



participants suggested that government intervention concentrate on certain aspects of the problem. Three themes could be given prominence at the national level: (1) child poverty; (2) violence against children; and (3) exploitation of child labour and effects on education.

The need to make children's rights a matter of ongoing public discussion across the country was also discussed. Establishment of a genuine national dialogue would enable pressure to be put on the Government and make a majority of Canadians aware of the situation of children in Canada and the rest of the world. Public awareness is essential. The participants realize that in order to have real international impact, the wish to do so must be clear within the country. The Federal government must feel that the public wants to see results and progress in respect for children's rights. The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development could be used to achieve this objective.

The existence of expertise in the Commission québécoise des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse was noted. As part of its mandate, this coordinating body of federal and provincial officials considers children's rights. Still with a view to promoting consultation and cooperation within Canada, this body could be expanded to include other organizations that promote children's rights.

In view of its position in the community of nations, Canada should assume a primary role in worldwide promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For this purpose, it is important to establish a policy on a priority basis for our own children if Canada wishes to gain some credibility as an international leader on children's rights. Canada should also make available to the other countries of the world its expertise in developing application mechanisms.

Canadian leadership could also be shown through including a social charter or social clauses in the major trade agreements it negotiates. It is important to note that failure to comply with these clauses should not automatically involve economic sanctions. The participants felt that this method does not produce satisfactory results. A different approach could be considered, by attempting to draw a distinction between countries that wish to comply with the social clauses but do not have the resources, and those that simply have no wish to comply.

International Labour Organization Convention 138 should be ratified. It has already been ratified by more than forty countries, and Canada is dragging its feet. According to the participants, the constitutional impasse--the Federal government would not have the agreement of all the provinces regarding the Convention--is an illusory problem. In the past, Canada has often committed itself to various international agreements without the consent of all provinces.

Greater national consistency is a priority. The Government must be involved, but so must unions, private business, academics, community groups and NGOs. All levels must cooperate on specific topics. To achieve maximum impact, all available resources must be better allocated. Improved information circulation and preparation of a comprehensive list of people working on the topic would be desirable specific actions.

Last, the power of concerted effort seems a key aspect in this field. Unlike others, children have no opportunity to get some of their numbers involved to promote their interests. Adults must speak for them.