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## National Child Labor Committee

INCORPORATED

105 EAST 22D STREET

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### ORGANIZED LABOR AND CHILD LABOR REFORM

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Organized Labor's attitude toward child labor is well known. It can well be compared to the attitude of organized bankers toward the loan shark, as it bears upon the financial element of legitimate business; or it may be compared to the attitude of the organized doctors of medicine toward the quack doctor, when the question of health is touched upon. And as to the law which permits child labor in uninspected mills, Organized Labor has for that statute the same undisguised contempt which the organized lawyers have for the shyster who disgraces their profession.

As to the great question of human interest which is involved, I can not tell you Organized Labor's attitude toward child labor. I do not command the language to fittingly describe to you the pride of the man who, with nothing but his skill and his membership in Organized Labor, wrests from the world a comfortable living for his wife and babies. We can but draw a picture of him as he sits at the head of his table, and watches with glowing love the happy, well-fed family enjoying the fruits of his labor. His heart bleeds with sympathy for other children, as he utters a fervent prayer that he may live until his own children are grown up; that he may continue to provide for them so that they may never, during their youth, have to answer the call of the morning whistle. For he knows, and you know, and the world knows, that no child whose father is a member of Organized Labor is forced to answer the early call of the factory whistle.

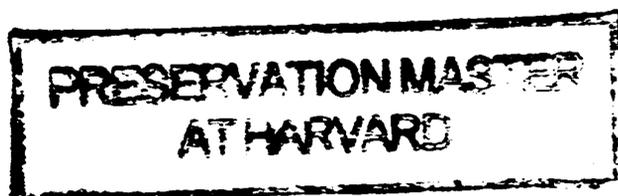
Organized Labor of North Carolina regrets the fact that our state has been so laggard in making laws which would protect her children. It is true that some of our legislators have worked hard

for the passage of such measures. But that wee, small voice—an almost inaudible whisper—in the lobby of the legislative halls, has carried sufficient force and power and influence to set at naught the cry of childhood. Therefore, our state having failed us, we welcome the work of the National Child Labor Committee. We feel that your service is great, and that your reward will be greater. And in your support of the Keating child labor bill, you have the genuine cooperation of Organized Labor.

The fight for and against this bill in the House of Congress has proven a constant source of surprises and disappointments. Men whose brilliancy was thought to be a reflection of their love for humanity have made searchlights of that brilliancy, and turned its rays upon the mill owners, to find and to show to the world the big-heartedness of the men who work the little children. But in a struggle like this, men must be forgotten, and the measure be made the paramount issue. For there are measures which outweigh men; there are principles bigger than political parties; there is a love as strong as life. Next to my own three little girls standing around my feet; above all political parties and political possibilities imaginable to the mind; above the valued friendship of real friends; above loyalty to lodges and affiliation to my church; above and nearer than all that—next to my own babes—stand the children of my fellow workingmen of North Carolina, of the South, and of the United States.

Yet we are more sorry than words can express that this insurmountable difference of opinion on this vital question has arisen between representatives and those represented. An official's duty in Washington is no more sacred than a layman's duty at home. And it is not only the duty of Organized Labor to champion the cause of child labor legislation, but it is our earnest desire to be instrumental in bringing it about.

Organized Labor confesses its utter lack of knowledge concerning the constitutional power of the national Congress. We frankly admit that we do not understand how the national government can control, through interstate commerce, many products of labor, yet can not reach out a helping hand to the laborer. Neither can we understand how the federal government can prohibit North Carolina labor from boycotting Danbury-made hats, and yet the same government can not lay a restraining finger upon employers



of child labor in our state. It is also beyond our power to understand how the federal government could invade states' rights, and at the cost of a million white men killed and wounded, set at liberty the negro slaves, who were then not even citizens of this country, and yet the same government can not lift the burden of modern slavery from the shoulders of little American citizens, as such much more entitled to the protection of this national government than were the negroes.

The work of this Committee, the proposed legislation, in fact all agitation, the purpose of which is to protect children in their tender years, is accomplishing great results. Each is a link in the chain which, when completed, will produce the only possible solution of the child labor question. For I respectfully submit to you the statement that the ultimate, the real, the satisfactory solution to the child labor question will be reached when Organized Labor fills the positions in the factories, the mills and the mines. When all operatives, in all sections, are working under the direction of one national head, and that national body is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, then, and not until then, will an actual, absolute solution of the question be found.

And why shouldn't it be so? In other branches of industry where business-like agreements are made between capital and labor, both sides are benefited. In my opinion it will not be long until the day arrives when Organized Labor will also be doing the work for the mill owners. And when it is once in operation, the most agreeably surprised people of all concerned will be the employers themselves. Let the mill owners for one year deal with Organized Labor, and they could not be induced to go back to unorganized. We make no statement which we can not prove. Ask any employer of Organized Labor in this state if he would go back to the slipshod days of unorganized labor. Then ask any member of this Committee if they have ever been called upon to rescue a child whose father carries a working card.

And when Organized Labor fills the positions in the mills and the factories, then the mill children can answer the call of their kind, and harken to the voice of the fairies, which should lead all children through the fields, the flowers and the sunshine—God's own gifts to little children.

The attitude of Organized Labor was further expressed by **Mr. George L. Berry**, of Tennessee, President of the International Pressmen's Union, who said in part:

"I submit that in the four million men and women organized in this country you have a militant organization, active not only in agitation for the upbuilding of the economic condition of the adult laborer which will result in the elimination of the child from the workshop, but active in the matter of voting and demanding an answer from those who do not live up to the claims of humanity in Congress and the legislatures. The time has come when we must let public servants know that we have our eye upon them. It is good to conciliate, it is fine to be pleasant, it is nice to be diplomatic, but when a program has been known to the American people as long as the program for the elimination of children from the factory, and an intelligent Congressman or Senator votes against it, it becomes a duty to leave that gentleman at home to a peaceful, harmless existence. I do not believe that the Senate will hesitate in the matter of the Keating bill after the splendid majority in the lower House. But if they do, I shall be one who will be found ready to give them a vacation.

"That is what you must do. You have to elect servants that will properly perform their duties. When the Keating bill was being debated in the House, a Congressman from the cotton district of Tennessee said, 'This is a fight between humanity and greed, and I vote with humanity.' It is time the working men and women, no matter what their party, should declare themselves in sympathy with humanity. Set aside your politics and select the man to represent you who first thinks of humanity and only next of dollars and cents. If you want dollars-and-cents Congressmen, send them to Washington. But if you want to elevate the human family, to make better conditions for men and women and society as a whole, then elect men and send them to Washington, who stand for humanity and not for dollars and cents."

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