

Graduation in Toronto

COPY of SPEECH given at the FIRST GRADUATION CEREMONY of the TORONTO MONTESSORI INSTITUTE, Toronto, Canada, June 9th, 1972, by graduating student.

I want to speak on behalf of the students of this first class. We spent a lot of time in this past year on the floor, looking at the universe from a new position, in the posture of a child. It has caused many new thoughts to come into our minds, but tonight I can only speak about a few of these, the ones which seem most relevant and important.

So, I have stated my „aim“ and will try to „isolate“ the essential things to say. The „control of error“ will be in these little notes I have made beforehand. I have made the equipment „attractive“; do you not see this beautiful carnation in my lapel? And the age level I suppose could be from 20 years to 65 years or even more.

The first thing we have to say is a most profound statement of gratitude to all those people who made this course possible. We are proud to be in the vanguard of a great thrust of progressive Montessori action in Canada, and we say, „thank you“ to the following people, who are too numerous to be mentioned individually by their names.

Initially to the small group, perhaps only one person, who three years ago made a determination to have a teacher training course in Canada, in the face of many obstacles. It was a wise and courageous decision. Next, to the directors of the Toronto Montessori Schools who gave us a base and managed to put all the pieces together, just like a jigsaw puzzle map. To

our three trainers and registrar. They were a whale of a team and I shall have a little more to say later about them. To our visiting lecturers and examiners who shared their wisdom with us and to Dr. Montessori who visited us three or four times, bringing a message of inspiration. Finally, to all the teachers in the Montessori schools, the public schools, and special schools, who generously shared their experience with us, in observations and in teaching practice.

To all of these we say „thank you“ for the opportunity you gave us. And now the question must be asked, what have we done with this opportunity? A year ago you might have described the students on this course by choosing words such as self-important, loquacious, knowledgeable, arrogant, prejudiced, important, vain, sceptical, grandiose, etc. Just as we do in the „logical adjective game“. I am afraid that many of these adjectives would have made a good fit!

But due to the untiring and unusual efforts made by our training team, there has been an occurrence which I am tempted to describe as phenomenon. It seemed as if three „action verbs“ came to work upon us during the year, and if you want to know the names of these we must play the game so often played in the *Casa*, thinking of words that start with „ch“. The answer is: „challenged, chastened and changed“.

We were „challenged“ to locate in our

selves the special qualities demanded of a Montessori teacher. We were „chastened” to discover that these qualities are not easily achieved, that it is incredibly difficult to be simple, and we were „changed” by means of the efforts we made.

Now we realize that the change is incomplete, but we know that an inexorable process has begun, which may continue all of our lives. In reality, our graduation is not a moment of „arrival” but simply a „beginning”, just like the first step of a „three-period lesson”.

Some of us will be starting new schools, others will teach in existing schools, a few will perhaps use the Montessori principles in a new context. Whatever the job, I think there will always be times when we are discouraged or depressed by circumstances. At these moments we should remind ourselves of the other side

of Maria Montessori’s work, the „big side” if you like, „the new child in the new world”, which has been mentioned tonight. The difficulties are great indeed, but the possibilities are enormous!

We all know that nobody could express these ideas quite as well as Maria Montessori herself, so I would like to conclude with a few phrases from her beautiful book „Peace and Education”. *)
„But now that man has entered into the realm of the stars, he can rise to his full height; he can present himself to the universe as a new being. He it is who is the child, the new child. He it is who is the new man, entering into the third dimension, the man predestined to undertake the conquest of the infinite. Such a conquest is a work of great magnitude and it demands the help of all men. But to bind them together they will find no other cement than love”.

Don Greenhow

*) „Peace and Education”, Page 29. (T.P.H., Adyar, Madras, India).

Some current information

A.M.I. Pedagogical Committee.

The General Director has proposed to the Executive Committee to invite a restricted group of Montessori experts to form part of a small committee to be called A.M.I. Pedagogical Committee. Its task would be to assist him in his work to voice, whenever needed, the pedagogical policy of A.M.I. and to carry on in case he is not able to do so.

The Council approved the proposal which is in accordance to art. 10 of the Articles of Association.

Very numerous the committee should never be, but changes can eventually be made.

It was a difficult choice. There are so many to choose from. He needs people who have always collaborated with A.M.I., who have contact with other areas of work than only their own, who express themselves and understand english easily. Also of those there are a great many. So he just made a choice for the first nucleus. Their contact will have to be through correspondence and a coordinator will have to be appointed.

We trust that this choice will be accep-