

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE



G.J. Portielje

In this first issue in 1993 I want to tell you – and our new members especially – about AMI. The letters AMI stand for **A**ssociation **M**ontessori **I**nternationale and that organization is not just any organization among many other societies and associations in the field of education.

Our Association Montessori Internationale is *unique*. Its uniqueness stems from the fact that it was Dr. Maria Montessori herself who gave the first impetus to the founding of the AMI. She had several reasons for her desire to establish an international organization. One was to unite Montessori movements worldwide.

Another and, in my opinion at least, equally important reason, however, was that, as time went on, under the name of 'Montessori' – partial applications and modifications of her ideas spread more

and more widely, to which she personally was increasingly opposed. Gradually her ideas became more and more diluted.

So, to protect the work of Dr. Montessori, and to provide her with means for the furtherance of her research, the AMI was founded in 1929 at the first International Congress in Helsingør (Denmark). That group of people devoted to Dr. Montessori must still have been rather small. Nevertheless, in the meantime, much work was done, for three years later, during the second International Congress held at Nice (France), Dr. Montessori made the foundation of the AMI publicly known. She and her son Mario were elected President and General Director respectively, for their lifetime.

After Dr. Montessori's death (6th May, 1952) the need to protect and further her work remained, perhaps more than ever. Therefore, AMI's Articles of Association, Article 3, reads: "The objectives of the Association are to maintain, propagate and further the ideas and principles of Dr. Maria Montessori for the full development of the human being".

AMI, through its Committees, Branch Office in the United States and others, aims to accomplish the objectives by, to name but a few:

- organizing *Study Conferences* (attended mostly by and meant for people working in the educational field, sharing and deepening knowledge);
- organizing refresher courses, seminars and workshops;
- assisting in organizing *International Congresses* in various parts of the world (open to the general public as well), suggesting themes and topics, names of speakers, lecturers, etc.;

- being involved with reprinting and/or translating into other languages, books written by Dr. Montessori;
- providing and exchanging information, which often leads to the forming of nuclei of interest resulting in establishing schools, groups of parents and teachers, national societies and so on;
- helping in research;
- trying to give guidance and unity and to create clarity in the confusion that arises from many different – and sometimes conflicting – interpretations of 'Montessori';
- accrediting centres/courses – in four continents – where people may be trained according to the principles and practices of education as envisaged by Dr. Maria Montessori;
- organizing meetings for the benefit of Directors of Training;
- being accredited as NGO (Non Governmental Organization) to the United Nations Organization.

I am well aware of the fact that to a large group of my readers most of the above-mentioned might be stale news. However, I wanted to go through things once more because of the following:

- Do you realize the importance of the large efforts made by countless volunteers enabling AMI to function? I want to salute and to recognize them.
- All of us should keep a lookout for young people, to attract them, to motivate them to become the volunteers of the immediate future; a future which starts today.

I cannot help but say a few words about money, the root of all evil! While I am hesitant to broach the subject of money as I know that many people find it vulgar, still I am going to bring it up. Not everything can be done by volunteers, however devoted to Montessori. Office staff, equipment, travel expenses and many more costs have to be paid so AMI simply needs income. More income can only be realized by membership growth and that is where YOU come in!! It is up to you to find new members to safeguard AMI's future.

I am really touched and very grateful to everybody who showed interest, sympathy and friendship to me during and after the period of my severe illness in the past year.

Let us continue our work through Montessori for the sake of the Child with might and main.

Bob Portielje
President