

A Kindergarten Run by the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* [Workers' Welfare Organization] (1927)

Abstract

This 1927 film clip focuses on a kindergarten run by the Workers' Welfare Association [*Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, or AWO] in the industrial city of Mannheim, south of Frankfurt. It shows children engaging with each other and with the class's pet sheep, reflecting the pedagogical influence of the Montessori method, which encourages learning through play. The film, produced by AWO itself, sought to showcase the many support services that the organization provided to working-class families. AWO was a product of the Weimar Republic. The SPD politician and social reformer Marie Juchacz founded the organization in December 1919 as the welfare arm of the Social Democratic Party, in order to help those suffering from the effects of war and the ongoing naval blockade, including widows, orphans, wounded veterans, and asylum seekers. At a time when churches still remained the only sources of basic charity and social support, Juchacz's proposal reflected remarkable vision. AWO expanded dramatically over the following decade to include retirement homes, counseling centers, free concerts, and childcare. Although German law did not require children to attend Kindergarten, the 1922 Federal Law on the Welfare of Youth [*Reichsjugendwohlfahrtsgesetz*] obligated society to help young people develop their potential when their families lacked the means to do so, and a number of religious and secular institutions, including AWO—as this clip shows—tried to meet that obligation. The Nazis banned AWO in 1933, but social reformers reestablished it in 1946, and it remains a lasting legacy of Weimar social innovation.

Source

Intertitles:

Reports on the Work of the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* [Worker's Welfare Association]

The exemplary kindergarten run by the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* in Mannheim.

The first visit.

A bright and sunny playroom.

In the Montessori classroom.

[...]

Our darling.

Source: *Die Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (clip), prod. Hauptausschuss für Arbeiterwohlfahrt, 1927. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv Filmwerk ID: 648299

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