

ALL THE CHILDREN OF ALL THE PEOPLE

WHEN the National Labor Committee was founded in 1904 it had, among other distinguished founders, Dr. Charles W. Eliot, then President of Harvard University. Twenty years later Dr. Eliot had not changed his point of view in regard to child labor. It had crystallized into advocacy of the Child Labor Amendment, then pending in Congress.

So keenly does a speech Dr. Eliot made that year strike at the kernel of the present opposition to the Amendment that it bears quoting: "I am surprised at the illogical character of the argument set up by the intelligent and experienced persons who are protesting against the child-labor amendment. That amendment does nothing but provide that Congress shall have power to pass laws concerning child labor which shall apply to the whole country. . . How else can we arrive at any law which shall be applicable to the whole country? How else can we deliver *all the children of the country* from forced labor in mines and factories? But those who protest against the amendment say Congress will do some silly thing if we give it power to pass laws applicable to the whole country. They predict that Congress will, for instance, forbid children under eighteen to work on the family farm, that they will forbid children to perform manual labor of any sort in the school. Is not that an extraordinary assumption? It seems to me an assumption inconsistent with *real faith in Democracy*."¹

It is a sorry commentary upon the longevity of human prejudices in the field of basic human rights that today, over ten years later, practically the same foundationless and misleading objections to the Child Labor Amendment are still dangled hope-

fully by its opponents before the bemused eyes of the American public.

Not entirely bemused, however. Now twenty-four of the thirty-six states necessary for ratification have gone on record as acknowledging their responsibility in assuring a share in basic human rights for all the nation's children.

Those rights? Any teacher knows what they are. They are not summed up, as somebody has said recently, in "the sacred right to toil." They are, rather, freedom from all consideration as present economic assets, freedom from devastating toil at the expense of health and education and a child's need for free play. The basic human right of every child is to grow up into healthy, well-rounded, socially adjusted adult life.

Today, you who read this doubtless agree. You probably also say that today child labor is practically non-existent. For the moment this is largely true, due to temporary emergency legislation. Do you want it back? Is there any way to prevent its return when the codes expire? The industrial codes of the NRA, we must all admit, are responsible for the temporary vouchsafing of this child's basic human right to all the nation's children. Nor was it a negligible number of working children under sixteen who were released from the bondage of premature labor when the industrial codes began to function. A most conservative estimate of their number is 1,000,000 under sixteen years of age; and approximately 50,000 more between sixteen and eighteen turned aside from hazardous occupations into the safer channels of school or permitted labor fields.

There is just one way to make permanent for these and succeeding generations of children the temporary gains secured by the codes. That way is ratification of the Child Labor Amendment.

This is the text of the Child Labor Amendment:

¹From an address before the Society of Harvard Dames. *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, November, 1924.

"Section 1. The Congress shall have power to limit, regulate, and prohibit the labor of persons under eighteen years of age.

"Section 2. The power of the several states is unimpaired by this article except that the operation of state laws shall be suspended to the extent necessary to give effect to legislation enacted by the Congress."

As you see, the power this Amendment would confer upon Congress is limited to one thing, to regulation throughout the nation of the labor by children, that is, to labor in the sense in which the term is used in labor statutes and has frequently been construed by courts—labor for hire. The Amendment is no law, merely an enabling statute. Immediately, however, the question arises as to how far Congress will go in exercising this power, once it is granted. We have an adequate forecast as to that in the child labor provisions of the NRA codes, provided provision is made for certain gaps in them through which some conditions unfair to children seep in. In general, the minimum working age for children set up by the codes has been sixteen years, with hazardous occupation barred for boys and girls between sixteen and eighteen. Provision for a limited amount of work outside school hours has been made for children between fourteen and sixteen years in certain industries.

In 1936 Virginia will have opportunity to go on record in favor of the Child Labor Amendment. If the teachers and other protectors of children's rights in Virginia will consider the present chaotic and in general inadequate assemblage of state laws concerning child labor they will appreciate the need for nation wide, uniform legislation to assure equal rights to all children. They need but reflect that only six states have arrived at the sixteen-year work-age minimum for employment during school hours to realize that the slow progress of

state legislation is a menace to the children of the other forty-two states. It is, in fact, up to the teachers of Virginia to put up a united front in behalf of the children of the nation, as well as of Virginia, who will surely suffer economic exploitation when the codes expire unless the Child Labor Amendment is first ratified.

GERTRUDE ROBINSON

ESSAYS IN THE EIGHTH GRADE

THE eighth-grade classes in the Training School of the Teachers College at Harrisonburg voted unanimously to make a magazine as their project for the second semester.

In the magazine they decided to include short stories, essays, editorials, poetry, and jokes. The pupils have attempted to do some of each of these types of composition.

Although essays, being contemplative in their nature, are usually considered difficult for any but skilled writers, we feel that our pupils have done their best work in this field. They have been especially successful in presenting numerous concrete details, the result of keen observation. Some of the essays, as written by the children, are presented here.

KATHERINE BURNETTE

MARY VERNON MONTGOMERY

NAMING DOGS

I get a dog, play with it awhile, and then decide to name it. Now here is my problem. First I call to mind and give due consideration to all the names I know or ever heard of and decide that not one of them will do. I then let it slip my mind and go about my business. Later in the family circle, I bring up the subject again and my mother says it should be named after the last dog we had, my brother thinks it should be named after some famous dog,