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**National Child Labor Committee**

INCORPORATED

105 EAST 22D STREET  
NEW YORK CITY

The National  
Child Labor Committee  
and Its Work

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By EVERETT W. LORD

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New York, 1909

## OBJECTS

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- TO PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF SOCIETY, WITH RESPECT TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN IN GAINFUL OCCUPATIONS.
- TO INVESTIGATE AND REPORT THE FACTS CONCERNING CHILD LABOR.
- TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF PUBLIC OPINION AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH RESPECT TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN.
- TO ASSIST IN PROTECTING CHILDREN BY SUITABLE LEGISLATION AGAINST PREMATURE OR OTHERWISE INJURIOUS EMPLOYMENT, AND THUS TO AID IN SECURING FOR THEM AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT SUFFICIENT FOR THE DEMANDS OF CITIZENSHIP AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF INDUSTRIAL EFFICIENCY.
- TO AID IN PROMOTING THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS RELATING TO CHILD LABOR.
- CO-ORDINATE, UNIFY AND SUPPLEMENT THE WORK OF STATE OR LOCAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEES, AND ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION OF SUCH COMMITTEES WHERE THEY DO NOT EXIST.

# The National Child Labor Committee and Its Work

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## CHILD LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES

For more than thirty years there have been occasional warnings of the great increase of child labor in this country, but until the publication of the census figures of 1900 few people realized the extent of this evil. These figures, which showed that in 1900 there were 1,750,178 children, or nearly one in every six children between the ages of ten and sixteen years in the United States engaged in gainful occupations, revealed the startling extent of the number of working children in this country. This number included agricultural workers, who may be presumed to suffer least from the effects of premature labor, but it did not include the thousands of children under ten years of age who are engaged in various gainful occupations, such as selling newspapers and merchandise of various sorts in the city streets or working in sweatshops and tenement workshops. No current official figures are available, but a conservative estimate, including children under ten years of age and providing for the increase which has taken place since 1900, puts the present number of working children under sixteen years of age at two millions.

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With our paralleled industrial development this condition of affairs has come into existence. The rapid growth of the evil is indicated by the fact that the army of child workers increased during the twenty years from 1880 to 1900 six per cent faster than did the population of the country, and twelve per cent faster than the total number of children of corresponding ages increased.

These facts had only to be made known and their startling significance started to awaken our people to action. The history of child labor in England with its woeful results gave sufficient warning that unless the evil were promptly exterminated in this country we should suffer in the same way.

#### **ORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE**

In order to acquaint the public with the actual conditions and to secure effective action, the National Child Labor Committee was organized.

The need for a national organization was first felt in the South, which was, and still is, the greatest sufferer. The new industrial activity in the southern states had to contend with the short-sighted policy which claims that to meet modern industrial conditions it is necessary to harness the child to the machine. A group of men in Alabama organized a child labor committee in that state, and after a hard fight secured in 1903 a law which set the highest standard then attained by any of the manufacturing states

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of the South. In that fight the Alabama committee had to face not only their opponents in Alabama, but also the tremendous opposition of northern capitalists whose funds were invested in the mills of the state. They had to meet also the question of interstate competition, for a high standard in any one state may seem to react to the favor of neighboring states with lower standards. Thus it was realized that only a national organization could do the needed work, and accordingly in April, 1904, representative citizens from all parts of the country met in New York and organized the National Child Labor Committee.

#### MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The personnel of this Committee is in itself a proof of the universality of its appeal. North and South, East and West, church and state, labor and capital, education and philanthropy, American manhood and womanhood, all are here united as they could probably be united for no other purpose. The Committee has forty-five members, and a board of fifteen trustees who actively direct its operations. There is also an associate membership, made up of men and women who desire to show their sympathy with the work, to keep in touch with current conditions through the literature published by the Committee and to give it their moral and financial support. This associate membership is open to everyone who may wish to assist in the work.

## **METHODS OF WORK**

From the time of its organization it has been the purpose of the National Child Labor Committee to **secure accurate information** in regard to existing conditions. Its members realize that nothing can be accomplished through exaggeration or misrepresentation. It makes no indiscriminate attacks on employers, nor does it intend unfairly to impute ignorance to parents or lack of interest or efficiency to educators. In its effort to find and remove permanent causes it deals less with surface disturbances than with the deeper currents. It aims to convince the American public that child labor is not only a **crime against the child and against society** but that it is built upon an economic fallacy. It acts as a sort of national steering committee, working in association with state and local committees and with private and official agencies everywhere. Its task is great, requiring patience, time and extensive resources for its successful accomplishment. It is not enough that legislators be interested to the extent of passing perfunctory laws prohibiting various forms of child labor. A lively public interest must be awakened in order that these laws shall receive public support, and that their infringement may not be overlooked.

## **PUBLICITY**

In the five years since the Committee was organized annual conferences on child labor have been held in New York, Washington, Cincinnati, Atlanta and Chicago. At these

meetings eminent speakers and practical workers have been present, and great interest in the subject of child labor has been aroused. Valuable reports upon child labor in different industries—in coal mines, in cotton mills, north and south, in glass houses, in department stores, in street trades and in many other occupations—have been given. The addresses and reports, published in book form, make each year a volume of great practical value to those who desire to know the exact situation and what is being done by the opponents of child labor. In addition to the annual volumes, the Committee has published and distributed a large number of pamphlets. Meetings have been addressed by officers or representatives of the Committee in nearly every state in the Union, and constant correspondence has been carried on with officials and others interested in the work.

#### **ORGANIZATION**

The central office of the Committee is in New York City, and district offices have been established in Atlanta, Boston and Cincinnati. The secretaries in charge of these district offices aid state and local committees within their respective districts in arousing a healthy public sentiment and securing efficient legislation and satisfactory enforcement of law.

#### **LEGISLATION**

The Committee has aided in securing legislation in nearly every state, until at the present time there are but two with no child

labor law. The active and associate members of the Committee throughout the country did strenuous work to induce Congress to pass a child labor law for the District of Columbia in the spring of 1908. Realizing that enactments forbidding the employment of children meet the situation only in a negative way, the Committee has strongly backed every effort for more effective educational laws, for compulsory school attendance, and for the promotion of industrial education. It has directed the campaign for the creation of a Children's Bureau at Washington, where all the problems of the youth of the country may receive governmental attention.

#### **THE OUTLOOK**

There is yet much to be done. Many problems in connection with the general problem of child labor must be considered, and solutions found. Cases of actual poverty, often urged in palliation of the employment of children, must be provided for, and when possible their causes discovered and removed. In many of our larger cities provision has been made by women's clubs or other organizations for industrial scholarships allotted to actually needy children taken from gainful occupations and returned to the public schools. Cases of this nature deserve attention in every city, and private agencies should so arrange that relief may be given without causing the family to resort to an appeal for public or private charity. The great need for industrial edu-

cation must be made apparent to our people. The thousands of immigrants entering our doors every year must be taught that their children cannot grow up in this country without receiving a practical education which will enable them to become worthy American citizens. Most important of all, perhaps, is the continual vigilance without which no legislation, however good in itself, can be made effective.

#### **PUBLIC INTEREST THE REMEDY**

Recent events have strikingly shown that public interest is sufficient to overcome and correct deep-rooted evils. Because a public crusade against child labor is necessary, the National Child Labor Committee is in the field. It is furnishing information and harmonizing and co-ordinating the efforts of those powerful makers of public opinion—churches, schools, organized labor, women's clubs, political parties, officials and the press. It is securing the necessary data and widening its channels of communication with all parts of the country. In this work it has deserved and is receiving the support of good citizens in every state.

For the sake of saving the American child from commercial exploitation, for the purpose of introducing him to a new and brighter outlook for industrial efficiency, for the uplift of the race and the protection of the home the National Child Labor Committee takes a firm stand and confidently appeals for support.

## THE EXTENSION OF THE WORK

The National Child Labor Committee relies entirely upon the good-will of the public for funds to carry on its work. Its success has been due to the support given by its members, and a greater degree of success can be realized as rapidly as the work can be extended. Every reader is invited to become a member and have a share in the work of the Committee; contributions in any amount can be used to the great and direct advantage of the children of America.

## CLASSES OF MEMBERS

*Associate Members* contribute from \$2.00 to \$25.00 annually.

*Sustaining Members* contribute from \$25.00 to \$100.00 annually.

*Guarantors* contribute \$100.00 or more annually.

All classes of members receive all the publications of the Committee, including the annual volume of addresses and reports.

Checks should be made payable to V. Everit Macy, Treasurer. Contributions and enrollments may be sent to the General Secretary or to the Secretary of the district in which the contributor resides.

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