

## THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

*In 1923 Eglantyne Jebb, founder of the Save the Children Fund, drafted a Declaration of the Rights of the Child commonly known as the Declaration of Geneva, which formed the basis of the work of the Save the Children Fund and the Charter of the International Union for Child Welfare. In 1959 the United Nations proclaimed its own fuller Declaration of the Rights of the Child and this was adopted by the Fund in 1963 to avoid the confusion of two charters. Now, fifty years after the drafting of the original charter, Dr. Clair Isbister, Consultant Paediatrician at the Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonards, New South Wales, Australia, asks for greater awareness of the needs of children today and the situations that will endanger them. We reproduce a portion of an address she gave at the National Council of Women of New South Wales.<sup>1</sup>*

There are great problems in our society today that are beyond the capacity of parents and some of these problems are being permitted and even created by academic experts, governments and fanatic, selfish minorities who are not giving adequate consideration to the rights of children. Children have no votes and cannot speak for themselves. I hope to make you think about some of the unjust things we are doing to them, and of the parents and children who are in what we may call "high risk" situations. . .

. . . We cannot see what the future holds for our children, but we can give them the benefit of our knowledge, we can show them the family patterns that have worked successfully and joyfully, we can tell them of our successful experiences and show them what is worth saving from the past. There is no turning back the clock, men and women must soon now be treated as of equal importance in the community and they must take equal responsibility. But I am thoroughly tired of hearing those who have failed at marriage trying to throw out the good with the bad. Let us look at the Rights of Children and put their needs first.

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<sup>1</sup> *The World's Children, December 1973.*