

The Humane Society Institute for Science and Policy
Animal Studies Repository

1969

Our Challenge and Our Opportunity

Coleman Burke

The Humane Society of the United States

Follow this and additional works at: http://animalstudiesrepository.org/acwp_awap

 Part of the [Animal Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Burke, C. (1969). Our challenge and our opportunity. In C. Burke (Ed.), *The Power of Positive Programs in the American Humane Movement: discussion papers of the National Leadership Conference of The Humane Society of the United States: October 3-5, 1969*, Hershey, PA (pp. 18-20).

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Humane Society Institute for Science and Policy. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the Animal Studies Repository. For more information, please contact eyahner@humanesociety.org.

Our Challenge and Our Opportunity

By Coleman Burke

Chairman of the Board

New York, New York

Keynote suggests to me a political convention. Of course, I know that there are no politics in The Humane Society of the United States and, broadly, in the humane movement! So I have decided that I will talk about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for The Humane Society of the United States. I'd like to make a few personal observations and give some of my ideas of how we can meet the future.

I'm going to take for my text the 12th chapter of Proverbs, the tenth verse.

I'm sure you all know that because I know you read your Bibles just as assiduously daily as I do. "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." This is the simple sentence that I found somewhat recently in Proverbs 12:10. It goes on after a semicolon to say what might be a little cryptic. In thinking it over, I believe I understand it – "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

To me this is a very trenchant statement of what's involved in the whole humane movement. And it's one of those verses that just flash out of the Bible and hit you in the face, and you realize that we're working with the same truths that were there 2,000 or more years ago.

The other day you probably all read of the death of Gavin Maxwell, who produced that delightful "Ring of Bright Water." He said, "Stage one on the way to understanding human beings is an understanding and affection for animals." Fit this in with the statement from Proverbs. Actually, Gavin Maxwell was more intrigued in his life by animals than by people. And I know there are others here who are. And I accept that. I'm not critical of it. I rejoice that there are people who are more intrigued with animals than with people.

But I have a very deep concern about many humanitarians – that this is over-emphasized. I'm very much bothered by the phrase, "dogs are man's best friend." There are a great many people who

could be brought into the humane movement who get this thrown at them so much – I'm one of them – that you wonder whether these people have human friends. And, really, want to have human friends.

There are a lot of other people who are more intrigued with people than with animals. And I think we must be very careful in this movement to bring about a universal situation where man is recognized as a dog's best friend, and a cat's best friend, and any kind of animal's best friend. This should be our emphasis. This is what we should preach. A universal situation where the world knows that man is not only his fellow man's best friend but the animal kingdom's best friend. That's why I go back to the Biblical quote, and that's why I dared to assert that Biblical quote today. It isn't too popular these days, but if we'd read that good book, we'd be a lot more powerful in doing our job.

We have a harder job in The Humane Society of the United States than many other organizations of the humane movement because all those who have done the hard thinking that has produced The Humane Society of the United States have emphasized the educational impact.

I became interested in The Humane Society of the United States by the inspiration of my dear friend, the late Luella Jeffrey, and others whom I sought out to know when I began to see the vista this organization had. I think it was a small disaster that I was elected as Chairman last year because I can't give this the time and I can't give it the attention that I would like. I guess all of us feel that way if we're dedicated people, and I hope I belong in that group; we like to put out for good causes in which we are interested. But I'm proud of this past year.

Demands for help, for leadership, for guidance, for standard setting, continue to pile up at a rate that calls for continuous expansion. More and more, the Society finds itself in activities that cover an expanding spectrum of life on earth.

We now find that wildlife needs our kind of philosophy and our kind of activity in spite of all that conservation organizations do. This is evidenced by our programs of saving the wild mustangs, stopping cruelty in seal harvests, and fighting cruel hunting and trapping.

Both animals and people need us in emergencies. We have saved starving mustangs; we have brought relief to stricken victims of Hurricane Camille.

Humane societies and city and county governments need us for advice on animal control measures and guidance on municipal control contracts.

Youth, and youth organizations like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs, and Future Farmers of America, need the humane educational material we produce to help make them better citizens.

Local animal welfare organizations need us for help with all kinds of problems relating to handling of animals, humane programs, and society and shelter operation and management.

The U. S. Government needs us. Legislators call on us for information relating to animal problems with which to answer correspondence. Government agencies seek our advice and cooperation in dealing with issues involving animals. Our representatives are on the U.S. Sanitary Livestock Commission – now known as the U.S. Animal Health Association – and the Task Force working on seal harvest methods in the Pribilof Islands. We work with the USDA on Public Law 89-544 and we have investigated, at the request of Congress, how the Federal Humane Slaughter Law is being implemented in slaughterhouses.

We are needed by humanitarians for advice and information on every aspect of humane work.

Domestic animals need us and our continuing campaign against surplus breeding.

The nation's schools need us for the production and distribution of classroom material aimed at developing attitudes of kindness in the young.

The animal control workers of America need us because, through our National Humane Education Center, we can train them in the best techniques and methods of doing their job.

Animals exploited in entertainment, in science education, in food production, and animals cruelly treated in transportation and biomedical research desperately need the help and relief we are bringing them.

We are needed to develop – through publicity, making people aware, and organization of subsidiary units – an ever-growing corps of adult humanitarians who will take action against cruelty in our society.

I kind of wondered what Henry Bergh would think if he were here today. I think he would be amazed, and very sobered. I believe, however, that with the perspective that he had then he would agree with me, and with others of you, that the time was never better to have our work surge ahead.

We must create a broad climate of goodwill and dedication. We must put aside the petty differences. We must really throw ourselves into the battle for a brave and courageous but a kind and non-violent world. We must put out the fires of hate in a world in scary turmoil, and build a world based on the concept of Dr. Schweitzer: respect for every living thing. Let us not forget in the humane movement, this means respect for each other as well as respect for the animal kingdom.

Protection of Wildlife

By Leonard Hall

Naturalist and Conservation Writer

Caledonia, Missouri

There seems to be, and I'm sure it is true with all of you, a feeling that the time has come when we must expand our area of concern to include wild birds and animals, as well as the domestic animals and pets which are part of our interest today.

On the basis of this assumption, I'd like to cover the following points in my discussion. First, all those sound and logical reasons to include a broad interest in wildlife in the program of the humane society. Second, some specific areas and problems that might engage our interest and action. Third, how can the humane society—an organization which is created primarily for action at the local level—and its members function in the field of wildlife conservation?

In this discussion I want to refer you to a chart done by, perhaps, America's first great animal ecologist because what we are really talking about is Aldo Leopold's biotic pyramid, or Pyramid of Life, which we must keep in balance if man is to continue his life on this earth.

In approaching the first question—should wildlife be one of our interests—it seems to me that we are at once brought up against a problem which not only our wildlife but people of the entire world are facing today. This is the problem of pollution of the air, of our soil and water, brought about by the very technology that allows us to boast the world's highest living standard today.

To put the matter bluntly, during the past half century or so, applied science has literally plunged recklessly ahead, piling one scientific breakthrough on top of another, and one material gain on top of another—apparent material gain—without ever projecting ahead to determine the final consequences of these so-called scientific advances.

We have an agriculture today that is actually a monoculture, the culture of individual crops in vast areas. What is happening in