

**THE CHILD LABOR BULLETIN. VOLUME  
SEVEN, NUMBER THREE, NOVEMBER,  
1918. FOURTEENTH ANNUAL  
REPORT CHILD LABOR, THE WAR AND  
RECONSTRUCTION CAMPAIGN FOR  
FEDERAL LEGISLATION, PP. 149-224**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649343492

The Child Labor Bulletin. Volume Seven, Number Three, November, 1918. Fourteenth annual report child labor, the war and reconstruction campaign for federal legislation, pp. 149-224 by Various

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# The Child Labor Bulletin

Volume Seven  
Number Three

NOVEMBER, 1918

Issued Quarterly  
Price \$2 per Year

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT  
CHILD LABOR, THE WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION  
CAMPAIGN FOR FEDERAL LEGISLATION

PUBLISHED BY

**National Child Labor Committee**

INCORPORATED

108 EAST 22D STREET, NEW YORK CITY

Entered as second-class matter, October 29, 1913, at the Post-office at New York, N. Y.,  
under the Act of August 24, 1912.

Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in  
Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 10, 1918.

THIS NUMBER FIFTY CENTS

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COMMITTEE

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PRESS OF CLARENCE S. NATHAN, INC., NEW YORK.



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## EDITORIAL AND NEWS NOTES

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Peace has its need of man power no less than war, and so the end of the war must bring no relaxation of effort to secure a federal child labor law to take the place of the Act of 1916, which was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court last June. The enactment of such a law should be made a part of the American program of reconstruction. National efficiency in the future requires a continuance of our wartime policy of conservation; let us be thrifty with our material resources, but let us be more thrifty than heretofore with our most precious resources—the children of the nation. They represent potential man power. Man power, of which so much has been said during the war, is a national conception and a national issue, and as we take up the duties and obligations of peace it remains a national conception and a national issue. This man power will be needed not only for purposes of industrial and economic prosperity, but for the spiritual development of American life—for the furtherance, in particular, of democratic ideals and actualities. Soldiers and civilians have been fighting a war for democracy, but the children of today must “carry on” tomorrow for democracy; and it is quite essential, if they are to do this wisely and successfully, that they should be fit for the work. A logical way of translating the phrase “constructive democracy” into practical effect is to build up democracy by beginning with the children, saving them from the exploitation that stunts and perverts their development, in health, intelligence and morals, and keeping them in school where they can be trained both for individual efficiency and for civic usefulness.

Since the Committee began working for a national remedy for the national evil and menace of child labor, there has been a great public awakening to the need of such a remedy. The war that is now closing has developed the humanitarian spirit of our people at the same time that it has enhanced our national-mindedness. Concerted action by the friends of the constitutional federal



legislation that is needed in the war against this undemocratic, intolerable thing, child labor, will certainly bring us victory. It is believed that a federal child-labor measure, based on the taxing power of Congress, offers a constitutional means of doing to child labor products (so far as mines, quarries, canneries and factories are concerned) exactly what was done to state bank notes, artificially colored oleomargarine and poisonous phosphorus matches—viz., tax them out of existence. The American constitution, the preamble of which begins, "We the people," was never intended to stand in the way either of national progress or of moral progress. The primary purpose, says Henry Cabot Lodge, was to make the will of the people supreme. If new measures are not presented to the Supreme Court from time to time there can be no development of our constitutional law; it would stagnate by the fault of the legislatures, and of the people behind the legislatures. Before a federal child-labor law can be subjected to judicial scrutiny, it must first be passed by Congress. Federal legislation on this subject is up to Congress—and the people. Now is the time:

"Come, while the nation feels the lift  
Of a great impulse shouting forwards!"

Child labor has greatly increased in this country since the federal child-labor act of 1916 went out of effect. This statement is made officially by the United States Department of Labor and is based on figures collected by the CHILD LABOR Children's Bureau of that Department. In a recent special report on the employment of children in canneries, the Bureau says there has been a large increase in the number of workers between 7 and 16 years of age. Inspections of 270 canneries in two states showed 1,094 children under 14 at work. A similar increase was found in other canning states. "Very young children have been employed in the vegetable canneries during the season just past. Many of these children managed to escape all school laws. These are employed a large part of each year at irregular hours and live usually in unsanitary and crowded camps." Several articles in this number of the *Bulletin* give information about the increase of child labor during the war, and particularly since the 1916 act was declared invalid.

The opening of the schools for the fall term gave the Children's Bureau an opportunity to find to what extent children were leaving school prematurely, whether those who had worked on vacation permits were returning, and, in general, the conditions among working children. A series of inquiries were made in typical industrial and commercial centers to throw light on these and other questions. The cities studied include New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Washington, Wilmington, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Louisville, and several smaller cities. In Washington it was found that this year 1,095 permits to work either outside school hours or full time had been granted under the law which permits children of 12 or 13 to work, if, in the opinion of the Juvenile Court, the poverty of the family justifies it. In 1916-17 only 277 such permits were issued. This is an increase of 295 per cent. The number of children from 14 to 16 who were granted regular working permits rose from 727 in 1916-17 to 1,917 this year—an increase of 164 per cent. In Wilmington 61 per cent more children have taken out permits this year than last. Practically all of this 61 per cent have definitely left school to enter industry on full time. Reports of greatly increased shifting from job to job seem to indicate that the child is not finding in his work a steadily progressing training. The figures do not show that children are staying at their jobs more steadily because of higher wages, or that they are staying long enough to gain from their industrial training experience which will make them increasingly useful.

"The school is your training camp. Don't be a deserter." This is what the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor is saying to the thousands of children "BACK-TO-SCHOOL" who are leaving the schools for industry, dazzled by the present high wages offered. Jobs that offer very little training, and less hope of a future are being taken unquestioningly by the youngsters who "don't like school anyway" and think they are "old enough to work," or who feel the urge of home necessity. The Children's Bureau has just announced a Back-to-School Drive whose object may be stated in the President's words "That no child may have less opportunity for education because of the war." The drive will attempt two things: to return

to the schools and keep there the children who have deserted them for industry, and to keep the children now in school from leaving prematurely. The actual work of the drive will be done through the Child Conservation Section of the Council of National Defense which was organized into state, county, and local units. In each school community committees are being formed whose first duty will be to study child labor and school attendance laws. After that they will go to the county superintendent, the school principals, and teachers to get accurate lists of the children who have not returned to school. Then begins the real work of getting the children back. Parents will be called upon, and the committee members will talk over with them why it is important not only to the child but to the country that he be well prepared for work before attempting it. Where the reasons for leaving were pecuniary an adjustment will be attempted so that the child can return. The Bureau urges that the adjustment take the form of a scholarship similar to those in practically all of the colleges, and in certain city school systems. The average amount of school scholarships is \$120 a year, and it is hoped that as a result of the Drive an average of at least one will be founded for each of the 281,000 school houses in the United States. The Red Cross will help to keep in school those children who have a father or brother in the service. In connection with the campaign the Children's Bureau plans to publish a comparison of the state laws on child labor and compulsory education, so that each state—forty-one legislatures will have sessions this winter—may know just where it stands in relation to the other commonwealths.

Throughout the country side by side with reports that unemployment is prevalent are reports that child labor is steadily and rapidly increasing. It should be obvious, even to the superficial mind, that the abatement of one abuse would aid in the correction of the other. Little children are forced into tasks unsuitable to their strength and judgment, and are at the same time robbed of education and the natural pleasures of childhood. Why not put unemployed men at these tasks, thus saving their vigor and moral stamina to society and by the same act release the children for a course in health and proper education?