

are no better off than a year ago. No such growth of general purchasing power has yet appeared in this country as would warrant the expectation of a sudden and permanent boost for trade. A moderate recovery was due, and gradual gains are to be expected in the long run, but not a frenzied expansion. If, therefore, production and employment rapidly increase, if new capital investments are made in unprecedented volume, we shall simply be piling up surplus goods and factories to break the market sometime in the future, unless the ultimate consumers evince a miraculous capacity to buy.

Of course, they may do so. It is just possible that the foreign crop failures of 1924 will be repeated in 1925, that the price of grain will continue to rise, and that the American farmers will become really prosperous. Wages in the United States may possibly rise not merely as rapidly as food prices, but in addition as rapidly as the capacity of the average wage-earner to produce. The ten percent of our production which is normally exported may increase prodigiously on account of a recovery of Europe under the Dawes plan—a recovery made in spite of crop failures and the resulting high food prices. If these things happen, real prosperity may arrive.

But somehow the cynical observer does not see in the present situation quite so much assurance. It does not look as if the stock market were intelligently discounting such factors as these. It looks more as if cheap money had at last, in spite of the restraints of bankers and the warnings of economists, led to speculative inflation. It looks as if the common or garden Republican, having been fed with exaggerated hopes of his own party and exaggerated fears of other parties, were rushing to the stock market to cash in on prosperity. And it looks as if the insiders, seeing a chance of lending large sums abroad at high interest rates, were cashing in on the common or garden Republican. If the boom breaks early on the stock exchange, without inducing inflation of commodity prices and overproduction in industry, the majority of citizens will be lucky. But if trade and industry catch the madness, they are sure to run amok. That would mean soaring prices and hopes for perhaps a year or two. After that it would be in order to ask the sixteen million how they like their prosperity.

Child Labor, the Home and Liberty

IN the current propaganda against the Child Labor Amendment, the economics of the issue is strangely subordinated. We are gravely assured by the various resolutions committees of manufacturers, merchants and even the National Grange, once a progressive organization, that what is at stake is our sacred liberty, the sanctity of our

homes. The defeat of the Amendment, according to Professor J. Gresham Machen of Princeton University (letter to the New York Times, Nov. 18), would mean that "it is actually possible, despite recent indications, that American liberty and the sacredness of the American home have not yet altogether been destroyed."

The argument is simple. The Child Labor Amendment grants to Congress the power "to limit, regulate and prohibit the labor of persons under eighteen years of age." There is nothing in the Amendment to indicate that it applies only to commercial employments. If Congress chose, it might penalize the man who sets his seventeen year old son at mowing the lawn, or the woman who has her seventeen year old daughter help with the dishes. It is no answer, say the opponents of the Amendment, to urge that Congress would never do anything so idiotic as that. They are concerned with a principle. The immemorial right of the parent to train his child in useful tasks according to his own discretion is destroyed. The obligation of the child to contribute in proportion to his abilities is destroyed. Parents may still set their children at work; children may still make themselves useful, but it will no longer be by right and obligation, but by default of legislation and administrative machinery.

This is the argument that is now being repeated, with a hundred variations, throughout the United States. Its validity admits of a simple test. Does any parent in the United States now enjoy discretion beyond the possibility of legislative invasion, in disposing of his children's time and labor that it is assumed the Child Labor Amendment would destroy? No. The states can now do everything that it is proposed to empower the federal government to do. If liberty and the home are destroyed when a government is in a position to step in between parent and child, they were destroyed upon the adoption of the Constitution, which did not establish the patria potestas in a bill of rights.

The Child Labor Amendment does not deprive the citizen of any liberties he now enjoys. It does not involve any new attack on the home. Not in principle. But the federal government might in practice regulate child labor more thoroughly than the state governments do. This is at bottom the reason both for the support of the Child Labor Amendment and for the opposition to it.

Is it to be presumed that the legislators in Washington will have the interests of children nearer to their hearts than the legislators at the several state capitols? We see no ground for such a presumption. But there are two reasons for presuming that the federal government would move more rapidly toward effective regulation than the average of the states.

The first reason is that the federal government would not need to consider the effect of a child labor law upon interstate competition. If it fixed

the minimum age of factory employment at sixteen all factories throughout the country would have to conform. No habitual employer of child labor could escape the law by migrating to another state. He might indeed migrate to Ceylon or Japan, where he would find as many child slaves as he could use. But then he would encounter the customs barrier if he tried to compete in the American market. When on the other hand a state government fixes a high age limit for child labor, the exploiter of children has only to move across the nearest state boundary. He is free to ship the products of child slavery back into the state, to compete with the products of free labor. The regulating state loses business and taxable property, without any equivalent humanitarian gain. If half the states had prohibited child labor, about as many children in the United States might still be found in factories, concentrated to be sure in the states of slack laws.

The other reason why the federal government would be more likely to act than the states is that the dilution of the citizenry with physical and mental defectives which always attends the exploitation of children is more manifestly a federal than a state concern. We are an excessively migratory people. Probably a majority of those who are now minors will spend the better part of their lives outside of the states in which they were born. Child labor notoriously involves an immediate profit at the cost of the efficiency of the adult worker. Under existing conditions the profit is too often enjoyed by one state while the cost is borne by another. The federal government would enter the profit and the cost in a single account.

Federal child labor regulation would presumably be more effective than state regulation. This is all that can be said for it, or against it, so far as liberty and the home are concerned. If the Child Labor Amendment fails, the employment of children in factories, workshops, mines and quarries, oyster beds and beet fields will be more general and persist longer than it would if the Amendment is adopted. This we think will generally be admitted on both sides.

Thus the matter simmers down to simple issues of fact.

Does early employment in factories, mines and workshops actually make for the full development, physical, mental and moral, essential to a condition of real liberty?

When wages are adjusted to the fact of child labor, is the parent "free" to put his children into a factory or keep them out, as he chooses?

Is the "home" from which children are hurried every morning to the factory and to which they return at night broken with weariness the "sacred institution" fat business men and windy professors are prating about?

We think that everyone who knows anything about actual industry will agree that it is child labor, not any law restricting it, that is destructive of lib-

erty: destructive of the liberty of the child, and of that of the child's parents, who are thrust into a position where they have to choose between starvation and the enslavement of their children. Ultimately it is destructive of the liberty of the community that tolerates it. We think it will also be generally agreed that wherever child labor is common the home tends to disintegrate.

On the one side are real issues. If the Child Labor Amendment is adopted, the federal government will be in a position to cope with the actual evils of child labor. It will have the power to eliminate conditions destructive of the home and liberty, and it is likely to use that power. On the other side are imaginary issues. The federal government will have the power to liberate the boy from chores and the girl from tending the baby. It would certainly never use any such power.

Why then is not the Amendment restricted to the field in which the government would naturally use the powers granted? Why is it not restricted to industry, mining and commerce? Because there are equally serious abuses in agriculture and gardening conducted under the padrone system. Why is it not restricted to child labor for wages? Because such a restriction would open the door wide to all sorts of subterfuges. Why is not an exception made of child labor directly under a parent's supervision? Because of the border line cases sure to emerge.

The Child Labor Amendment is what every properly drawn constitutional amendment ought to be, a grant of powers that the legislature may exercise at its discretion. If it had been, like the Prohibition Amendment, direct legislation incorporated in the Constitution, it would have been reasonable to cavil at any apparent excess of scope. An amendment prohibiting all child labor under eighteen, or sixteen or even ten or eight, might decently be opposed as impairing the liberty of parents and undermining the home. But the charge that the Child Labor Amendment as it actually stands attacks liberty and the home is absurd. And where it is used by interested parties to preserve their privilege of exploiting child labor, it approaches the utmost limit of propagandist effrontery.

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Science and Politics

FROM time to time I am asked whether I have ever thought of taking to politics. I suppose that question is asked of every man who can speak consecutively for twenty minutes. Sometimes I fear I have answered that politics is no occupation for an honest man. If I made that answer I was wrong, for it is my duty, and everyone's duty, to try to alter that state of affairs if it exists. But the true answer was that I thought I could be of more use where I was. "But why," my questioner might have asked, "if you can find a method of reducing the amount of potassium in your own blood or altering the distribution of sugar between the different tissues of your body, should you not apply your mind to reducing the amount of unemployment in the country or helping to bring about a juster distribution of its wealth?" I could not answer that these questions do not interest me. I have not to take many paces outside my laboratory to see the need for political and social reform. As a skilled manual worker and a trade unionist I have a strong idea where I should find my political affinities.

I might claim that my work had done something to save life and health in the fight against disease. But if it resulted in halving the death rate from heart disease (which is highly unlikely) it would not save half as many lives as if I could be instrumental in bringing the sanitary conditions of the unskilled urban laborer up to those of the skilled worker. And these conditions depend mainly on housing and wages.

My only valid excuse seems to be along quite different lines. I believe that social problems can only be solved in the long run by the application of scientific method such as has made possible modern industry and modern medicine. I am at once answered by two sets of people. The first tells me that if I think on scientific lines about politics I shall inevitably be led to its own favorite scheme, a scientific tariff perhaps, or a scientific organization of the means of production by the state. The others say that my scientific method may be adequate for dealing with machines or animals; but that as man is a great deal more than a machine or an animal, it cannot be applied to politics. With these last I have considerable sympathy. If I thought that science in its present embryonic state could be applied to politics I should become a politician. But it certainly cannot. Man is no more a mere animal than he is a mere economic unit. It is quite true that biological laws apply to him as mechanical laws do. Good intentions alone are as useless against smallpox as against an earthquake, though they are needed for dealing with both these calamities. But to predict the behavior of men in the mass we require knowledge of a special kind of

psychology. And at the present moment the expert politician knows ten times as much of it as the best psychologist. But there is this big difference between the two. What little knowledge the psychologist possesses, though it is so abstract and meagre as to be of very little practical value, can be put in a form accessible to other psychologists. The same cannot be said of the politicians. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Lord Younger disagree on most political topics, but they would probably agree to a large extent in estimating the ability and integrity of a given statesman, or the probability of gaining votes by a given speech or measure. Yet they could not put into words the processes by which they arrive at these estimates, although their judgment is worth more when they agree than when they differ. The psychologists are just beginning to give an account of these processes. In another two or three centuries they will be beating the politicians at their own game and usurping their power, provided that the politicians have left a civilization in which psychology can exist.

I say two or three centuries for the following reason. Two hundred years ago the physicists and chemists were beginning to study the properties of metals by exact methods involving measurement, and the biologists were looking through the first microscopes. But the real knowledge of metals lay in the hands of skilled workmen who handed down their rule of thumb methods and manual dexterity to their children. Today metallurgy is a branch of applied science, while biologists are just beginning to be of some use to the practical animal breeder, though they cannot yet beat him at his own game. Psychology is about as much more complex than biology as biology than physics. Hence my estimate of the time it will take to develop. Let us hope it is too large.

Why then am I not a psychologist? Because, with all respect to psychologists, I do not think psychology is yet a science. Mechanics became a science when physicists had decided what they meant by such words as weight, velocity, and force, but not till then. The psychologists are still trying to arrive at a satisfactory terminology for the simplest phenomena they have to deal with. Until they are clearer as to the exact meaning of the words they use they can hardly begin to record events on scientific lines. Moreover I do not believe that psychology will go very far without a satisfactory physiology of the nervous system, any more than physiology could advance until physics and chemistry had developed to a certain point. This is not to say that physiology is a mere branch of physics or chemistry, or the mind a mere by-product of the brain. But it is a fact that we can only know about life by observing the movements of matter. You