

It simply shows one important fact, that while children are important they are also powerless. They do not have the means to make the kind of pressure on governments to take decisions on their behalf. It is, therefore, a challenge for all of us to try to put some power into their hands. That is why the ratification of the covenant is so important, because it does set a brand new standard by which all governments will now be answerable for their commitments. It will set a new standard by which we will all be responsible for making that kind of requirement.

It would be my hope that perhaps as we go through the next few months in discussion on constitutional change, it might be worth considering whether the word children and our responsibilities to them should also be incorporated as part of our constitutional commitments.

I would just like to close with something which I think may be the most appropriate word. It comes not from me but from a child, a young woman who is in grade seven in St. Mary's Academy in my riding. Last year when I sponsored an essay contest she sent in this essay which I think summarizes what the meaning of all this is. She says:

Dear World Leaders:

As I watch television and read the newspapers there is one thing that is always shown, children—not happy children being hugged but dead children, starving children, sick children or frightened children. Another subject that is always seen is some story about world leaders preparing for war, world leaders discussing pollution in the environment, blaming each other and coming up with very few solutions.

The leaders also seem to use the future of children as an excuse to do what they are doing. Well, listen to me, please. I am a child and I want you to really listen to me. I don't want you to talk to me about my rights. I want you to recognize that children did not choose to be born. They did not choose their country of origin or their circumstances. They did not choose to be victims. I would like the world leaders to use their power, their resources and their intelligence to provide a caring and loving world for children. If everyone stopped being so busy worrying about who has the most money, the most natural resources and the biggest guns they would help everyone.

Let's all try to see who can have the least homeless, the least child abuse, the least illiteracy, the least pollution and the most compassion.

If you really believe that we are the future, if you really believe that we deserve basic human rights, then show us. Next time you stand before the cameras of the world and talk about how important we are as part of the future, show us. We want to believe you but please show us.

Routine Proceedings

I think the words of this 11-year-old summarize most adequately and most eloquently what we all have to do in this House as we sign this covenant on human rights.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing):
Mr. Speaker, I would just like to add some brief comments on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

I would like first to thank the member for Rosedale for bringing forward this motion. I know he is passionately committed to the issue of children in both the Third World and in Canada who are suffering from deprivation, from hunger, from the effects of war and being left out of the processes that make the decisions which affect their lives. I would like also to thank the member for Winnipeg South Centre for his participation and my own colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, who I know was involved in the process of bringing this issue to the House.

I would also like to take the opportunity of commending the Prime Minister for his involvement in the UN convention where he played an instrumental role, and I think it is clear from his comments that he also passionately feels for the needs of children who are suffering in Canada.

We can all look to different ways of resolving that problem, the problems both of children in Canada and in the developing countries. But I think it is worth noting and it is important to note that the Prime Minister also is committed passionately to that issue.

I think now what we do is wait for the government's actions. As soon as the government brings forward measures which will indeed implement the terms of the UN declaration, increase Canada's contribution to the solution of the problems in developing countries and provide extra resources to deal with the chronic and terrible problem of child hunger in Canada, then we on this side of the House will be fully supportive and assist in the passage of those initiatives.

We look forward to those initiatives. I do not feel particularly confident that those initiatives will be forthcoming, but I hope so. I can assure the House of the full support of the New Democratic Party should they come forward.