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The Humane Society of the United States

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The Challenges of Leadership

By *R. J. Chenoweth, Kansas City, Missouri*

Chairman of The HSUS Board of Directors

It has often been my custom, at these annual meetings of our Society, to discuss our accomplishments during the past year, evaluate our successes and failures in terms of relief of animal suffering, and talk at some length about our future plans. Each year has brought new victories, new advances, and always a new set of problems to tackle with the determination and renewed strength of purpose that seem a natural product of these annual Conferences.

In this, our eleventh annual meeting, at a time when major issues may seem to threaten the humane movement, it seems fitting to examine in depth the responsibilities of leadership we have as the leading national humane organization and how we have discharged those obligations. The influence which our society exerts is awesome in the immensity of suffering and numbers of animals involved and we cannot ignore the self-analysis and examination of conscience that are prime requisites of good leadership.

When a great and demanding need exists in any field of endeavor, it is a historical fact that men of intelligence, integrity and goodwill will find a way to fill that need. Like a rudderless ship, in 1954, the American humane movement was drifting without course or compass in a sea of indifference to animal welfare and outright cruelty for man's personal gain. National animal welfare work had languished for years; there was little direction to humane work at the state and local levels. The humane movement had become, in the eyes of an apathetic public, synonymous with cat and dog rescue work.

There was a great, basic need—a crying need—for leadership. An organization was needed to consolidate the myriad but scattered efforts of a thousand local humane societies. It had to be a national society with selfless dedication, courage, and a singleness of purpose that would bring order, direction and inspiration to struggling humanitarians. In particular, it had to be a society that would combine realistic planning with maximum potential for success while, at the same time, establishing bold objectives towards which all could work.

The HSUS was organized to fill this challenging role. From the very beginning, the new society justified the faith which so many people bestowed upon it. It quickly set forth the fundamental principle of working to oppose and seek to prevent all uses or exploitation of animals that cause pain, suffering or fear. Within this framework of policy and purpose, it set out to improve conditions for all kinds of animals under all circumstances. Abstract ideology was recognized but concrete measures for the relief of animal suffering that had been too long delayed were immediately put into practice.

The burdens of leadership weighed heavily in those formative years. There was so much to be done that the new society despaired of fulfilling its obligations to a newly-awakened humane movement. HSUS directors and officers knew full well—as they know now—that leadership is an earned privilege, not a right. They recognized that respect and achievement were the only real criteria and they set about meeting the challenges that had existed for so long without any real effort to resolve them.

The “dog and cat” image projected by the humane movement was a natural outgrowth of the pre-occupation of humane societies and humanitarians with the influx of these unwanted animals into humane society shelters and public pounds. Although millions of cats and dogs were being euthanized every year, little thought was given to the obvious fact that the killing was nothing more than dealing with the effect rather than the cause. The HSUS, in a practical approach to this major problem, launched a campaign to reduce surplus animal breeding by advocacy of neutering pets. Appropriate leaflets were produced, filmstrips were developed and distributed, national publicity was sought and obtained, and humane societies and individual humanitarians urged to spread the message to an uninformed public.

The program was, and continues to be, long range. It nevertheless demonstrated the practical approach and fearlessness of the new organization. A major problem that had not been faced before suddenly became a publicized cruelty and everybody knew how to do their share towards stopping it.

The massive campaign for humane slaughter legislation left no doubt that the humane movement, working in unison and under competent leadership, could gain significant victories even against the strongest opposition. Enactment of the Federal Act, so widely acclaimed by humanitarians as a great humane legislative victory and by politicians as a masterful demonstration of political strategy, was recognized by The HSUS only as a vitally important first step in securing corrective legislation governing all phases of the rearing, handling, transporting and slaughtering of livestock. In leadership, The HSUS welcomed the victory of humane slaughter which it fought so hard to achieve but considered it as only one battle in the war for improvement of all conditions for food animals.

Outspoken criticism of sports hunting and advocacy of humane trapping methods soon brought sharp ridicule of the new society. The HSUS attacked the traditional glamor and masculinity attached to hunting, exposing it for the brutal cruelty it is and advocating the shortening of hunting seasons as one practical method to reduce the annual carnage of animals. At the same time, society publicity condemned the use of steel jaw traps, calling for perfection of the Conibear killer trap and increased research into simulated fur development. Legislation requiring use of humane trapping methods on government lands was fully supported as The HSUS led a newly-optimistic humane movement towards new goals.

The orbit of national activity in which we operated for so many of those early years did not allow the development of influence and leadership on the state and local level so important to a healthy, grass roots participation. Your society was acutely conscious of this deficit and even the preparation of materials and publications helpful to local humane societies did not seem to fulfill this requirement of truly competent leadership. There had to be a way to proceed from national to state and local humane activities without losing any of the cumulative force which played such a large part in past successes.

An eighteenth century Scottish writer and philosopher, Dugald Stewart, once said the faculty of imagination is the principal source of human improvement—a faculty equally basic to securing humane improvement. In seeking an effective way to organize humane work at the local level, HSUS leadership showed itself richly endowed with that faculty by creating and launching a program of organization of state branches and affiliated local societies. It was an ambitious undertaking that, even now, has really just begun. It has all of the elements of extending our work and influence into vast areas of the nation—the community problems of animal protection and their solution, personal involvement at the local level, support by a large national organization, direction of programs towards immediate relief of animal suffering locally, and eventual relief of millions of animals nationally.

HSUS branches in California, Connecticut, New Jersey, Minnesota and Utah are providing that help but there are many other states where this program can best advance the humane cause. It is a sound middle-point between the dangers of too much centralization, on the one hand, and the anarchy and waste of a multitude of local organizations that cannot and will not work with one another, on the other hand. The United States needs our type of truly national humane society, organized to meet cruelties in each of the 50 states as well as cruelties of national nature. Our programs in the states where we have established branches are aggressive, intelligent and productive. They are a true product of leadership—a machinery for use

by future generations of humane workers. You might say we are determining what the future shape of the American humane movement shall be.

It has never escaped the attention of The HSUS that animal problems, as they affect individual animals, are essentially local problems. Only by understanding the needs and difficulties locally can we truly understand and recognize what is needed state-wide or nationally. Yet, local problems differ widely in their severity and complexity—even local humanitarians disagree on what situation should be remedied first. In every community there are many kinds of animals, each with its special problems. Should we, for local work, choose the county with the worst pound, the one with the most starving stray cats and dogs, the one with the least humane dog warden, the farmers who know the least about caring for livestock or, taking a different approach, the fewest people who care anything about animals?

We could, of course, at the national level decide these things but it would be an arbitrary decision, not at all compatible with the dictates of true leadership. This is the sort of thing that is, by right, the province of a state branch. The solution to each specific case might require technical assistance or advice, the kind our Field and Service Departments specialize in, but the problems to tackle and the priority of importance must lie at the local level.

One cannot, of course, simply sally forth into a given state and organize a branch of The HSUS. Nothing worthwhile is that easy and, if it were, the prospect of permanency would be remote. Thus, while your Society continues its efforts to establish state branches, it continues also to initiate national programs that will reach down to the grass roots level, laying a favorable foundation for effective humane work and the improvement that can always be made for suffering animals in any community.

Apart from the technical services which we supply to these communities, there are programs of immense significance, costly and sometimes not understood, that will have the most far-reaching consequences in relation to animal welfare. Consider, for example, the National Humane Education Center, now being developed near Waterford, Virginia. This educational and training institution exemplifies our desire to achieve a widespread improvement in humane work that will eventually reach into virtually every community. This capacity to plan and execute programs of far-reaching significance is perhaps the most important quality of leadership since it has produced, in the National Humane Education Center, a means of assuring good leadership throughout the movement.

In every community, men and women are needed who, by right moral thinking and sound practical argument, will influence others to recognize and accept humanitarianism as a better way of life—indeed, the

essential way of life. This is the way leadership should work in our movement so that, from the ranks of local leaders, will come national leaders of dedication, courage and vast experience.

The HSUS recognizes, of course, that it is not enough merely to train humane leaders for the future. No matter how capable such leaders might be, results will depend upon the attitudes and interest of the general public. Anything done now to develop favorable public opinion will naturally increase results.

Foreseeing this, The HSUS has expanded its humane education activities far beyond its normal program of television announcements, news releases, radio spots, literature distribution, etc. These efforts have been aimed primarily at adults in the hope that they would convey proper attitudes to children. Without minimizing the value of this program and without interfering with it in any way, your Society has added a new dimension that represents an ultimate in future planning--the inculcation of humane attitudes in children.

A little later, you will hear an important talk by Dr. Stuart Westerlund of George Washington University in Washington, D. C. I ask you to listen to it carefully because Dr. Westerlund will speak of a project that parallels the National Humane Education Center in potential benefit to suffering animals. It is a new approach at the national level, one that will produce citizens responsive to moral obligations and opposed to cruelty in all of its forms.

All of this future programming does not ease the burden of responsibility which your Society carries in current anti-cruelty work. A great problem--one requiring much strength and fortitude to combat--is discouragement of humanitarians and humane societies when animal welfare campaigns fail or bring no immediate results.

It is seldom understood that fortitude of spirit is closely related to dedication and that setbacks are at least as certain in our work as in any other. Defeat of a humane slaughter bill in New Jersey, failure in an effort to enact an Easter chick law in Montana, or unsuccessful opposition to pound seizure legislation in Connecticut are nothing more than battles lost in a never-ending war. They are no more than temporary reverses and do not shake real conviction and devotion to our cause. The HSUS is fortunate that its members possess those inner resources of spirit that enable the Society to stand strong even in defeat and rise from it to renew the struggle.

Over all the challenges of leadership we have discussed so far, the responsibility we have towards millions of laboratory animals stands supreme. There is no single item of more immediate importance, no one campaign that could reduce such an immensity of suffering. Yet, the present situation in our own movement is such that the courage and conviction that have always marked our approach to this and all other battles in the war against cruelty are now objects of attack and criticism from organizations that are supposedly working for

the same objective: protection for research animals through federal law. I will waste no time in counterattacking those societies who have belittled us, and the entire humane movement, with irresponsible tirades of invective and innuendo based upon self-interest and studied avoidance of the facts. I hope it is sufficient to say that a quality common to all leaders, in humane work or elsewhere, is a willingness to study, analyze, prepare, to know their field of activity thoroughly and to act accordingly within the bounds of the possible.

We are at a time in the history of the humane movement when we must leave behind the old idea of different societies with different dreams and different approaches offering a choice of different types of humanitarianism to the world. It has become very clear that multiplicity of organizational policies and programs have confused our cause in the minds of the public and have actually retarded our progress. In our present world, there remains increasingly but one road into the future--a road along which your own society has already set forth, confident that others will follow.

In writing and sponsoring the Rogers bill, H.R. 10049, for example, your Society acted soberly and in the best interests of the millions of experimental animals that have received no relief from suffering in all of the years the humane movement has been trying for remedial legislation. Bill after bill, sponsored by society after society, had been introduced in Congress to no avail. Until The HSUS initiated a complete study of all existing laboratory animal legislation and determined to write a new bill that could unify the humane movement in principles and action, no one seemed to consider what was really possible in the way of getting strong legislation through Congress.

This study resulted in a new comprehension of what could, and could not, be done in regulating the care, housing, procurement and use of research animals. HSUS directors and staff members felt this obligation of leadership more than any other and sought the cooperation of other leading humane societies in discussing the drafting of the new bill. Some cooperated, others didn't. Nevertheless, the Society produced a new approach to laboratory legislation whose strength was quickly recognized by Congressmen like William Randall of Missouri and Claude Pepper of Florida, both of whom had introduced strong bills in the past but who now introduced identical legislation to the Rogers bill. At the same time, leading humane societies in all parts of the country joined in support of the new legislation.

In our optimism over the prospect of enactment of the Rogers bill, we must not overlook or minimize the fierce opposition which the bill will encounter from research-oriented medical organizations. Those same medical interests that so bitterly opposed the former Randall-Pepper bills will not stand idly by now. It must not be forgotten that the main philosophical and material threat to our cam-

campaign for laboratory animal legislation comes from a scientific community so reliant on science alone that it would leave the world with no sense of the real direction and purpose of existence if unopposed.

In our desire to win protection for laboratory animals, as in all other areas, The HSUS is responding to the challenges of leadership, ably fulfilling its responsibilities to the many societies and individuals who look to it for guidance. Flexibility in strategy and planning has won more victories throughout the years than stubborn commitment to a losing course of action and your Society will continue to exercise this essential of good leadership.

At the same time, The HSUS never intends to get so far in front that it is acting on its own, without the support of the humane movement. Such a development would not yield maximum results for the benefit of animals. The motto of close cooperation with local organizations and individuals which has characterized HSUS activity from the start has been largely responsible for fostering a potent, nationwide force that now embraces most of the humane movement.

What has been achieved and what will be achieved is determined by the combined strength and determination of that force. In my own opinion, this great and growing potential for good stands as the best monument to the inspirational leadership which your Society has provided throughout these past eleven years.

Treasurer's Report

By Edward M. Bostick, Falls Church, Va.

This report, required by HSUS by-laws, was presented at the Corporation meeting.

It is a pleasure to be able to convey to you figures relating to the financial standing of The Humane Society of the United States. First, however, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable services of our Assistant Treasurer, Mrs. Worthy Gardner, and The HSUS Office Manager, Mrs. Moneta Morgan, without whose help your Treasurer could not function.

You will all remember some years ago that John Foster Dulles said that brinkmanship was one of the prerequisites to the successful conduct of international affairs. If Mr. Dulles was correct in this statement, I can think of no better training ground for a Secretary of State than the post as Treasurer of The Humane Society of the United States. Your Society exists perpetually on the brink of the abyss of financial chaos.

Every year there are times when the General Fund balance is reduced to precariously small proportions. The situation gives frequent cause for alarm; yet it has its bright side, too. If The HSUS had been launched under conservative financial management, always trying to lay up a reserve against a rainy day, it would be but a small segment of what it is today. Fred Myers' courageous and aggressive policy of spend all you can get your hands on for animal welfare and the Lord (meaning the humane constituency) will provide has been basic in the Society's development. You have provided in the past and we continue in the same policy in the faith that you will continue to provide in the future.

The HSUS continues to take in more every year and to spend more every year with no reserves of any kind being set aside to bolster the General Fund.

To review a few figures: The net worth of the General Fund on August 31 was \$39,000. However, half of this sum is represented by notes held by The HSUS from its various Branches. At this writing there is little prospect that these notes will be paid in the foreseeable future. From the remainder, deducting miscellaneous assets represented by furniture and equipment, there is little cash left.