



e-bulletin



January 2015 President's Letter on our shared commitment to early years development

As AMI's new President, I would like to start 2015 by recognising the extraordinary service of my predecessor André Roberfroid, which fortunately has not come entirely to an end, but has entered a new phase after 10 years: André continues to put his expertise at our service in his new role as AMI Global Ambassador for special projects. The success AMI has seen, the transformations that have taken place within AMI over the past decade, and our relations with affiliates, countries and other Montessori organisations, are fitting tributes to his leadership and that of Lynne Lawrence. Also at the heart of AMI's organisation he has exerted influence on many of us, including myself, inspiring us to even greater engagement in the cause of children's rights.

The AMI membership confirmed my appointment as President only eight months ago, and obviously I am still doing my introductory "rounds", as I wish, and need, to build up as complete a picture as possible to help us map out our future.

Each discussion, each visit, each new piece of literature read has thrown up insights and questions that need considerable rumination and digesting — which is why at this stage of my young term this message can only be brief, yet hopefully still show you some aspects of my personal motivations to engage wholeheartedly with Montessori, and the AMI community.

That we need to make this difference is so very clear



What I have seen over the past eight months in the comparatively "light" exposure I have had to some of the work you all do has only reinforced a number of thoughts I had on taking on the role of President.

First, we recognise a tremendous challenge in being able to influence the way the early years of a child's life are viewed: we need to work on complete recognition of how extraordinarily influential these early months and years are, not only for each individual but also for society.

Second, the impression of dedication and commitment to children, to the philosophy

of Maria Montessori, which I had seen at our Annual General Meetings and Montessori Forum days over the past few years, came even more alive in the discussions I have had with some of you in Sweden and Italy, in the classrooms of Hangzhou in China, and in an inaugural Parent-Child Conference in Singapore. The consistent and complete embodiment of the concept of child-centered development is surely one of the hallmarks of the Montessori work.

When I meld this commitment with the growth in demand for training and Montessori education that we have experienced in the past few years, and situate these within our strategic plan with its three pillars of Legacy, Capacity and Outreach, it strengthens my belief that we can make the difference that we aspire to make, both for individual children and for society.

That we need to make that difference is so very clear: for just today we see children in Liberia out of school due to the Ebola crisis; we see children from Syria and South Sudan spilling across borders, as conflict disrupts their childhood opportunities, and we see the spectre of discrimination and intolerance raise their ugly heads in so many countries, often in brutal and violent ways.

And perhaps a last reinforcement of an earlier thought, resulting from my conversations in particular in Sweden and Italy, is that what

we can achieve alone is significantly less than what we could do with enhanced and extended partnerships. Our world has lots of "Montessoris", sometimes belonging to different branches, but ultimately stemming from the same family tree and inspiration.

There are organisations out there, academic institutions and children rights organisations, committed to the same principles that guide us. Collaborative efforts would magnify the call for a child centred approach to education and social development.

A call that will have special importance in the coming year as governments will be agreeing on the final form of the next set of UN Development Goals for 2016-2030.

Our voice, our collective influence, our mission must be heard in that articulation.

To conclude, I send all my very best wishes for a busy, fruitful happy and fulfilling 2015, and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming months.



Philip D. O'Brien
President
Association Montessori Internationale

