

Free the Child from Adult Domination

Way to Regenerate Society and Create a New World

*(By DR. MARIA MONTESSORI, the
Famous Italian Educator)*

A world disappointed with itself and filled with disquieting fears of the future must look for sound rebuilding not to the regulated machine or the unchained worker or the liberated woman, but to the emancipated child. In the child, released at last from the domination of the adult and free to fulfil his own pure childhood personality, lies the hope of the regeneration of society and the creation of a new world.

WE MUST turn to the child as a Messiah, but we must turn to him not as the being in whom our responsibilities are centred, but as an individual. The child is not an adult on a small scale, but an individual possessed of his own characteristic life which has its end in itself. The failure of the adult to recognise the independent life of the child leads to the imposition of a cruel and socially evil servitude upon children. The child might fulfil his latent personality through a process carried out by himself in obedience to natural laws were it not for the efforts of the adult to pattern the child to adult standards.

It is only when the child is subjected to the usual education that he withdraws himself, dissimilates his powers in order to adapt himself to the judgment of the adult, hiding his real self, forgetting it, or burying in his self-consciousness the wealth of an expanding life whose aspirations are

an expanding life whose aspirations are frustrated.

It seems as though only a revolution by the children will bring about a recognition of their rights. The idea that the adult must change his attitude towards the child has advanced very little.

NO PARENTAL INFLUENCE

The idea behind the Russian educational practice of bringing up children to do social work is good, but I deplore the system by which the children, escaping from the domination of the family, are in turn placed under the domination of the teacher.

I would much prefer that the child be under the influence of no one. To put him into an environment in which he is compelled to do what the Communists or the Fascists want him to do is against Nature. The natural being of the child is thus always masked; he is still a slave, and no better world can be created upon this foundation. The reason is that no one seems to properly recognise the child's importance.

From the age of 13 years children should be able to earn their own living in work for which they are fitted. Today children are either without work altogether or they are free to engage in adults' work which they are unable to accomplish. Through work centres designed according to the environment—fishing near the sea, farming in the country districts, carpentry in the industrial sections—the child enters true social life little by little, and at the same time becomes independent of the adult, an independence which gives him strength of character.

All organisations which have mobilised children have helped them in their struggle for this independence. Among these is the Boy Scout movement. They have aided not so much by their aims or methods as such, but because they bring the children together; they take them away from their families and allow them to feel their personalities, to take their places in society, and to feel their importance.

MUST ACT FOR HIMSELF

MUST ACT FOR HIMSELF

When I was in America last, the predominant idea seemed to be that the more money spent on buildings and equipment and material with which to play, the more the children were being educated. The chief effort was to augment the child's environment, and this was done without consideration of the ability of the child to

absorb it or whether the environment met his spiritual needs.

A protest against this richness of equipment is not meant to deny anything to the child, but merely to insist that education should aim to keep the child's world one in which he can guide himself.

A great store of things merely creates for him a confusion in which he cannot find his way.

These things which make him call upon an adult for guidance are useless. The child must act by himself. The more he acts by himself, lives by himself, and chooses by himself, the more he is being truly educated. For it is in the effort of doing things that his individuality develops itself. And it is this principle that must be introduced into his school and family life.