

HANSENOLOGIA INTERNATIONALIS

"Leprous" children, prior and after the "Year"

EDITORIAL

By the time this editorial is in press, 1979 will be approaching its close. We sincerely hope that children all over the world, of all nationalities and races, poor or less poor, sick or healthy, will have somehow been benefited by the multiple and widely publicized activities occurring during this International Year of the Child.

However, children with "leprosy", who were, to the average citizen, merely "lepers" prior to the "Year", will remain "lepers" after the "Year", rejected for the rest of their lives.

"Not so", could be the eventual conclusion in eventual articles written about the "Year", repeating that "things are different now", "stigma is vanishing", "the public is being enlightened", "leprosy is just a disease like any other", "curable", etc.

Seeing is believing. We shall believe when we see that a child may casually report to her teacher that the cause of her being late was delay at her "leprosy" clinic — without

the class disbanding in terror, led or followed by the teacher herself; or when a child with a few tuberculoid "leprosy" lesions is allowed to play with his mates — without transforming the playground into an instant-Sahara.

Some may prefer to wait for events like that to happen one day. We will not, and we invite other endemic countries to follow the examples of Brazil, Portugal, Bolivia and Costa Rica.

We stick to our principles, which are exactly the most elementary principles of communication: no education is possible with counter-educational "labels of primary force", no enlightenment is feasible with the darkest epithet in history.

Those principles have been proved and the whole non-leprological world knows they were. *No dose of wishful thinking will ever immunize children against leprostigma, social rejection, biding, and aggravation of their hanseniasis.*

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