



Statements and Speeches

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THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

A Statement by Mr. Douglas Roche, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and Representative of Canada to the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) of the Thirty-fourth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, October 17, 1979

As we reflect on the International Year of the Child, the mood I express, on behalf of Canada, is one of challenge as well as congratulation.

We are indebted to Canon Joseph Moerman of Belgium for originating the idea, to Mrs. Aldaka-Lim, Special Representative of IYC, and UNICEF, which continues to distinguish itself in the cause of children's rights. We are grateful for the sharp focus that has been put on the lives of children all over the world during their special year. We pay tribute to the countless organizations which sponsored activities and events that can never be adequately recorded. We appreciate the work of so many adults in so many fields who made the year a success. And most of all we thank the children and young people of every land who inspired us with their own involvement in ways that were often ingenious.

It is clear that the world community has renewed the United Nations' concern for the present condition and the future of our children. Let us celebrate that achievement. But our celebration ought to be brief. For what the International Year of the Child has underscored is the shocking amount of exploitation and discrimination against children that exists in different ways throughout the world. And if we are now impelled to work harder to advance the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, we must more urgently get at the roots of the problems that afflict children. The Special Year ought to have given us more profound insights into the essential fact that children do not live in isolation. Children live in families, families live in communities, and these communities make up our world. To express our love and affection for children is hollow unless we are now resolved to implement programs of action that will make the world a safer, more just place to be born into.

It is my pleasure to recount for a moment the observance of IYC in Canada. Here was an example of widespread public participation complementing government initiative. The Canadian government, through the Department of National Health and Welfare, provided \$1 million to the Canadian Commission for International Year of the Child, a body comprising representatives of the federal, provincial and territorial governments and, most importantly, 15 non-governmental organizations representing the 103 non-governmental organizations across Canada participating in IYC. The Commission, comprising 45 volunteer members headed by Judge Doris Ogilvie, was directed to distribute this money in small grants to communities across the country to stimulate local involvement in programs for children. I might note parenthetically that this was one instance of a commission forsaking a national conference in order
