

# The Aims of the Social Party of the Child

## Maria Montessori

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child was accepted officially on 20 November 1959 by the United Nations. Mario Montessori hoped that, '[t]he affirmation of these rights can only bring universal unity among men, which is the necessary first leg towards dreams not yet dreamt.' He pointed out that Maria Montessori had been one of the pioneers in the field of children's rights and during the 1930s was working on taking concrete steps. She founded the 'Social Party of the Child', a Research Centre and a Centre of Study of the Child. With the advent of the war the Party's supporters and promoters were dispersed. Moreover, Dr Montessori's centre in Laren, Netherlands, was occupied by the German army, which meant that her efforts had to be put on the back burner, although she continued to cherish these dreams. In spite of her internment in the compound of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, during the years in India, Dr Montessori continued to campaign for her hopes. In May 1941, she wrote "A Step towards the Future" for The Theosophist. A copy of this article together with the aims of The Social Party of the Child appears here.

We affirm that the Child has not only the Right to Live, but also that of Being Considered a Citizen of the State.

As a citizen, the Child must be recognized in its human dignity and it must be respected as the Builder of Man. The importance of the child's personality must be consecrated among the moral principles of humanity, because upon the child depends not only the physical constitution of man, but also his moral character. The future of Society is therefore connected with the Child as unconditionally as effects are connected with their causes.

In stating the importance of childhood to society, we affirm that the child must have rights equal to those of other citizens before the law and the institutions directing social organisation. Therefore we aim to establish:

I That authoritative institutions be formed to represent the interests of the child, wherever constitutional powers are in function. That, therefore:

- A. Special Members be elected in Parliament, with the mandate to represent the Rights of the Child and of Youth in all legislative discussions.
- B. A special Ministry, The Ministry of the Child, be instituted to fulfil the practical exigencies of the recognition of the Rights of the Child as a Citizen of the State, and to coordinate all existing provisions taken to guarantee the life and the development of children.
- II That the rights of the Child be considered in every law reform, and in every decision of public interest, so that further social progress will include a parallel progress for the life of the Child.
- III That the Ministry of Education act, in all questions concerning the organization of schools and programmes, on the decision of the Ministry of the Child and the Members of Parliament who defend its vital interests.
- IV That Compulsory Education of children and young people have as its basis

the protection of man during the course of his physical and spiritual development, and take into consideration the child's vital and natural needs. That, therefore, the programmes and the form of practical, intellectual and social education be conceived in such a way as to respond to the demands of culture, indispensable for social organization, in accordance with the natural exigencies of human development.

- V That the care necessary for the physical and spiritual welfare of childhood constitute an indispensable part of that compulsory instruction.
- VI That a special instruction in the physical and psychic care of the new generation be made a legally recognized obligation on the part of those who wish to marry; and that a certificate of completion of these studies constitute one of the necessary documents for the celebration of matrimony.
- VII That, at the ceremony celebrating the marriage, in the reading of the mutual duties being undertaken by the couple, there be also included the duties of the parents towards their children.
- VIII That the State be the scrupulous guardian of children and assume, if found insufficient, the care taken by the family and intervene with legal power when care of the children is inadequate.
- IX That the Question of the Child be represented, and considered, in every social movement aiming to achieve Peace between peoples.
- X That childhood be considered as a Nation, the Nation of Humanity; that, since its population is the most numerous and its importance paramount, its authority outweigh that of any other

nation, as its members form part of all nations and represent their most sacred interest, the interest of Life and Existence. That, therefore, when a League of Nations is formed with the aim of organizing a peaceful society, the Nation of Childhood be legally represented.

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