

24th International Montessori Congress

Paris, France, 2-4 July 2001



THE FUTURE OF A.M.I.

Renilde Montessori

It all has been too fast. We could have done with another day and this is extraordinary because in the afternoon of the last day of a conference people begin to walk out and there's much shuffling of chairs etc. But here, everybody stayed and waited for more: our final words to you all.

It's been an extraordinary congress. I've seen quite a few Montessori congresses; I think this is the best to date. I think that Camillo is going to make a comment on the Congress more than anything else and I am supposed to talk about the future of the A.M.I., which of course, is the future of Humanity.

Many, many people have come to me and said –“What can we do?” Well, it so happens that A.M.I. has gone back to what it used to be once upon a time. I think probably many of you have heard me repeat over and over that once upon a time, at the beginning of the century - in the twenties and the thirties - it was called the Montessori Movement, and for many decades it had been stagnant. It is beginning to move again.

First of all, it is very interesting what Mr. Roberfroid said; there are actually many young people around. You know, it is as if this had become a geriatric association! And now, little by little (we missed one generation in the middle somewhere) it is being filled with youth, and youth with enthusiasm. People tend to get old and pessimistic; but we need the youth, and the enthusiasm too. In this congress, this has been what has appeared.

A.M.I. has many plans. People were saying: - “What can we do?” I want to tell you what we want to do, what we need to do.

Apart of fact of continuing to champion the children, always the children - unborn, born, young, older - that is our main goal. Maria Montessori was called the ‘champion of the child’; well, we can all go forth and be champions of the child. Any child, anytime, anywhere. That is our bottom-line, that is our leitmotif, our work.

But - very concretely - in our work we have courses, Training centres where people are trained to teach 0 to 3 year olds, 3 to 6 year olds, 6 to 12 year olds; and they are all isolated. In some places there are courses for 3 to 12, though this is rather rare. Ireland is the only place where two courses have been done together and we are very proud of Ireland because they did that. But what our ideal is - and this is particularly addressed to the younger generation, who looks askance at us when we venture the idea - we really must have, in the long run, a university. Our programs have to become university programs. Maria Montessori wished that and she gave it a name, which was a very beautiful name: ‘Università per la scienza dello sviluppo dell’ Uomo’ (Renilde: -‘Era così, Camillo?’ Camillo: - ‘Si, è così.’)

There is a first step we could possibly take in this direction, which is to ensure that our courses at least give 0 to 12 training. A three-year-course: first year, 0 to 3, then 3 to 6, then 6 to 12 - as a

unit, because then at least we shall know something about Human Development. If we only know about children from 3 to 6, it's like being a specialist of the left nostril - that doesn't really work. We have to create these courses as a first step towards the University.

Another aim and ambition that we have is to establish an International Study Centre, in which the work of Maria Montessori continues to be studied. You know very well she always said we have to be 'scientist of the child':

"Teachers have to be scientists of the child."

Some of us are, some of us are not. But that is what we need to aim for: to have an International Study Centre where all the published work of Maria Montessori is present, where people can come and study her work. A very important idea and we hope we are taking our first steps in that direction.

Another thing that is extraordinarily important is to begin to implement our beautiful program for the adolescent. Everybody's aware of the extraordinary importance of the adolescent and the abandonment of the adolescent, the invisibility of the adolescent. Maria Montessori has a beautiful program. The trouble is that when people read it they find it too simple and they say: - "Well, is that all? Yes, that is all!" Read it please. You will find it in: From childhood to adolescence. Ponder it; think of our adolescents and think how we can implement those plans that Maria Montessori had. If we get on with that, we will do very well.

So it is up to you, really, to all the young and enthusiastic people. It's a delight to see you together. It is always a delight to see each other. It has been a great congress, fantastically well organized in the most marvellous quiet way, by actually three people with very good helpers. I congratulate you, because you have done it with beauty, with elegance and with intelligence. Thank you very much.