A New President at the Helm

Twenty-two years ago I was provided the opportunity to become President of The Humane Society of the United States, then headquartered at 1451 19th St. in Washington, D.C., in a small rented suite of offices. This opportunity came at a time when I was considering an alternative vocation to the one in which I was then engaged—clergyman in the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. It was an opportunity and challenge I accepted most enthusiastically.

I have frequently been asked why I decided to "leave the ministry" to become associated with an animal-protection organization. In most cases, the questioner was hinting that I had chosen perhaps a lesser calling; or that I may have fallen into disfavor within my previous profession! Never did it occur to such people that, in choosing to become associated with the animal-protection movement, I was, in fact, extending my ministry and enlarging my congregation to include animals as well as human beings. I was accepting the challenge to apply the same ethical and moral principles that undergird religion to a concern and consideration for animals. It is a challenge that continues to frame and focus my work and efforts in this movement.

It was a similar orientation and background that prompted Paul G. Irwin, my longtime associate and now successor, to become identified with The HSUS approximately seventeen years ago. During that time, he has served The HSUS as both president and chief executive and recently has been elected president of The HSUS and invite you to do so as well!

Paul Irwin brings to this position of leadership a personal commitment and dedication that has helped to inform and guide the work and programs of The HSUS for almost two decades. But he also brings managerial and financial skills that are in large measure responsible for the extraordinary growth and development realized by The HSUS during the years of our shared leadership. I know of no one, either within or outside this movement, more able or more prepared to accept this new and exciting challenge.

Paul will not be without excellent help and support in this new undertaking. Standing with him at the helm of The HSUS and sharing the leadership of its many programs and activities will be Patricia Forkan, newly elected executive vice president of The HSUS and, like Paul Irwin, someone whose leadership skills and personal dedication have been indispensable to the successes and advances of The HSUS during the last seventeen years.

A woman of great talent and ability, Patricia Forkan has, as senior vice president and, prior to that, vice president, program and communications, skillfully and enthusiastically directed the many campaigns and activities of The HSUS that have helped to bring about a better day for animals.

In my new role as chief executive and CEO I shall continue to guide and direct the entire family of HSUS organizations, including the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (NAHHEE), the Center for Respect of Life and Environment (CRL/E), which seeks to enable the participation of academic and religious communities, as well as various other professions, in a concern for the Earth and its inhabitants; EarthKind, our newly formed environmental organization, which seeks to address environmental issues from the perspective of their impact on animal suffering and survival; and Humane Society International (HSI), the organization through which we shall extend the activities and leadership of The HSUS more fully into the international arena. HSI will be our vehicle to assist those countries, organizations, and individuals who so greatly need our support in advancing the cause of animal protection across the face of the Earth.

Through HSI we shall be represented in the international bodies that frequently determine the fate of animals in ways not always available to a national organization.

As president of HSI I shall spend considerable time and effort in enlarging further and extending the international role of The HSUS on behalf of animals, while Paul Irwin and Patricia Forkan guide and direct the programs and activities of The HSUS within the United States.

To both Paul and Patricia I extend, on your behalf, a warm welcome to their new position and sincere congratulations on having been elected to these leadership roles by the HSUS board of directors. I am confident that in both of these persons you will discover deep personal commitments and leadership skills unparalleled in the animal-protection movement.