

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

PRESENTATION OF SCHWEITZER AWARD

to  
PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER  
of  
REPUBLIC OF COSTA RICA

SPONSORED BY:

ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE

Room 1202, DSOB  
February 9, 1977

President Oduber, Mrs. Christine Stevens, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored that the Animal Welfare Institute, ably directed by my friend Mrs. Stevens, has asked me to present today its distinguished Schweitzer Award to an outstanding international leader, President Daniel Oduber of Costa Rica.

President Oduber is widely known for his political achievements, as leader of the National Liberation Party, as his country's Ambassador in Europe and the United Nations, as a member and president of Costa Rica's legislative assembly. His election to the presidency in 1974 capped a long and highly successful career in his country's politics. A good friend to the United States, he has worked to strengthen constructive ties between our two nations.

This ceremony today highlights a lesser known facet of President Oduber's concerns. The Schweitzer medal awarded to President Oduber today recognizes his efforts in creating an outstanding network of national parks in Costa Rica's forests and coastlands to preserve unspoiled a homeland and refuge for that country's native wildlife, including species that otherwise would disappear.

This park development, carried out in cooperation with international conservation groups, is a monumental project. The vision and commitment demonstrated by Costa Rica is an example to countries with far greater resources.

Truly, President Oduber deserves our praise, and it is my proud duty to associate myself with his concern for protecting and preserving wildlife and its natural habitat.

Animals do not vote. What is done for their welfare may have no immediate political rewards. And so organizations such as the Animal Welfare Institute serve a vital purpose, by constantly reminding us that this globe does not belong to man alone.

Too often, the havoc and cruelty we deal to animals is invisible because no one speaks up in their behalf. Animals have been the unwitting victims of human civilization. They have been hunted to extinction, they have succumbed to man's thoughtless exploitation of their natural habitat. And they have died from oil spills and waters polluted by industrial wastes.

To accept the suffering and extinction of God's creatures as an inevitable consequence of human progress requires a very narrow, diminished view of man's place in the universe. Our rationality should raise us from the level of predator and destroyer to protector of our fellow living creatures.

Some years back, I was the proud recipient of the Schweitzer Award. It was granted me for my role as chief Senate sponsor of the Federal Humane Slaughter Act passed in 1958.

The debate on this bill was long. Yet its purpose was modest. It simply asked that the necessary slaughter of animals for human food be done in a merciful way. Nobody could witness the barbaric practices then prevalent without feeling repugnance and disbelief. But many people simply preferred to dismiss the issue from their minds.

At that time, I quoted the great humanitarian Albert Schweitzer, for whom this medal is named. He warned that "no one may shut his eyes and think that the pain which is therefore invisible to him is nonexistent."

But in any case, we should never allow our natural human impulses to be blinded by the delusion that dollars and cents are the only criteria for sound public policy. Almost always, such cost benefits hold only at close range; and almost always to rely on them alone is an inadmissible distortion of human values.

It would be difficult to place a cash value on the beauties of nature that your system of parks in Costa Rica will preserve. And it would be difficult to estimate in dollars and cents the suffering spared the helpless creatures that are at the mercy of man.

But we know something of the cost of ignoring these values. Respect and kindness toward our fellow living creatures is surely the mark of any civilization that sincerely cares about the quality of life. The careless destruction of animals, through deliberate cruelty, or wanton carelessness, erodes the morality of the culture which tolerates it.

There is so much that remains to be done to preserve animal species from extinction, to minimize the impact of industrialization on the natural environment and the creatures that depend on it, to avoid unnecessary destruction, cruelty and killing. The parks you have set aside in your lovely country are a priceless heritage for your people, and a witness to the humane values of your society.

President Oduber, I want to welcome you to a proud fraternity. All of us who have been honored to receive the Schweitzer Award must consider it one of our most cherished trophies. Since you have traveled from Costa Rica expressly for this presentation, I know you appreciate its value.

On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute, and all of us who have worked for the welfare of animals, I am proud to present you with the Schweitzer Award for 1976.



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