

One of the rights of the child is to be heard. Or so asserted our correspondents between the ages of 9 and 17, who come from 10 countries.

Most who wrote to us in answer to our questions have food, housing, education, medical care—fundamental rights. What more does a child need? We begin this special issue for the International Year of the Child with some of their replies.

LIFE AS THEY SEE IT

NEW WORLD NEWS

Vol 27 No 23 28 April 1979



What are the rights of a child?

EVERY CHILD has the right to know about God and what sort of values He stands for. Every child has the right to decide what sort of life he wants to live without being stopped. He also has the right to be told realistically about what sort of life he has chosen. **15 year old, England**

CHILDREN SHOULD BE ALLOWED to vote in elections, but should state their reasons why they choose one person and the explanation should be approved by two adults. **14 year old, England**

THE RIGHT TO LIVE whether he is talented or handicapped. The right to speak out. Although children's thinking is not mature yet they are part of society. **14 year old, Hong Kong**

GROWN UPS should always listen to children's ideas and let them into family matters, problems, daily activities, changes in routine and any other discussions that are to do with the whole family. **12 year old, England**

PEOPLE OUGHT to listen to children since we are going to take over control very soon. **15 year old, Scotland**

THE RIGHTS OF ALL human beings should be the same, but a child until he is old enough to be responsible may abuse his rights and hurt others. However I believe every child should have the right to the love and attention he needs (preferably within a family), the right to an education and to equal opportunities, and though he may be guided by his parents he should have the right to freedom of opinion (which includes freedom of worship). **15 year old, England**

ALL CHILDREN should be told about God so that when they grow up and have to choose how to live their lives they can't say they didn't know that they could change and live differently. **15 year old, England**

How can you improve the spirit in your school?

THE SPIRIT would improve if the school lunches were better. Many boys have a sinking feeling after lunch because of soggy chips, lumpy custard and burnt sausages. I could talk with the head boy and suggest a way to put this point to the headmaster. **13 year old, England**

OFTEN WE TALK about one another behind each other's backs. This causes a great deal of bad feeling. Making everyone feel included is also how to improve the spirit of the school. **15 year old, England**

I CAN LOVE and be courteous and not be unkind when someone is unkind to me. **9 year old, USA**
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SCHOOL contd from p1

NOBODY IS BETTER than the next person and your colour doesn't matter. The atmosphere must be so good between teacher and pupil that we can ask a teacher something we don't understand, without being laughed at.

17 year old, South Africa

I AM RATHER satisfied with my school.

13 year old, Sweden

START WITH MYSELF e.g. not fighting, not quarrelling, not going with the tide, keeping the school rules.

14 year old, Hong Kong

IT IS HARD to have the right attitude to things if you have a guilty conscience. If you want to see a more healthy spirit at school it is best to improve your attitudes by cleaning up your conscience and putting right anything that is wrong with friends and enemies. Personally however I have no idea whether I have improved the spirit at my school and I certainly need to change my attitudes.

15 year old, England

Why are families important?

TO HAVE A FAMILY is the best thing in the whole world, money can't buy love, drugs can't buy happiness. Families are the thing.

12 year old, England

CARE AND LOVE in a family helps one to care for and love others more. In this world where so many people are lonely and left out for such reasons as unemployment or race, love and care in the family might I think lead to much more care and understanding between management and labour, thus solving disputes which might otherwise have resulted in a lot of bitterness.

15 year old, England

THE WORLD IS TOO BIG for it to share its love individually. This is where the family comes in. There people can have individual love and caring. The family is the source of strength.

16 year old, Canada

What would you do if you were Prime Minister of your country?

I WOULD COME HOME at the right time so that my children also have a father. I would make the children's crossings to schools safer and give the old people what they need, especially those who don't have a family and no one to look after them.

12 year old, Norway

What sort of world would you like to grow up in?

ONE COULD ANSWER this by saying I would like to grow up in a safe padded world with no suffering or strife. But you would not appreciate all the good times in life if the bad times did not go with them. I would like to grow up in a world where there is more understanding.

16 year old, England

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE a world with clean air and free of pollution.

14 year old, England

A WORLD where there is peace. I can help to make this by not getting into arguments and fighting with others.

9 year old, Norway

A WORLD WHERE there is peace and everybody is friendly to each other and everyone can share and help those who are less fortunate and there are no thieves and everywhere you look there is happiness and laughter and friendship and there is caring for each other and there is no care what colour your skin is and there is nothing like English or African or Indian or American, but everybody is one great big family, and there are no diseases and everyone lives as brothers and sisters.

11 year old, India

I WOULD LIKE to grow up in a full of tree world. In the morning the bird will sing outside my bedroom. To make this possible I will begin to plant a little flower and tree.

14 year old, Hong Kong

I WANT TO LIVE in the peaceful world. Now I can ask God to stop the war happening in this world. I must study hard. In the future I can work in the Government, so that I can help the people of Hong Kong.

15 year old, Hong Kong

EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE A FAMILY to care for and look after them but everyone should make sure that they care for and help their families too.

15 year old, England

IF WE LOSE OUR FAMILY, we become lonely and helpless.

14 year old, Hong Kong

I BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT for children up till 18 years of age to have parents who are not divorced. A home should be free, where you don't fear to say anything, not a place for oppression. The children must feel that their parents really trust them. I would like myself to create such a home.

13 year old, Sweden

TO BE UNITED with one another and to have a place for relatives and to have a home where people love you most of all.

9 year old, USA

A PARENT SHOULD REALISE when a child is born that if he runs off with another girl and lets the woman bring up his child, she has to work for money, give the child security, love and protection. Some women fail in this, and the child becomes a murderer or a prostitute.

17 year old, South Africa

*An orange sun emerges over
The city, the world awakes.
Alone at the station you beg:
Approaching footsteps.... You hold out your
bowl....*

*'God bless you, Sir!'.... 'May Vishnu
Grant you happiness, Sir!'....
Ignored.... Footsteps.... Silence.*

*Your face drops.
Hours later you buy
A meagre meal, hiding it
From the other beggars.
That day your mother does not return.
You wander the streets looking, you are
alone.*

*Poverty child you suffer, you shrug.
You smile, you hold your head up
And you defy the world.
Now you are sad. Your spirit is
Crushed and broken.
The world is large and you are small.
Who cares about you?*

*All men have hopes
As they strive towards their destinies,
Someone must be watching.*

14 year old, India

I WOULD TRY to divert industry in new directions, e.g. the silicon chip and I have a few inventions of my own.

15 year old, Scotland

INCREASE AID to developing countries.

15 year old, Switzerland

I WOULD ASK all the parties to meet together and talk about what is going on in the country. Then I would ask each of them to give good answers to the problems of how to run the country. When they had all given their answers I would take them into consideration and try to make a set of ideas.

11 year old, England

ONE OF MY POLICIES would be slum clearance. So many families live in overcrowded, unhealthy homes or have no homes at all, while others have far more space than they need. I would like to try and even out the distribution of wealth and see that everyone had equal opportunities.

15 year old, England

RESIGN

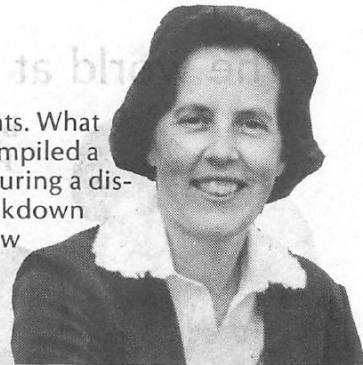
13 year old, England

MOST IMPORTANT is honesty. I would try my best not to hide anything from the people even if it brings trouble to myself, and to do the things which are best and right and not the easiest.

16 year old, South Africa

PARENTS LISTEN

'The International Year of the Child has highlighted an overwhelming need in us parents. What is the missing factor?' asks ANNEJET CAMPBELL, a mother of two. She has recently compiled a book, *Listen to the Children*, which will appear in June. The idea, she says, emerged during a discussion with 12 friends from several countries. 'All of us were aware of the massive breakdown of family life, with nearly half the marriages in places as far apart as California and Moscow breaking up,' Mrs Campbell remembers. 'All felt the threat of this breakdown to the world in which our children have to live. But our immediate concern was with the ordinary problems which every wife and mother meets, which can grow and end in disaster.' Here we print two extracts from the book:



Rule of thumb ?

by an Australian journalist

ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD he was fearless. Yet every night sucking his thumb was an essential part of going to sleep. Andrew was nine years old and despite the earnest, even frantic efforts of my wife and me, there seemed to be no end to the habit.

We had tried painting his thumb with unpleasant tinctures, and sewing up his sleeves, but the direct assault seemed merely to lead to a fruitless struggle of wills.

I was kneeling by his bed about to say prayers with him when I found myself saying, to my surprise, 'Have you ever asked Jesus to

help you stop sucking your thumb?' I can still feel the penetrating look in his eyes as he answered, 'Jesus may work for you; He doesn't for me.'

'I don't find it easy,' I replied. 'Every day I have to ask for His help on something I can't do myself.'

'What was it today?' was the next question, with an emphasis on the 'today'.

Quick as a flash I remembered, and wished I hadn't. A debate went on inside me. It was not an example that would be helpful to him. In fact it might be harmful. Yet we had always made a rule to be completely honest in our replies to genuine questions—and there was no doubting the searching interest of Andrew as his eyes levelled unblinkingly on mine.

'Well, as a matter of fact I had to ask Jesus'

help not to look back at a picture on the cover of a magazine.'

'What was wrong with the picture?'

To an adult I might have replied that it was 'suggestive', but to Andrew I had to say simply, 'It was dirty.'

The final question, 'And did you look again?' was answered by a rather relieved 'No'.

Then he prayed. I don't remember the phrasing of his request for help. What I do remember is that he never sucked his thumb again.

Many years later Andrew told us that what had helped him most was that we were prepared to be dead honest with him about our needs, whether he volunteered anything or not.

A window opens

by a French woman living in Morocco

I HAD ALWAYS wanted to marry a gentleman farmer, and that was exactly what happened. In 1912 my father-in-law had settled in Morocco. It was to his 750-acre farm that Charles and I went to make our home.

My days were full, and Charles sometimes criticised me for not going with him more often into the plantations—it was invariably time to feed the baby or change his nappies. When he returned in the evening he dived into his precious newspapers while I kept to my sewing.

In 1954 the situation in Morocco was becoming serious. There was a campaign for independence but the French government was reluctant to let its protectorate go. Some friends told us about Caux, the MRA centre in Switzerland, where many solutions to political problems had begun to take shape. We decided to go.

At Caux we met many people. Charles, in true French style, argued point for point. He was very up in politics. I was not in the least interested and didn't get involved. After all, wasn't a wife's role to keep peace in the home?

Life at home hadn't turned out as I had hoped. But I had resigned myself to it—you don't get the ideal on earth and the best you can do is to learn to live together. In Caux we found that it is possible to become different. On our eighth day there, Charles asked me, 'Where would you like me to change?'

It was like a great window opening onto a

clear sky. It took my breath away. Not being a courageous person—while he boils over quite easily—I had always been afraid of making him angry. I used to suppress my own outraged feelings. Now I was at a loss for words.

Then a small incident came into my mind. 'Do you remember the day when I had read the newspaper to please you?' I asked, 'and I asked you some questions because I hadn't understood everything? Why did you tell me to go and jump in the lake?'

'Yes, I remember it very well,' Charles answered seriously. 'You had asked some thorny questions which I couldn't answer. It was easier to say you were stupid than to admit my ignorance. I am sorry.'

Urge

The cork of the champagne bottle had popped and the foam could freely overflow. For the first time the way was open for us to say everything to each other, without fear and without quarrelling.

We walked down across the lawn to a seat. There we opened our notebooks and we each made four columns, heading them absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. Also a list of all the people whose lives were involved with ours, at the top he and I, then our parents, children, servants, workers, friends, enemies....

In silence we began to see where we had fallen short. I used to think myself so honest. But what about all those secret thoughts which, in the name of domestic peace, I took care not to reveal to Charles? Weren't they dishonesty? And the dream picture I indulged in of that marvellous husband,

which was my escape from the reality I found too hard? Wasn't that impurity?

Charles discovered that his frankness with me often had a streak of cruelty in it, and was totally devoid of love.

I have a vivid memory of the urge that took hold of us, the freedom to say everything. With it came the courage to be open about the most difficult things.

As I was getting off my chest all the deceptions which kept us apart, and as Charles realised what his attitude had cost me, an awful discovery began to dawn on him: the colonial regime was right there in us. Our relationship had been just like that between the French, who made decisions without asking others' advice, and the Moroccans who kept quiet for fear of becoming worse off than before.

We returned to Morocco with a new sensitivity to human needs.

At a time when French and Moroccans hardly met each other, a leader of the independence movement learnt of the change in us.

Hearing that we had stopped having wine or spirits—which are an offence to the Moroccans in whose country we were—he was intrigued and invited us to lunch.

During the meal trust was born. A few weeks later he and Charles took the plane for Caux together. Upon their return to Morocco this man took courageous action which led the country to independence without bloodshed.

'Listen to the Children' by Annejet Campbell will be available in late June from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ. Paperback £2.25, hardback £5.30 both postage paid.

The world at one

by Anne Hartnell



I LOVE CHILDREN. For seven and a half years I worked first in a children's home and then lived with a family. So I was surprised

at my reluctance, three years after Chris and I were married, to consider starting a family.

I was scared of the responsibility of parenthood. Would I be any good as a parent? Would I be able to give the beginnings of a faith to our child? Would I be able to help him to cope with the demands and pressures of life?

Just recently our son, David, had his first birthday. It is fascinating to watch his personality develop and assert itself—his sense of fun, rebellion, mischief and love of life.

When he was a few months old we had to decide whether or not he should be given the whooping cough vaccination—which had been attacked on TV and in the press because it had caused brain damage in some children. It's one thing to decide something for yourself and suffer any consequences

but quite frightening when it may affect someone else.

We talked with our doctor, parents and medical friends. Then we prayed that God would show us what was right. Finally we felt at peace and that he should have the vaccination. He had a series of three injections and is fine.

Our great security as parents is that we believe that God has a plan for David's life as He has for everyone. We are entrusted to seek out that plan and do what we feel God wants for David until he is old enough to decide for himself.

It's natural as parents to want to protect your child—from the 'wrongsort of friends', from being hurt, from making the wrong decisions. We want to prepare David to face life not to shelter him from it.

What every pupil wants to know

by Norah Cook

MY STUDENTS had one thing in common—they wanted happiness out of life. And, they said, the main ingredient of happiness was 'a marriage that worked'.

I used to ask widely different groups of students what, in their view, was an ideal home? Every group gave the same answer, 'A place where you could talk about anything.'

Most children, I found, expected high standards of sexual behaviour from their parents. And many were critical of their parents placing such value on money, possessions and power.

Our discussions did not stop at criticism. The students genuinely wanted to know how marriages could be made to work. They asked me whether I was happily married, and how this had happened.

I told them that my husband and I began each day with a time of quiet when we sought God's leading. I am academic, self-assertive, cautious about money, activist. He is a businessman, quiet, generous, relaxed. The differences in our personalities could have disrupted our marriage, but there is no incompatibility where both partners accept the blame if things go wrong and each genuinely seeks to do what is right.

For many of these children it was already too late to speak of united families since they came from homes where their parents had separated. These children in particular wanted to avoid the mistakes their parents had made. But many of them, scarred by their parents' disunity, seem incapable of forming lasting relationships.

The only answer I have found to this is my experience, proved again and again, that God can sort out the basic personality flaws which disrupt human relationships.

Grandfather's footsteps

by John Craig

MY FATHER'S FATHER died when I was sixteen. I remember a patriarchal figure with a white beard and calm eyes that radiated an inward peace.

He believed in a righteous God to whom he was accountable, and that the Authorised Version of the Bible was the inspired word of God given to guide him day after day. As a result he gave up a well-paid job as a steel furnaceman because his employers introduced Sunday working.

My father's faith was much gentler and less rigid, based more on the love of God than on His righteousness, but it was as deep and dominant in his life as his father's before him. It steered him through the turmoil of two world wars, the trials and tribulations of boom and depression in the steel industry. His was the glamorous success story of private enterprise, the 13-year-old office boy who became Chairman of his company and the respected elder statesman of his industry. His explanation of the success was given sincerely in the words, 'I have been wonderfully led'.

For me faith has meant I will fight that society accepts that man is more than an instinctive mass of animal flesh. He has a spirit. I cannot control what others do to me,



but I can decide how I react to what they do.

If I react with the animal instincts of hate (aggression), fear (running away, giving in or lashing out) or greed (grabbing for yourself or exploiting weaker folk) I add to the disruption of society.

I pray that my grandchildren will search for a faith of their own. We will only answer the problems of the world as we accept that God has a plan, and a place in that plan for each of us which, if we are willing, we can find.



'Will tomorrow's child continue to be a victim of materialism and the drive for self-fulfilment, and be starved of a sense of God?' So asks the invitation (left) to a conference for families at the MRA Assembly Centre in Switzerland. 'How can today's parents, teachers and children learn together to share, to care and to be responsible for the world they live in?'