

Child Labor Must End!

A FEW years ago the people of this country were so convinced of the elementary necessity to give Congress the right to make laws for the protection of children in States which neglect or refuse to protect them that the child-labor amendment seemed certain of passage. President Wilson, President Harding, and Mr. Coolidge had all declared for it. Now Massachusetts has voted against the child-labor amendment, and the forces of reaction have taken new heart.

The American people has three times expressed its determination to stop the slavery of children in the mills. In September, 1916, Congress passed a bill prohibiting interstate commerce in the products of child labor. In June, 1918, the Supreme Court ruled that the bill was unconstitutional, holding that it was not in fact bona fide regulation of interstate commerce. In February, 1919, Congress passed a new bill imposing a 10-per-cent tax on the products of child labor. In May, 1922, the Supreme Court ruled this act, too, unconstitutional. It was plain then that if child labor was to be regulated by the federal government there would have to be a constitutional amendment. Congress adopted such an amendment last spring; to become effective it requires ratification by the legislatures of three-fourths of the States. Arkansas has approved it; Louisiana, Georgia, and North Carolina, as was expected, have rejected it; and the people of Massachusetts, in a referendum distinguished by misrepresentation, ignorance, and deceit, have also voted against it. In January, 1925, thirty-six State legislatures will assemble, and the battle will be on. It will have to be won a fourth time, and it will be. No defeat of such a measure is final, but every victory endures; a State legislature may reconsider a negative decision but not an affirmative—such is the provision of the Constitution.

This federal amendment is, in the nature of things, permissive only. The Constitution is not the place for statutory legislation—it is the place to define powers. What the federal amendment would do is to transfer to the national Congress powers which are not held by the State legislatures: "The Congress shall have power to limit, regulate, and prohibit the labor of persons under eighteen years of age." Today every State in the Union has that power, but those whose memories reach back through the years of pioneer effort to take the children out of the mills know how heartlessly the State legislatures have failed to use their authority. Some States have excellent child-labor laws; some have wretched laws, and those ill enforced.

When this amendment is ratified—as sooner or later it will be—we may expect federal legislation akin to that killed by the Supreme Court's veto. The federal laws passed in 1916 and 1919 sought to prohibit in mills, factories, and workshops labor of children under 14, and to regulate—by establishing an eight-hour day and a six-day week—the labor of children under 16. They also sought to keep children under 16 out of the dangerous quarries and coal mines. The National Child Labor Committee, which focuses the national campaign to stop child labor, also proposes to include tenement sweatshops in the general prohibition, and to extend the prohibition for work in industries dangerous to life, health, or morals to the age of 18. No attempt has ever been made to prohibit child labor on the farms; the suggestion of such legislation is a bogey invented by the

defenders of child labor to frighten the farmers into opposition to the amendment.

Child labor and illiteracy of course go hand in hand. All the leading countries of the world except the United States have, by passing national child-labor laws requiring children to go to school up to certain ages, reduced the number of their illiterate citizens. We talk of our enlightenment, but our illiteracy rate is four times that of England or Germany. According to the census of 1920 1,060,783 children under 15 were at work in the United States, and 1,437,783 children between 7 and 13 were not in school. These unprotected children in States which have weak child-labor laws or which do not enforce the laws on their statute-books have a right to look to the national government to protect them.

In Massachusetts the Associated Industries, affiliated with the National Association of Manufacturers, early transmuted itself into the "Citizens Committee to Protect Our Homes and Children." One might suppose an association so named a branch of the National Child Labor Committee. It was not; it was a part of an association which masked greed for profits won out of children's labor under the fair name of the American home, and deliberately set out to deceive the people of Massachusetts. It suggested that the campaign to stop child labor, waged so earnestly in the United States these last decades, was an invention of Soviet Russia! It quoted or misquoted—we have not verified its quotations—from extreme Russian communists who propose to take children out of the home, and declared that these quotations represented the program of the heroic group which has been struggling to save American children from the mills. A letter sent out by Charles R. Gow, general manager of the Hood Rubber Company and chairman of the finance committee of this Massachusetts "committee to protect homes and children," quoted a statement attributed to Zinoviev's wife, that "We must remove the children from the pernicious influence of the family. We must . . . nationalize them," and continued:

The avowed purpose of the proposed Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution is stated above in the exact language of the chief of the forces who conceived, drafted, and lobbied that measure through Congress under the American leadership of Mrs. Florence Kelley, formerly Wischniewsky.

Falsehood could hardly go further. Neither Zinoviev's wife nor any other Communist had anything whatever to do with the campaign for a federal amendment to stop child labor in the United States. Florence Kelley, a present-day saint if there be such a thing, is a daughter of a former congressman, also named Kelley, from Pennsylvania. Her mother's maiden name was Bonsall. She is American to the core; one of her sons was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury during the war. Mrs. Kelley did work for the federal amendment—she has given twenty-five years of her life, as secretary of the National Consumers League, to campaigns in behalf of working children and women in the United States; that is the only truth in Mr. Gow's letter. By such lies—we use the word deliberately—Massachusetts was induced to vote against the child-labor amendment. The rest of the United States will, we hope, show more intelligence. It will have its chance in January when the legislatures meet.

Plunkitt's Way

GEORGE WASHINGTON PLUNKITT was one of the wisest men in American politics and by a stroke of genius on the part of a good newspaperman, William L. Riordan of the New York *Evening Post*, much of his wisdom was packed into a single small book called "Plunkitt of Tammany Hall." Unfortunately, that book is out of print and rare; but now that Plunkitt is dead it should be republished in large editions and handed to every student of politics, to every organizer of new parties and movements, to every first voter. For in this small book of political sermons, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall, leader of the Fifteenth Assembly District, practical politician and political philosopher, tells all that needs to be told about American government.

He tells why reformers have been only morning glories that "looked lovely in the mornin' and withered up in a short time, while the regular machines went on flourishin' forever like fine old oaks"—a chapter full of post-election thoughts for progressives. He told of the dangers of dress suits and high-priced cars in politics almost twenty years before the defeat of Ramsay MacDonald in England. He explained the difference between honest and dishonest graft in terms so ingenious and yet so simple that Harry Daugherty might have learned a straighter or at least a safer road to wealth and power had he read them; there are no little black bags in the philosophy of George Washington Plunkitt.

He even tells how the Democratic Party can survive. His advice was given in 1905 and in detail may be considered obsolete; but the thought behind it is as good as new and may be applied to 1928 as aptly as to 1908.

The trouble is [he said] that the party's been chasin' after theories and stayin' up nights readin' books instead of studyin' human nature. . . . You can't get people excited about the Philippines. They've got too much at home to interest them; they're too busy makin' a livin' to bother about the niggers in the Pacific. . . . There's just one issue that would set this country on fire. The Democratic Party should say in the first plank of its platform: "We hereby declare, in national convention assembled, that the paramount issue now, always, and forever is the abolition of the iniquitous and villainous civil-service laws which are destroyin' all patriotism, ruinin' the country, and takin' away good jobs from them that earn them. We pledge ourselves, if our ticket is elected, to repeal those laws at once and put every civil-service reformer in jail." . . .

I see a vision. I see the civil-service monster lyin' flat on the ground. I see the Democratic Party standin' over it with foot on its neck and wearin' the crown of victory. I see Thomas Jefferson lookin' out from a cloud and sayin': "Give him another sockdolager; finish him." And I see millions of men wavin' their hats and singin' "Glory Hallelujah."

Forms change but the fundamental issue remains: enough jobs and enough money to go round. The party that can actually deliver a full dinner pail or the party that promises it convincingly gets the votes. Honesty doesn't matter; efficiency doesn't matter; progressive vision doesn't matter. What matters is the chance of a better job, a better price for wheat, better business conditions. The same issue holds in national elections and in ward politics. General principles, as Mr. Plunkitt says, are all right to work into the platform but they are always going to be side issues.

Reformers who doubt this are bound to be defeated and disillusioned. They must learn somehow to apply the human knowledge that Tammany Hall and George Washington Plunkitt have used for their own ends to the pressing job of salvaging a derelict civilization. They must learn in the first place that politics is a full-time job just like any other business, not a gentlemanly avocation outside of office hours. They must learn that it is a profession requiring training and technique—not merely virtue or indignation. They must learn that it means getting into close, helpful, daily touch with thousands of individuals. "If there's a family in my district in want," said Plunkitt, "I know it before the charitable societies do, and me and my men are first on the ground. The consequences are that the poor look up to George W. Plunkitt as a father, come to him in trouble—and don't forget him on election day." Reformers could learn many a lesson by studying "Plunkitt of Tammany Hall."

Plunkitt worked for himself and for his friends and for his organization. The rest of the people, let us assume, were mulcted by his activities. But they didn't feel it and didn't know it—until he told them. And then they didn't care, because they could understand a cheerful and honest grafter who made no pretense of virtue but did practical good right and left every day in the week, better than they could a seventh-day reformer who talked of the public welfare and did nothing tangible for anybody.

Plunkitt is dead, but the system he believed in and grew rich by is certainly still a fine old oak. If it is to be hewed down, if the system of private patronage is to be changed to one of honesty and a fair deal all round it will only be by Plunkitt's own method—"You must study human nature and act accordin'."

The Indispensable Century

THERE are signs that the eighteenth century is about to be discovered again. "The Beggars' Opera" has been revived with remarkable success, and in the wake of that success, or perhaps only contemporaneously with it, dozens of literary persons have returned from excursions into the world of Queen Anne or the first three Georges with the information that it is a world of ineffable charm. Anthologies almost by the dozen have been made of fugitive eighteenth-century verse. One of them is entitled "Byways Round Helicon," and the compiler has picked his posies with exactly the same beguiling devotion that was expended a generation or two ago upon the minor versifiers of the seventeenth century. Another selection has the even more significant title of "Rogues in Porcelain." There we have the note of naughtiness thought just now to be essential in the new-found century, combined with the note of artificiality which, to be sure, professors of literature have long been in the habit of saying was there. Certain other manifestations of the rage are more impressive. David Garnett in England has produced two admirable if fantastic short novels which are hailed as being in the manner of Defoe, and Elinor Wylie in America dresses up a later period in something brilliant which she calls a "sedate extravaganza." But all of the manifestations thus far have been manifestations of interest in comparatively trivial aspects of the century.

No genuine admirer of the century can resent this for a moment. Triviality was something like an art in those