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National Child Labor Committee

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WHY YOU SHOULD SUPPORT THE PALMER-OWEN BILL

Twice within recent years the United States Government has demonstrated the need of federal regulation of the employment of children. In 1907 Congress authorized a careful investigation of the condition of woman and child wage-earners in the United States, and the report of that investigation, published in 1910 and 1911 as a Senate Document of nineteen volumes, was the Government's first demonstration.* It showed not only the appalling amount of child labor in the country, but the unhealthful nature of much of the work children do, the long hours they are employed, the small wages they receive, the inadequacy of their abbreviated education, and the moral effect of premature employment as evidenced in the greater amount of delinquency among working children than among nonworking. It even showed that sometimes factories move from a state which passes a rigorous child labor law to another state without such a law in order to enjoy there the free employment of children.

The Number of Children at Work

If the testimony of that report had not been enough, the Government's second demonstration would have amply filled the lack. The Census of 1910 proved that in spite of the unremitting and in a great measure successful work of the National Child Labor Committee and allied organizations, there are still approximately two million children under 16 in gainful occupations in the United States. In three southern states nearly half the children 10 to 13 years of age are at work—not in school. Almost 100,000 children 10 to 13 years of age are engaged in non-agricultural pursuits alone in this country.

Lack of Uniformity in State Laws

To one who has followed the spread of child labor laws since the organization of the National Child Labor Committee ten years ago, these figures from the 13th Census seem incredible, yet it is largely because of the lack of uniformity in existing laws that they are pos-

* Vols. II, III, IV, VIII, XI and XIV of this report were summarized in the August and November numbers of the CHILD LABOR BULLETIN, 1914, published by the National Child Labor Committee. See list of pamphlets, page 4.

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sible. At one extreme we find Ohio enforcing a law forbidding the employment of boys under 15 and girls under 16, and at the other extreme North Carolina unable to enforce even a 13-year age limit in mills—to say nothing of New Mexico with no child labor law whatever. Six states have no 14-year limit for work in factories, and 15 states nullify their 14-year limit by exemptions. Although published mine reports are unanimous in showing the high death and accident rates in mines, 21 states having mining products valued at \$2,500,000 or more, allow children under 16 to work in mines. And, on the other hand, besides Ohio with its high standard, there is Montana, which prohibits the employment of children under 16 in mills, factories and workshops as well as in mines. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia provide an 8-hour day for children under 16 in factories, and 33 states and the District of Columbia prohibit night work for children under 16. Yet, at the other extreme again, are the states that have not yet successfully enforced an 11-hour day for children, and West Virginia and Wyoming that have no regulation of hours on their statute books.

What the Palmer-Owen Bill Will Do

The Palmer-Owen Bill, drafted by the National Child Labor Committee to meet the evident need of federal regulation, embodies the recognized minimum provisions of a good child labor law. It will serve as the basic standard for child labor regulation. It excludes from interstate commerce goods in the production of which children under 14 have been employed in factories, mills, canneries and workshops, or children under 16 in mines and quarries, and goods in the production of which children between 14 and 16 have been employed more than 8 hours a day or at night. Nine states* already have all the provisions of the bill on their statute books; only Wyoming and New Mexico have none of its provisions, and some states have surpassed it in certain respects. It is like the Convict Labor Bill in wording and similar in scope to the Pure Food Law and the Mann White Slave Act which have been upheld by the Supreme Court. Like them it is an expression of the federal government's right to regulate interstate commerce.

It will give to state officials the help of federal authorities in enforcing child labor laws; it will equalize competition between manufacturers engaged in interstate commerce and check the migration of

* Arizona, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Montana, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma and Wisconsin.

factories in search of unrestricted employment of children; it will protect a state that has registered convictions against child labor from an influx of goods from another state where children are employed under wrong conditions. But, most important of all, it will prevent the exploitation of children in certain industries and awaken all the states to their obligation to conserve and develop citizens of the nation.

The Bill and the European War

The present crisis in Europe inclines us to minimize our own problems, but the war itself is preparing for us new problems in view of which the Palmer-Owen Bill is of special importance. With the close of the war Europe will look to America as the hope and haven of the poor. The flood of immigration, now temporarily checked, will be redoubled and we must be ready for the people who are coming to us. Unless the Palmer-Owen Bill is passed we shall not be ready. They will come poor in money, broken in spirit, and ready to work and to let their children work for a pittance under any conditions they find; they will lower our standards of education and living if we allow them to, and after they come the obstacles in the way of progressive legislation will be greater than ever. Before they come is the time to pass a law that will insure to immigrant children safety from exploitation and a chance at the education that will make them American.

What You Can Do

The opposition to the bill is surprisingly slight, yet its passage is unlikely unless all its friends make it their personal concern. It has the support of national and state organizations, of churches, of women's clubs and of the country's leaders in social endeavor. It has been favorably reported by the House Committee on Labor and is on the House Calendar for consideration during the present session of Congress. But it is more than possible that in the rush of other business the Palmer-Owen Bill, in spite of its importance, may be overlooked unless its urgency is forcibly brought to the attention of Congress. For that reason we are justified in saying that the Palmer-Owen Bill cannot be passed unless *you*, personally, give it your support. You and your neighbors and your friends must take the matter up individually and write your Representatives and Senators urging the immediate passage of the bill. The more letters the Congressmen receive, the more they will feel the imperative nature of the issue.

The bill is not involved in party politics. Indeed, the fight against child labor has from the start enlisted men of all political faiths and has been in no sense political or local. This bill was

proposed in the House by a Pennsylvanian and sponsored in the Senate by an Oklahoman. The Democratic leader of the House and many other Democrats have endorsed it; prominent Republicans in both the House and the Senate have expressed their belief in it; Progressives are supporting it; Socialists regard it as an expression of their stated principles; manufacturers favor it, and Organized Labor is urging it. The Palmer-Owen Bill is a federal bill to regulate a national evil and as such its support comes from the nation at large and from every element in the nation that believes in a heritage of health and proper development for the American child.

But its passage depends on you.

National Organizations Which Have Already Endorsed the Bill

American Federation of Labor.
American Medical Association.
American Osteopathic Association.
Association of Governmental Labor Officials of United States and Canada.
Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America.
Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.
General Federation of Women's Clubs—Industrial and Social Conditions Department.
International Child Welfare League.
National Association of Compulsory School Officials.

Pamphlets on the Bill Published by the National Child Labor Committee

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND CHILD LABOR. Addresses by Mrs. Florence Kelley, Secretary, National Consumers' League, Dr. Felix Adler, Chairman, National Child Labor Committee, Samuel McCune Lindsay, Professor of Social Legislation, Columbia University, and Dr. A. J. McKelway, Southern Secretary, National Child Labor Committee. Pamphlet 222. 32 pp. 5 cents, postpaid.

A BRIEF FOR THE PALMER-OWEN BILL. Owen R. Lovejoy, General Secretary, National Child Labor Committee. Pamphlet 216. 32 pp. 5 cents, postpaid.

THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY FOR CHILDREN. Anna Rochester, Special Agent, National Child Labor Committee. Pamphlet 212. 16 pp. 5 cents, postpaid.

THE EXTENT OF CHILD LABOR OFFICIALLY MEASURED. Edward N. Clopper, Secretary for the Northern States, National Child Labor Committee. Pamphlet 237. 8 pp. 5 cents, postpaid.

Summaries of Federal Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners:

CHILD LABOR BULLETIN, August, 1914. Part II. 32 pp. 25 cents.

Children at Work on Men's Clothing. Anna Rochester. (Vol. I).

Child Labor in the Glass Industry. Anna Rochester. (Vol. II).

CHILD LABOR BULLETIN, November, 1914. Section I. 75 pp. 25 cents.

Children Who Weave Silk. Eleanor H. Adler. (Vol. IV.)

Child Labor and Delinquency. Fred S. Hall. (Vol. VIII.)

Dangerous Machines in the Metal Trades. Helen C. Dwight. (Vol. XI.)

Mortality among Cotton Operatives. Florence Taylor. (Vol. XIV.)

