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— IYC AFTERMATH. —

Post Mortems on the International Year of the Child continue to be held. Pot Pourri this issue is devoted to items highlighted in the final reports of various IYC Committees.

UNICEF DIRECTOR ON IYC IMPORTANCE

"Why was IYC so important?" James Grant, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) asked, and gave his own answers to this question in an address to the Final Plenary Session of the United Nations NGO/IYC Committee in New York in May 1980.

He noted three reasons that seemed particularly significant to him:

First, the IYC had made a great contribution in the market place of ideas — the environment in which decisions are taken — both to the increased attention that must be given to children and to the understanding of how to do so meaningfully.

The **second** reason of major importance of the IYC was that it had involved so many new groups in the

field of children's needs.

The **third** important impact of IYC to James Grant in particular, was that it had accelerated the evolution of UNICEF into a different type of organization than heretofore. Adding to its primary responsibility of "helping children to survive in a decent environment", the U.N. General Assembly had charged UNICEF with the task of co-ordinating development aspects of the follow up of IYC. "This involves UNICEF in the 'non-survival' elements of children in not only the developing countries but in the industrialized countries as well", Mr. Grant stated. The International Year of the Child had now given UNICEF a whole new dimension as the lead agency of the United Nations system for working with children.

TASMANIAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The formation of a Council of Children's Affairs has been advocated by the Tasmanian State Steering Committee for IYC in its Final Report published recently. The proposed Council would develop plans which would endeavour to focus attention on children's needs and rights and the community's obligation to provide an environment for their general well being.

The Tasmanian Committee made two further recommendations:

1. The establishment of a Tasmanian Children's Community Chest to provide financial assistance to children on an individual basis where their need cannot be met from family or other community resources.

2. The appointment of an Ombudsman for children. The Committee noted, in making this recommendation, that the legal rights accorded to children are inadequate in relation to their needs, are often abused, disregarded or at least poorly implemented.

The Committee acknowledged that the appointment of the Tasmanian Ombudsman who included Children's Rights" in his mandate had partly fulfilled this recommendation. However the need still existed for a person outside of government to whom children could relate in their particular needs and enquiries into their rights as people.

CHILDREN SPEAK OUT

Twenty different groups of children who attended the Governor General's IYC Conference in December 1979 have presented resolutions to the Government. These recommendations include:

School

The cane and all forms of violence should be banned from schools, and other more appropriate forms of discipline should be implemented. School rules should be developed by children and teachers and should apply to both.

Punishment and discipline

Punishment and discipline and love and affection should be evenly balanced.

Children and television

There should be fewer programmes showing artificial family situations, as this gives children a false sense of reality about family situations and stereotyped sex roles. In advertisements and programmes shown during children's viewing hours there should be less violence to people and property.

Refugees/children in developing countries.

It is the responsibility of all UN Countries — including Australia — to help developing countries and refugees by:

1. Finding out the facts, not the myths, about refugees and their situations.

2. Providing the type of help that really is needed, e.g. food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care and love, in a way which will build their self respect and independence.

3. Taking in refugees and accepting them into our community as equals and offering them friendship, not pity.

Pourri



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ADVOCACY ADVOCATED

A State Government initiated public consultation to assess the extent of community support for the establishment of some form of independent, statutory "Children's Rights Advocacy Body" has been called for by the IYC Victorian State Committee.

This call was unanimously supported by the delegates to an IYC "Keep on Caring" Conference held in

March 1980. The Proceedings of the Conference, and the Victorian Committee's Final Report were published in July.

Before disbanding on 10th April, the Committee set up an "Advocacy Paper Follow Up Group" comprising interested non-government members to continue to draw public and governmental attention to the

document that had been prepared on Child Advocacy, and the issues raised by it. The group, headed by Dr. G. Keys Smith, is actively lobbying parliamentarians and members of the community seeking support for "a fresh and detailed inquiry to make recommendations on the appropriate means of promoting and safe guarding children's rights and interests in the 80's.

Children's Rights — Are They Wrong (from page 14)

If such a situation is too radical to countenance at least professional and voluntary agencies that are set up within a community to support the child must work with each other in order that the child's needs are assisted as a whole, rather than the child being perceived as a fragmented, amorphous "object" which can be spread around a variety of services and agencies at the whim of professional advisors.

This paper began with a commentary on IYC and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child; it is fitting that it end on the same note. The following quote is from an article by Terry Carney, Lecturer in Law at Monash. While this writer does not agree with all that he says, he has provided us with a description of what is, and a prescription of what ought to be, in the area of children's rights:

"The realities of the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child cannot be assessed in isolation from the cultural context on the passage of time. It is a relative, not an immediate document. Whatever its relevance in earlier times or for other cultures, the Declaration is now largely a spent force in western industrial countries. The stirring

rhetoric no longer inspires individuals or governments to action; the balmy generality of language obscures the complex tension between the interests of the child, the parent or caretaker and the state; the empty phrase of the "best interests of the child" possess over the critical policy issue of the degree of autonomy to be granted to the family unit. Finally, it sidesteps the philosophic debate concerning the limits which should be placed on state, professional or familial authority where that authority leads to an unreasonable degree of stultifying uniformity for those who conform, and to the risk of a stigmatising "deviant" label for those children who reject that paternal intervention".

(Carney, 1976)

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