

## SINGLE TAX AND CHILD LABOR

The spectacle of little children engaged in gainful occupations is one that should suggest an inherent imperfection in our social institutions. The normal mind perceives it with a shock, yet failing to carry the analysis of conditions to a logical conclusion men and women are content for the most part to follow the mere philanthropic impulses of the heart while ignoring the tremendous challenge which the spectacle presents to the intellect. For there is no more obvious and formidable indictment of our civilization than this.

Of all the children 10 to 15 in the United States more than one in six, or 1,990,225 in 1910 were found at work. More than half of these were less than 14 years old.<sup>1</sup> The majority were engaged in various forms of agriculture. This number has perhaps decreased since 1910, because of the increasing number of State laws forbidding the employment of children in certain occupations. But the 1910 Federal Census provides the only available statistics of child labor covering the entire country. It is interesting to note that in 1900 there was not a single State in the Union with a 14 year age limit for any common industrial occupation except mining.

It is objected that as the majority of the children employed (a little under three-quarters of the number) are engaged in agriculture, they are working under favorable conditions and enjoying regular attendance at school. But unfortunately this is not the case. Investigation has revealed that in the berry and vegetable fields of Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey hundreds of children go with their parents to supply the demand for labor to pick the crops. They return from the country weakened by overwork, improper food and want of proper supervision.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>U. S. Federal Census, 1910.

<sup>2</sup>National Child Labor Committee.

The following table, compiled from the Census figures, shows the distribution of children in industry:

INDUSTRY	CHILDREN REPORTED		
	Age 10 to 13	Age 14 to 15	Total
Salt, Oil and Gas Wells.....	28	205	233
Public Service (not elsewhere classified)	84	707	791
Quarries .....	224	1,120	1,344
Liquor and Beverage Industries.....	115	1,327	1,442
Chemical and Allied Industries .....	187	3,132	3,319
Paper and Pulp Industries.....	154	4,652	4,806
Professional Service .....	805	5,628	6,433
Metal Industries (except Iron and Steel) ..	252	6,971	7,223
Clay, Glass and Stone Industries.....	1,234	9,161	10,395
Cigar and Tobacco Factories.....	1,843	8,723	10,566
Food and Kindred Industries.....	972	10,245	11,217
Leather Industries.....	406	11,592	11,998
Printing and Bookbinding .....	622	11,482	12,104
Mines .....	2,241	14,877	17,118
Iron and Steel Industries.....	951	19,518	20,469
Lumber and Furniture Industries.....	4,367	17,418	21,785
Clothing Industries .....	1,113	22,158	23,271
Transportation.....	3,041	21,777	24,818
Miscellaneous Industries.....	2,064	28,093	30,157
Building and Hand Trades .....	5,008	27,657	32,665
Textile Industries.....	14,642	65,888	80,530
Trade .....	22,441	88,965	111,406
Domestic and Personal Service.....	33,045	80,510	113,555
Agriculture, Forestry, Animal Husbandry	800,137	632,443	1,432,580
Totals.....	895,976	1,094,249	1,990,225

In most States today the employment of children is regulated and restricted by more or less adequate provision. In some States there is an almost total absence of such provisions. But parents whose poverty compels them to make a sacrifice of their offspring to the toil and hazards of industry often set these regulations at naught. Many youthful workers are still employed in the cigar making industry despite the efforts of the Cigar Makers' Union to protect them from work that is unhealthy and carried on often under the most unsanitary conditions.

Following are a few instances of the employment of children. Many more could be given were it desirable to extend the limits of this article:

Over 17,000 children between the ages of 10 and 16 are engaged in "the extraction of minerals" in the United States.<sup>1</sup> These industries are dangerous and when not so are hopelessly monotonous.

Over 29,000 children between the ages of 10 and 16 are at work in factories in States where they may work at night.<sup>1</sup>

Over 122,000 children between the ages of 10 and 16 are at work in factories in States where they may work 9, 10, or 11 hours a day.<sup>1</sup>

The New York State Factory Investigating Committee in the season of 1912 found 952 children under 14 working in the canneries.

The Bulletin of the Department of Labor (175) which treats of the employment of women and children in the United States refers in this way to the conditions set forth:

"The conclusion seems to be that numbers of children are at work whose families would not really suffer hardship if the employment of the children were forbidden, and another considerable number whose families could very well afford to spare their earnings." For a moment it seemed as if this very serious government report was about to divide the parents of these children into two classes: those who could afford to spare their children's earnings and another class who did not need these earnings. They go on to say: "The question naturally arises why children of the latter group are at work. To a considerable extent it seems due to indifference or active hostility to the schools on the part of both parents and children. This is referred to in several of the reports."

This is naive enough but the Report recovers itself long enough to say: "Poverty and the generally low earning capacity of the mill people, who get lower wages than the people in almost any other great industry, are among the prime causes of the indifference and hostility of the parents toward the schools." So it may be that "poverty and low earning capacity" are really responsible for the employment of young children, and not at all the dislike of the children for school life, a phenomenon which, by

<sup>1</sup>National Child Labor Committee.

the way, is not wholly unknown even among the children of the more favored classes.

The facts are, despite labor legislation<sup>1</sup> and the well meant efforts of labor and trade organizations, that hundreds of thousands of children are at work who should be at school or play, the great majority at miserably low wages,<sup>2</sup> and in hopelessly monotonous occupations. Most all so engaged are learning nothing that will be of any money-earning advantage to them as they grow older.<sup>3</sup> The industrial surroundings of great numbers of these little workers are unsanitary and sometimes fraught with grave hazards; the environment is of necessity corrupting to the moral fibre of the young, and men and women so reared are not likely to make good citizens in the days when the Republic shall require them.

We may commend the work of the National Child Labor Committee, labor and trade organizations, and the philanthropic bodies which seek to mitigate the horrors of a social condition which denies to the child its few years of playtime. But this commendation must be qualified. Either these amiable philanthropists do not know or do not want to know. For these children are victims of a great wrong. In so far as one sees this wrong and seeks other ways out than the true way—the way of indus-

<sup>1</sup>Special attention was given to the subject of illegal employment. Almost one third of the children (203, or 32.6 per cent.) had at one time or another worked under illegal condition, some of them having been so employed more than once. About one-sixth (102) were working illegally at the time of the investigation. Studies of child labor in Pawtucket and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Plymouth and Hazleton in Pennsylvania, Columbia, S. C., Columbus, Ga., and a group of three small mill towns near Columbus, partly in Georgia and partly in Alabama.—*U. S. Labor Bulletin*, 175.

<sup>2</sup>Practically 90 per cent of the boys and all of the girls entered industries whose average weekly wage for all employes is under \$10; 7 per cent. of the boys entered industries whose average weekly wage is between \$10 and \$15 and only three per cent entered industries whose average wage is \$15 or over.—*U. S. Labor Bulletin*, 175.

<sup>3</sup>Much of the work undertaken by the children is of such a character that it requires little mental training; 50.6 per cent. of the employers say that no education whatever is needed by the larger number of their employees to do the best work.—*U. S. Labor Bulletin*, 175.

trial emancipation by giving the earth to man—he merits the contempt of all those who would rescue the poor stunted souls and bodies of these little ones.

We have thought it advisable to present the foregoing facts as conveying, however inadequately, some notion of the appalling nature and extent of child labor in a country politically but not yet economically free. The phenomenon of child labor is the inevitable accompaniment of low wages, and low wages result from a condition of land monopoly which the Single Tax will destroy. Nothing less than the opening up of natural opportunities for employment will give to parents the higher wages adequate for the maintainance of a decent standard of family life and thus remove children of tender years from gainful occupations.—EDITOR.