have done, we and all else shall become victims of death. But if we shall dare to live for the sake of all that shares with us this wondrous creation, not only shall we know the fullness of life in our own experience, but shall forever establish life as the victor over death.