



The Montessori OBSERVER

Politics

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From left to right, Jack Jones, Mike O'Mara, Lorenzo Gaztanaga and Susan Gaztanaga at the organizing meeting for the Maryland Public Assembly in Silver Spring, Maryland — March 1, 1997

IMAC Testifies before the U.S. Department of Education

In November, 1996, **Lee Havis** testified for the IMAC accrediting agency in a hearing conducted by the U.S. Department of Education. The testimony was presented before the Department's National Advisory Committee in Washington, DC—in support of IMAC's standards and authority for accreditation of Montessori teacher education programs in the United States.

The hearing was to consider the continuing recognition of another agency, known as MACTE, which conflicts with IMAC standards and accreditation activities for Montessori teacher education. The Society is gravely concerned that any such non-IMAC government recognition would detract from the public acceptance of IMAC standards and authority in the field.

Havis testified that government recognition of the other agency was not necessary and that its non-inclusive nature and lack of proper standards was an obstacle to complete public awareness of Montessori education. At the hearing,

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New Citizen Political Action in Maryland

On March 1, 1997, a group of citizen activists met in Silver Spring, Maryland to form a new political organization known as *Maryland Public Assembly*. Organizers indicate that the Assembly will provide a means for greater citizen participation in the political process in Maryland—to create a platform of issues and endorse candidates who will best reflect the broad public interest for more responsive government in the state.

At the meeting, an interim state central committee was formed, consisting of **Susan and Lorenzo Gaztanaga** (Baltimore), **Jack Jones** (Prince George's Co.) and **Lee Havis** (Montgomery Co.). The Assembly is open to all Maryland citizens of voting age, and is designed to encourage consensus decision-making through the fair and open participation of all interested citizens throughout the state.

Havis, who was elected interim Assembly chairperson, stated that a permanent state central committee will ultimately be determined by representative voting in each of the local jurisdictions of the state. He indicated that this type of grassroots political organization is vitally necessary because of the many problems with the current electoral system. He stated that "I believe our membership will grow as more people become aware of

this opportunity to help create a positive change to the present political situation. Our written rationale for the Assembly clearly explains the important need for our efforts."

The Assembly's rationale sets forth the essential problems with the current political system; i.e., favoring status quo incumbent candidates, undue influence of special interests, lack of accurate voter information about candidates, and economic obstacles for new alternative public interest candidates. The statement also points out how the new Assembly will help solve these problems by offering public interest candidate endorsements and a wider voter awareness of issues through the grassroots involvement of ordinary citizens.

Havis indicated that current Assembly efforts are being directed to building up the initial membership, organizing the local committees and planning for a consensus platform of issues. He emphasized the distinctive and innovative nature of this grassroots political organization that could have a significant impact far beyond the state of Maryland.

For further information, to receive a copy of the Assembly's Articles, rationale, application for membership or other information, contact: **Lee Havis, Chairperson, Maryland Public Assembly, 912 Thayer Ave. #205, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Tel. (301) 589-0733.**

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Politics

by Lee Haviv

"...the child...Never is he taken into account in politics..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.43

Although politics is very much involved with education today, its focus of attention is not generally placed on the central reality of the child's true "normalized" nature; i.e., loving order, constant in intellectual activity and self-disciplined. Modern politics tends to approach the child essentially as an object to be molded according to the superficial needs of society. So, parents and teachers seeking to implement true Montessori education with children must not rely on support from the existing structure of politics and government — but rather on their own creative work to overcome the detrimental political entanglement of education and the state.

Education and the State

"Education...no longer matters...only to children and their parents, but also to the state...mothers, fathers, politicians; all must combine in their respect and help for this delicate work of formation."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.15

The state is ordinarily involved in education most significantly through the operation of its own system of government schools — a virtual monopoly in education where the only non-government alternatives are often severely limited by restrictive licensing and certification laws. Compulsory school laws and economic limitations further force many parents to send their children to the free government schools which have now become well established in almost every nation of the world. In these state-run schools, the children are allowed very little freedom in view of the political methods that control their operation.

Political Methods

"Political methods...today offer freedom of speech and vote without education; the right to express thoughts where there are no thoughts to express, and no power of thinking."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Hum. Potential*, p.42

Modern political methods tend to limit personal freedom in many ways — and this limitation is accordingly imposed on children in the system of state-run schools. Government educational standards therefore reflect a state-controlled

curriculum and group instruction that can severely divert the child from its own individual path of development. Even the lofty goals of Democracy cannot assure a commitment to individual liberty in the government school system.

Democracy

"...humanity...seeks, as their greatest good, what they call Democracy...What irony! to choose one's rulers! But those who rule cannot free anybody from the chains which bind all..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.16-17

While Democracy may speak for the voting majority, there is no guarantee that this majority will respect or dignify the ultimate authority of underlying laws of nature. Public officials must follow and enforce whatever may be popular in education — regardless of its repressive effect on the child's normal development. A form of far-reaching, if subtle, tyranny is therefore imposed on all children who are caught up in the system of government schooling.

Tyranny

"How can we speak of Democracy or Freedom when from the very beginning of life we mold the child to undergo tyranny, to obey a dictator? How can we expect democracy when we have reared slaves? Real freedom begins at the beginning of life, not at the adult stage."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World*, p.61

The tyranny of ordinary politics is conveyed to children through a traditional government education of adult-controlled curriculum, group instruction and a teacher-imposed grading system. Such tyranny tends to restrict the child to the role of docile slave and victim to the forces of external authority. By contrast, the "new education" follows a path of freeing the human spirit for its own self-expression — to deal with such fundamental questions as peace in an entirely different manner from ordinary politics.

Question of Peace

"The question of peace cannot be discussed from a merely negative point of view, as politics ordinarily regards it in the narrow sense of avoiding war..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. and Peace*, p.xi

While true education affirms a positive approach to creating peace, ordinary politics is purely negative in its efforts to prevent external conflict. In a Montessori

classroom, the question of peace is resolved by the children themselves — the teacher being present only to control the environment by her commitment to such infinite and eternal laws of nature as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three Montessori principles guide the teacher to study the underlying psychological problem in each situation of disorder — to discover and allow the child to reveal its own true nature in a way that is completely foreign to the approach of ordinary politics.

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Lee Haviv, Executive Director

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INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
The International Montessori Society is sponsored by Educational Services, Inc., a non-profit corporation organized in Maryland, USA. The Society's purpose is to support the effective application of Montessori principles throughout the world.

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Conflict and Dispute

When children are in constant dispute and conflict (see *Observer*, November, 1996), the Montessori teacher cannot always allow them to resolve the problem entirely on their own. Although many disputes are indeed usually best left for the children to settle themselves, the teacher should intervene when the problem is too great for the children to work out on their own.

In such situations, the teacher should not simply separate the disputing children, since this would interrupt an important aspect of social learning. Such forced separation would violate Montessori principles through a control of the child. Since Andrea and Terry are so obviously drawn towards each other, they need to resolve their relationship first before they can find their own independent, self-directed interests in the environment.

Since Andrea is the "bossy" element in the conflict, she will be taken as the hub child, and Terry (the dependent one) as the "other child" in the environment to control. The teacher here might intervene by asking Terry what she wants in the situation, and give some practical life lessons in grace and courtesy to achieve her desire. Perhaps Terry could find a more polite and persistent way to seek Andrea's cooperation.

As Terry is directed to give more attention to her own expression and behavior with Andrea, she will gain a greater self-confidence in her own social skills with others. In time, Terry will probably lose interest in relating with Andrea at all as she finds her own independent activities and interests elsewhere in the environment.

Leaving Mom

Three year old Nell has been in the classroom for two weeks, and clings to her mom when it is time for her to go in the morning. A period of 15-30 minutes each day are involved in "good-byes" and other efforts to disengage Nell from the mother's attention — before she can finally leave her mother, to get involved in the classroom activity. Since the problem of leaving mom does not seem to be resolving itself so far, the teacher wonders what else she should be doing to help Nell make a smooth transition to the classroom work — to finally resolve the extended drama and disruption that has been the customary routine each day thus far.

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The Psychological Problem

"The problem for us does not lie in the political action to save one nation or another; our efforts must be devoted, rather, to solving a psychological problem involving all mankind..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. and Peace*, p.60

Montessori teaching views education as an internal psychological study of the human personality; i.e., not the conventional idea of mere transmission of an adult-controlled curriculum. By contrast, popular politics limits the government educational system to such superficial effects as grades and tests. Whereas ordinary politics starts with a preconceived notion of the child as an external object to manipulate and control, Montessori education starts with the child as a neutral being of vast, unknown potential.

Neutral Being

"If we wish...to discuss a pure being, a being who has neither philosophical ideas nor a political ideology and is equally removed from both, we will find this neutral being in the child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. and Peace*, p.118

The "new education" considers the child as a neutral being — an unknown entity with its own infinite and inherent possibilities for self-development. While conventional politics seeks to influence and mold this neutral being to fit the needs of adult society, the "new education" seeks to allow the child to reveal its own true nature in the world. Such a "new education" requires a corresponding new political order to support its full expression in society.

New Political Order

"We are entering now upon a new political order that must provide for...the child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.4

Montessori education expresses itself beyond the classroom through many forms of social and political interaction with others. Home schooling and the larger movement for educational choice are growing trends in society which are bringing about a new political order in greater harmony with the normal development of children. As parents, educators and ordinary citizens find themselves in greater general agreement on fundamental educational issues, major differences of personality, philosophy and belief can be successfully overcome.

General Agreement

"The Greeks had a new political ideal — that of freedom. They thought it monstrous that one man should command and all had to obey. Laws were made by general agreement, and then must be respected."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Hum. Pot.*, p.71

The "new education" brings people together from many diverse backgrounds and points of view — to work together through their broad general agreement on such fundamental principles as individual liberty. A consensus decision-making can then be employed for specific action that would not be possible within the more exclusionary forms of traditional politics. A strong group can be formed through mutual trust in a similar manner to that of normalized children working together in the Montessori elementary environment.

Strong Group

"The child of six likes to mix with others in a group wherein each has a different status. A leader is chosen, and is obeyed, and a strong group is formed."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Hum. Pot.*, p.4

The Montessori elementary classroom shows how children can create a strong group to regulate their affairs in a peaceful manner for the benefit of all —

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Indiana Graduate of IMS Training Course

On February 15, 1997, the Society issued its latest Montessori teaching credential to Indiana course graduate, **Sunila Madiman**. A native of Pune, India, Ms. Madiman completed the Society's course of study through correspondence while working as a science teacher at the Children's House school in Indianapolis, Indiana (U.S.A.).

Ms. Madiman came to the United States recently to help provide a better education for her children, who are now attending Purdue University in Indiana. Previously, she had been a science teacher in India for the past 17 years.

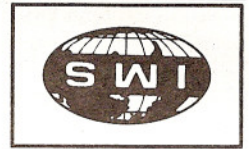
In the United States, Ms. Madiman acquired a position as a science teacher at the Children's House, and soon became interested in Montessori teaching. In September, 1995 she enrolled into the Montessori teacher education program which she recently completed in February, 1997.

Ms. Madiman says that her experience in the course has deepened her experience of the child as being its own creator

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working together in harmony under the authority of fundamental laws of nature. This normalized political order provides a useful model for the organization of political activity in adult society as well. However, such a new "normalized" politics requires a recognition and respect for common human values.

Human Values

"...a universal movement for human reconstruction...is not limited to any one nation nor to any particular political trend...the simple realization of human values...that is what is of primary interest over and above all political or national differences."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.13

Effective political action for the "new education" can only be built up by a mutual trust founded on such common human values as honesty, truth, integrity and love. In this way, even a small number of persons can effect great changes through their mutual agreement and joint action for the "normalized" child. Such political activity with others must be part of every teacher's work beyond the classroom — to assure that the value of her being with children will not be ultimately lost to the prevailing prejudices and limiting beliefs of the surrounding culture.

The Teacher's Work

"Not in the service of any political or social creed should the teacher work, but in the service of the complete human being..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Hum. Pot.*, p.2

Montessori teachers cannot rely on the dominant political institutions to support their efforts in society — and so they must find new ways to speak out for the

"normalized" child with others. Without a commitment to this broader political action, the teacher's work in the classroom would remain limited and restricted by the overriding repression of prejudicial politics. Creating the "new education" therefore requires not only a personal commitment to Montessori teaching in the classroom, but also a broader interest and commitment to the new "normalized" child in society — even to act with others in the realm of politics.

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: (3-6) for child-centered environment. Must be committed to excellence. School is growth-oriented, non-profit. Job offers competitive 10-month salary, optional summer employment, signing bonus to \$10,000, paid sick and personal days, liberal legal holidays, continuing education, opportunity for administration. Send resume or call: Montessori Center for Early Learning, 143 Beardsley Parkway, Trumbull, CT 06611-5251, Tel. (203) 372-2358.

Montessori Teachers: toddler, primary and elementary directresses. School is committed to excellence with dedicated, supportive staff and excellent benefits. Located 10 minutes from beach in Orange County. Send resume to: Sharon Kamp, 10221 Slater Ave. #103, Fountain Valley, CA 92708, Tel. (714) 531-8623.

Montessori Teachers: Montessori Charter School of Douglas County, Colorado is hiring for primary, elementary and head of school. New Montessori Public School opening in Fall, 1997. Located just south of Denver. Send resume to: Donna Mitchell, 8741 S. Cedarwood Lane, Highlands Ranch, CO 80126.

Indiana Graduate

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— and that the only role for the adult can be indirect assistance in the environment. Her future plans include a return to India to teach and continue other related study.

Since its initial operation in 1982, the Society's Montessori course has graduated over 60 students throughout the world. Many graduates are now successfully operating their own schools and others are active in many ways in the field of Montessori education.

Contact the Society to receive an application or further information about its independent study course for Montessori teacher preparation.

IMAC Testifies

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Sandi West represented the MACTE agency, to continue its recognition.

Ms. West indicated that the prior MACTE director, Joy Turner, had recently resigned. It was later learned that Turner's resignation was due to a conflict over the participation of non-accredited programs in MACTE. In a letter of October 31, 1996, Ms. Turner stated her belief that the MACTE Board "acted irresponsibly in passing a by-law which changes the MACTE purpose...MACTE is no longer the inclusive accrediting agency which we struggled for 20 years to create".

On January 27, 1997, IMAC submitted further written comments concerning this matter which will again come before the National Advisory Committee in 1997.

Contact the Society to obtain further details or express your views on this matter. A copy of the IMAC testimony and position is available to any interested person.