



Children must be considered when laws are being reviewed and enacted.

quired a great deal of research knowledge about the interaction of children and the contexts in which they live. This knowledge has not only made institutional change imperative, it has also given us clear guidelines as to how to go about it. In certain instances this has already happened. Thus, for example, findings about attachment and separation with respect to children and their families have been taken into account by designers of new health care settings and services. But all our institutions that profoundly affect the lives of children such as education, the child welfare system, the courts, municipal and community services, must change to accommodate the social revolution that is still in process and the new knowledge we possess if Canada's children are to develop in ways that will benefit themselves and society as a whole.

Collective experience

...All of our recommendations have been constructed on a solid base of information drawn from a number of sources. To begin with, as members of the commission we brought to our common task a collective expertise and experience which is considerable with respect to children. To this we added the results of a systematic study of the 4,000 submissions we received from every part of Canada.... We were able to incorporate into our deliberations the ideas which children and young people communicated directly to us in a variety of ways, including by letter sent to our special children's box number. We solicited and received input for consi-

deration from individuals and community groups....

The patterns of need that emerged from the formal analysis of our well-documented submissions were similar to those that could be discerned in the information we received from the provincial and regional IYC committees and from the members of the general public. The same patterns ran through the comments and writings that came to us from children. The young people gave their own emphasis, but altogether the patterns merged to provide a clear picture of the major problems that now face Canadian children.

Children's problems

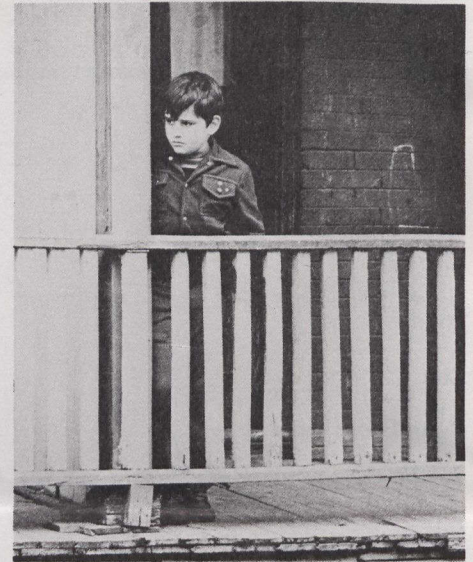
What are these problems? Analysis of needs revealed:

- that poverty and isolation are much more extensive than most Canadians believe;
- that adequate and appropriate community support systems do not often exist for children;
- that parents need help to be better parents and that this help is not readily available;
- that everywhere in Canada existing child-care facilities fall far short of the expanding need for them;
- that services for handicapped children are far from sufficient;
- that opportunities to take responsibility and to learn the skills of citizenship are rare;
- that age-group segregation often creates impenetrable barriers between children and older people and that programs to help people cross them are needed;
- that the battle against prejudice and racism with respect to children needs reinforcements;
- that the situation of Canada's native children is acute;
- that creative approaches are required to break through the sense of alienation felt by so many young people;
- that there is a surprising ignorance of the child's need and right to play; and
- that there is a great need for enriching experiences, a need which reflects the impoverishment of many children's minds and spirits; people are too busy, too pre-occupied, too disinterested to pay attention to them.

Focus of committee

IYC committees and the general public focused on:

- the multiple difficulties experienced



A young victim of poverty.

- by families everywhere;
- the need for support services – material and moral, formal and informal, child-care provisions of various kinds, parenting courses, family drop-in centres;
- the growing evidence of destructive behaviour directed at children – child abuse and neglect, child pornography, commercial exploitation, violence on prime-time television;
- the growing evidence of self-destructive behaviour in young people – suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, sexually transmitted disease;
- the inadequacy of existing child-welfare services, the lack of co-ordination, the absence in many parts of the country of a government focal point for an over-all policy relating to children and young people; and
- the need for young people to accept responsibility for their own actions.

Young people's comments

This last need was given a different emphasis by the young people themselves. In their comments to us they concentrated on:

- their great need to be trusted and respected and offered opportunities to demonstrate their capacity for responsible judgment and to learn the skills of community action;
- the problems of communication between themselves and their parents and other adults, and the increasing withdrawal of older people from their lives;
- family instability and its effect on them and their friends;
- the lack of recreational, cultural and

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