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Children bear the promise
of a better world

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PERIODICALS

Our Nation
does not need their toil.

IF a declaration of independence were to be written today, American women would ask that in the enumeration of the objects for which governments are instituted the welfare of children should head the list; and the American men would agree. It is time that with characteristic American directness we undertake to realize that object now.

—*Grace Abbott.*

Children need

opportunity for education and normal development

Give them

freedom from toil that bars them from this opportunity

Child-labor laws are

THE PROTECTION of children from premature employment and the safeguarding of their opportunity for education and preparation for life are basic in any program for social welfare in any society, whether that society be strong or weak, rich or poor, at peace or at war. In the United States at this moment—now more than ever before—it is essential that the Nation make the wisest possible provision for the protection of its childhood from labor that is detrimental to health, education, and general welfare. A child who starts to work too young, before he has had a chance for normal physical, mental, and social development, starts life with a handicap—a handicap that burdens not only the child himself, but his State and his Nation. If today's children are to be able to build the better world of tomorrow for which adults are now fighting, boys and girls must be given *more* rather than *less* opportunity than they have been given in the past.

To say that the children must be denied these opportunities because sacrifices must be made in other directions is to ignore the reason for these sacrifices—the common good. It is as if the people in a time of scant harvest should devour all the seed corn, so that as a result the next year would be a period not of scarcity but of absolute famine.

Child labor is not a new problem just now thrust upon the Nation. Our people have developed reasonable standards of protection in this field; we know the ways in which those standards may be put into operation; we have advanced far in developing good technique for administering them effectively. Good child-labor laws, and their important complement, compulsory-school-attendance laws, are fundamental in our present program to insure for children preparation for democratic citizenship. Such laws should (1) require children to

Childhood's protection

attend school at least up to 16 years of age, (2) establish a basic 16-year minimum age for employment, (3) regulate their hours of work, (4) protect them from hazardous occupations, and (5) make provision for the effective enforcement of these standards.

It is essential that these standards be upheld in the fields of employment in which they exist, and that they be put into effect where they do not exist. Increased employment pressures due to the defense program are causing a greater demand for young workers and a greater tendency to violate child-labor laws. Children under 16 are going chiefly into nonfactory work—jobs, for instance, as errand and delivery boys, newspaper and magazine distributors, “curb-hops,” garage helpers, stockboys and salesgirls in stores, domestic-service workers—employment on the whole less subject to regulation than work in the defense industries. There has been an unusual demand for the work of children in agriculture, and some localities have delayed the opening of schools or have excused children from attendance for this work, without considering whether the need might be met in some other way. An even greater demand for children to work in the fields may face the country as more adults are drawn into the war effort.

It will take vigilance to watch for these first breaks in standards and to combat them. It will take courage in this period of crisis to insist upon extending protection where it is now lacking. It will take intelligence and determination to find those ways of solving our problems that will not burden our children. If the foundation of a democracy is an educated and informed citizenship, our children must have the opportunity to gain an education and thus become informed. Solution of post-war problems will demand a generation wiser than that which preceded the war.

Children have a right

THE FIRST child-labor laws in this country, enacted in New England more than a century ago, required working children to have the rudiments of an education. Then some limitations were placed by State laws on hours of work, and later laws established a minimum age for employment. As the country grew, the economic and industrial interests of the States became more and more closely interrelated.

Early in the twentieth century people began to realize that child labor is a National as well as a State problem and that the children of the Nation as a whole have a right to equal protection under the law. Federal child-labor laws enacted in 1916 and again in 1919 were in effect for a short time but were declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court. Now the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 contains child-labor provisions which in effect set a basic minimum age of 16 years for employment in establishments producing goods shipped in interstate commerce. This act has recently been upheld by the United States Supreme Court.

Every State should have laws of labor that set standards at high as—

1. A minimum age of 16 for employment in factories at any time for all employment during school hours; a minimum age of 14 for employment in nonfactory occupations outside school hours during vacation.
2. A minimum age of 18 for employment in hazardous and unhealthy occupations.
3. Employment certificate for minors under 18 based on evidence of age.
4. A maximum workday of 8 hours and a maximum workweek of 60 hours for minors under 18, prohibiting night work, and providing for a minimum lunch period.
5. Minimum-wage standards for minors.
6. Provision for administration of these standards, including adequate State appropriations and qualified personnel for enforcement.

to equal safeguards

Public opinion recognizes that, in general, child-labor standards set by law should establish: A minimum age below which children may not be employed in any occupation; regulation of daily and weekly hours and prohibition of night work; protection of children and adolescents from employment in occupations hazardous to health and safety; administrative provisions, including requirement of employment certificates, and adequate provision for law enforcement.

The amount of protection that existing standards give to children differs greatly in different States. The child-labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act do not cover industries purely intrastate in character. Only 14 States set a basic minimum age of 16 years for the employment of children. Even the 14-year and 15-year minimum-age standards in effect in 33 States are subject to exemptions. Five States that have no basic 16-year minimum age for employment permit children to work longer than 8 hours a day, and 5 States without this basic minimum age of 16 years permit them to work longer than 48 hours a week.

Protection of 16- and 17-year-old workers is even more incomplete than for the younger group. At this age, boys and girls who go to work must carry the double burden of rapid growth and labor, and because of their immaturity they are especially susceptible to industrial accident and injury to health. Yet half the State laws fail to give young workers of 16 and 17 years substantial protection from employment in hazardous occupations, and less than half limit in any way the maximum weekly hours of both boys and girls of these ages.

The Fair Labor Standards Act does these things for children:¹

1. It sets a basic minimum age of 16 for employment of children in establishments producing goods shipped in interstate or foreign commerce.
2. It makes an exception for children of 14 and 15 years in nonmanufacturing and nonmining occupations working under conditions that do not interfere with their schooling, health, or well-being as determined by regulations of the Children's Bureau.
3. It provides a minimum age of 18 years for occupations found and declared by the Children's Bureau to be especially hazardous for minors 16 and 17 years of age.
4. It provides protection for employers through certificates of age for their minor employees.
5. It provides for cooperation with State and local agencies charged with the administration of child-labor laws. In most States State employment and age certificates are recognized as proof of age under the act.
6. It entrusts administration of these standards to the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor.

The child-labor amendment would do this for children:

It would make possible one national minimum standard affecting all types of child labor in all parts of the Nation. This amendment has been ratified by 28 States; 8 more ratifications will be necessary to place the amendment in the Constitution.

¹ The act contains also provisions relating to wages and hours for workers of all ages, which are administered by the Wage and Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor.

Do you know that—

1. Almost a quarter of a million children 14 and 15 years of age were working in the U. S. A. in March 1940.¹
2. Two-thirds of a million boys and girls 16 and 17 were working in March 1940.¹
3. The census figures indicate a decrease in child labor since 1930, but a new sharp rise in employment of boys and girls 16 and 17 is now taking place.
4. The number of children under 16 taking full-time jobs is smaller than in 1930 but is also increasing where permitted by State law.
5. Any upswing in general employment, such as is occurring at present, tends to be accompanied by an increase in child labor.
6. There is still child labor, little protected by legislation, where conditions are often very harmful for children; for instance, in street trades, in domestic service, in industrial home work, and in industrialized agriculture.
7. More child workers are used in industrialized agriculture than in any other form of toil, and it is here that increasing pressure upon children may be expected unless precautionary measures are taken.

¹ According to estimates by the U. S. Bureau of the Census based on a 5-percent sample.

*If you want children
protected from harmful
child labor, you can—*

1. Know what kinds of work children are doing in your community.
2. Know what they are doing on the farms of your State.
3. Know where children in your State are working in factories, in stores, at street trades, in agriculture.
4. Promote understanding by parents, employers, and young people of the standards set up by your State for the protection of young workers.
5. Know whether the State is equipped to enforce the child-labor standards set up by law: Has it the necessary funds? The needed personnel? If not, help to see that these conditions are remedied.
6. See that there is a staff available in your community to issue certificates for children going to work.
7. Help the enforcing officials in your community by referring to them cases of child-labor violations.
8. Know whether your State child-labor and school-attendance laws dovetail so that children are not dropping out of school before they are ready to go to work. If these laws are inadequate, you can help to get them amended.
9. Help children stay in school to get the education they need.
10. Support new child-labor legislation to protect children who are not now properly safeguarded by the laws of your State.

*Our Nation is mobilizing its resources
for the welfare of children
as an important part of national defense:*

To coordinate health, welfare, medical, nutrition, recreation, and related services bearing on the defense emergency, the President of the United States has established by executive order the

Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services,
Paul V. McNutt, Director.

To assure effective coordination of Federal relations with State and local governments engaged in defense activities, to facilitate constructive civilian participation in the defense program, and for other purposes, the President has established the

Office of Civilian Defense,
Fiorello H. LaGuardia, Director.

The *Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor* is responsible for promoting the welfare of children at all times through—

Studies and advisory services	Child-labor administration
Cooperation with State agencies	Bulletins, leaflets, and radio talks

The **Chief of the Children's Bureau**, Katharine F. Lenroot, has been designated child-welfare consultant to the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services, and the Assistant to the Chief, Charles I. Schottland, has been made liaison officer with that office. The Associate Chief of the Children's Bureau, Dr. Martha M. Eliot, has been designated liaison officer with the Office of Civilian Defense. Other Federal, State, and local agencies are working for the promotion of child welfare, in cooperation with many privately supported organizations.



The Defense of Children Series:

**“CHILDREN BEAR THE PROMISE OF
A BETTER WORLD” *includes:***

1. What Are We Doing To Defend Them?
 2. Are We Safeguarding Those Whose Mothers Work?
 3. Are They Getting the Right Start in Life?
 4. Have They the Protection of Proper Food?
 5. Are We Defending Their Right to Health?
 6. Their Defense Is the Security They Find at Home.
 7. Their Education Is Democracy's Strength.
 8. Through Play They Learn What Freedom Means.
 9. Our Nation Does Not Need Their Toil.
 10. Are We Helping Those With Special Needs?
 11. Protect Them From Harmful Community Influences.
 12. Is Their Safety in Wartime Assured?
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*“CHILDREN IN WARTIME,” a radio
program on defense of children, pre-
pared by the Children's Bureau, is pre-
sented every Monday at 11:00 a. m.
Eastern War Time over the Blue Net-
work.*

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ● CHILDREN'S BUREAU

Defense of Children Series No. 9

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