

THE CHAIRMAN: Already in this congress recognition has twice been made of the vital relation between playground work and industrial conditions. In one of the sections yesterday there was advocated a closer connection between the playground supervisor, the parole officer of the juvenile court, the truant officer of boards of education, and the factory inspector; and at yesterday's conference we had a reference to the economic pressure for which playground work is in some degree a relief.

I am sure that it was a very proper matter for the Playground Association of Chicago to discuss and act upon—the matter of Saturday afternoon holidays for the clerks in the Chicago department stores; and, although the action taken by the Chicago Playground Association in that regard in trying to further the efforts of the clerks was not successful, it seems to me that it is entirely proper for these voluntary bodies to bring pressure to bear for more leisure time for the overburdened classes, for a longer childhood, for longer opportunity to use the playground; and I am sure it is exceedingly proper in this congress that we should have a paper upon “The Playground a Necessary Accompaniment to Child Labor Restriction.”

Mr. Everett W. Lord, the New England Secretary of the National Child Labor Committee.

THE PLAYGROUND A NECESSARY ACCOMPANIMENT TO CHILD LABOR RESTRICTION

PAPER OF MR. E. W. LORD

All nature unites in the exemplification of childhood as playtime. In all animate creation the older generation has to introduce, sustain, and educate the younger, and we of this generation are coming to understand that the best training for our successors is not found in the repression of their God-given

instincts or in the attempt to make them assume the burdens and the demeanor of the full-grown, but rather in their encouragement and guidance in doing what is urged by the divine impulse within.

Modern conditions have threatened to take from the child of to-day his inheritance of all the ages. It has become evident that America's claim to preëminence as the land of equal opportunity for all is less true than of old. For more than thirty years there have been occasional warnings of the great increase of child labor in this country; our factories and mills, our mines and mercantile establishments, have been robbing the schoolhouse and the playground, but until recently few people have realized the extent of the evil growth. The census of 1900, which showed that there were employed in gainful occupations more than 1,750,000 persons between the ages of ten and sixteen years, or nearly one child in every six in the United States, gave to the people a revelation of the startling extent of child labor in this country. It is true that in this number there are included agricultural workers, whom many believe suffer little from the effects of premature labor, since the most of their work is done in the open air and under the immediate direction of their parents; but the figures of the census do not include the thousands of children under ten years of age engaged in various forms of labor. Many of the newsboys and peddlers of the city streets and the young children working in sweat-shops and tenement work-rooms are under that age. A most conservative estimate, including all these children, indicates that at the present time, even though in many states recent legislation has decreased the number of young employees in some lines of industry, the total number of child workers is little, if any, less than in 1900. A recent special report issued by the Census Bureau shows that the average earning of the child worker in the twenty-five states in which statistics were gathered is \$3.46 per week. In return for this meager wage, thousands of children are giving up their opportunities for proper physical development and for an education, even of the most elementary sort.

In the midst of national prosperity and great industrial development this disturbing condition of affairs has come into existence. During the twenty years from 1880 to 1900, the number of child workers increased 12 per cent. more rapidly than did the total number of children of corresponding age in all the

country; this indicates how rapidly the evil has spread. Almost no section of our country is free from oppressive child labor; from the easternmost point of Maine, where little ones work in the sardine factories, to the fruit ranches of California, child workers are everywhere found; in the cotton mills from Canada to the Gulf, in the mines and the mills of the Central States, in the sweat-shops and the department stores of the large cities, and in the canneries of the rural districts, the cheap labor of children has been made a source of profit. Few see it at home, but all realize that elsewhere child labor is pernicious: thus, in Maine they refer to the deplorable conditions just across the state boundary in New Hampshire; in New Hampshire they may comment on the wretched situation in Maine; New York tells us of the breaker-boys in Pennsylvania; and Pennsylvania remarks upon the host of children in New York sweat-shops; in South Carolina it is not difficult to convince people that the evil of child labor is great in Georgia; and in Georgia the people are already convinced of the sins of South Carolina.

It requires little acumen to see that the children who toil prematurely are thereby deprived of the possibility of intellectual education, that a community of child workers to-day means a community of ignorant citizens to-morrow, but all do not realize that the education of these children as industrial units is equally deficient. All may not know that the army of tramps infesting our land is largely recruited from the ranks of the prematurely aged and work-worn children, nor that our work-houses and prisons harbor a multitude of the hopeless or desperate victims of child labor. But this is true.

Such are the conditions; yet every suggestion of reform, even though so evident in its righteousness, meets some urgent objection. Seldom does one see far beyond the reach of his personal interests, and few indeed are they who feel another's need as strongly as their own. Therefore it is not surprising that they who have descried the dangers attending the exploitation of child labor for commercial purposes and who have urged some effective restriction thereto find frequent and vigorous opposition. Were it otherwise, we might doubt the need for action.

We are told that our revelations impeach the good name of the community, and we agree in part. That is, we agree that the conditions revealed do stand as a somber stain upon the reputation of our people, but we cannot believe that we should there-

fore refrain from publishing the truth. We remember that the truth has ever been the potent enemy of evil.

We are urged in the sacred name of business to desist from any agitation which may interfere with its vested rights. The manufacturer and the merchant fear for the capital invested in forms of enterprise dependent to a greater or less degree upon the products of child labor. It may be true, they acknowledge, that their factories and work-rooms are not beautiful and restful; it may be true, though they do not always grant it, that many of their young employees drift along perforce toward ignorant and perhaps vicious lives. Enfeebled bodies and dwarfed mentalities may detract from the general well-being of society, but—business is business. This dictum, un pitying as the whip of the Cossack, cold and relentless as the grip of the arctic ice, is quoted as sufficient justification for any evil which may exist.

Business is business; we grant it, and we would not have our business men cease to be business men, but we want them to be *good* business men, and if experience has plainly indicated anything of value to the manufacturer and the merchant it is that cheap labor—which in this country means child labor—does not pay. The man who employs it gets inferior results, and in the end is likely to be distanced by his shrewder rival with employees not so cheap but more efficient.

Some speak of the rights of the family, protesting against any hand which shall be placed between the parent and the child. Shall we attempt, they ask, to prevent a father from governing his family as seems to him right? In the welfare of the child who can have a deeper interest than his own parents? But the *jus patris* is no longer a defensible legal principle; the father has not the power of life and death over his children as in patriarchal days, for we recognize the greater right of the individual. We would not detract from the legitimate authority of the parent, but, on the contrary, we would endeavor to sustain that authority in the only certain way, insuring the dependence of the children upon the father as the family bread-winner. It has been too frequently found that the father's interest in his children extended only to the point of seeing them regularly listed on the factory pay-roll for us to accept now the plea that children do not sometimes need protection even from those who are their natural protectors.

There are people who flatly deny that child labor as an evil

has any existence, in effect accusing us of misrepresentation or of pernicious exaggeration. They declare the number of working children is so small that any disturbance on their account is entirely unnecessary. Perhaps it is deplorable that even a few should go without formal education, but after all there are not enough of them to cause all this commotion. Indeed, these people are sometimes inclined to declare that constant work is good for the young. They recall Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, and dozens of other famous men who had to work from their earliest childhood; they believe that no one worthy to rise will be kept down by adverse conditions—with which consoling thought they are prone to dismiss the matter from further consideration.

There are some who, though disposed to treat the situation more fairly, granting the existence of the evil, still oppose any special effort to check it under the mistaken plea that, while many young children are working daily and even nightly, and while such a condition is not good for them or for society, it is necessary as an alternative to the greater evils of beggary or pauperism.

And there is always some one to bring forth what seems to be regarded as a final and unanswerable objection to any plea for the restriction of child labor, that the children are better off in the work-room, where they are kept from mischief and are acquiring habits of industry, than they would be on the street. As the evils of the street are manifest, appealing to the most casual and unobserving, this is often accepted as an evident argument against any active restriction of child labor. Yet, as a matter of fact, the child worker learns more of viciousness in the factory and the mill than the street waif learns in the street, and habits of industry are not acquired by the forced repetition of mechanical motions which usually form the task of the young factory hand.

These, and many other objections of somewhat similar nature, are constantly presented, and they who work for child labor restriction are required to give convincing replies to them all. It is not impossible to ascertain the approximate truth as to the number of working children, nor is it by any means difficult to prove conclusively that the vast majority of these young people who are deprived of the natural rights of childhood, so far from attaining the heights of fame reached by a few men of phenomenal strength and genius, seldom rise even to the com-

fortable plane of the average workingman. We can show that a very small percentage of children are compelled to work by dire necessity, and some acceptable provision can generally be made for that small percentage. We deny that the child is materially better off in the factory or mill than he would be on the street, but yet more insistently do we deny that these are essential alternatives. Our work is not merely negative. We are equally insistent upon the abolition of premature labor and the provision of facilities for proper training of the young. We recognize childhood as a period of preparation for adult life and its problems, and we believe that the place for the child is in the school and on the playground rather than in the factory or on the street. The gospel of work which has long been proclaimed has sometimes been too literally accepted as necessary for the salvation of old and young alike. They who most readily agree that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do" often are deaf to the equally cogent saying about "all work and no play," which, we have found, does verily "make Jack a dull boy," and holds out slight prospect that he will become a useful man. Believing only in constant productive employment, there are some who cannot accept the fact that hands and mind employed in the natural play of childhood are further removed from idleness than are those employed in unremitting and unnatural labor; but we no longer consent to be bound to a literal interpretation of sacred Scripture, and we are not going to submit our cause to the judgment of literalists who pin their faith to proverbs.

So long as a particle of the spirit of youth remains the child will not dispense with play of some sort. The young breaker-boys of Pennsylvania sometimes meet with accidents, and an excuse given is that the accidents occur when their work is temporarily suspended and they are playing around the breaker. The instinct of the child tries to make a playground even of the scene of his labors, and, when he is surrounded by pitfalls and dangerous machinery, freedom from accidents cannot be expected. With the play instinct so universal it is hard to believe that it can be entirely crushed out, but a lady in the South who tried to give a treat to some young mill operatives found it so with them. She took a number of them to her home in the country and turned them into the woods to play. To her distress and amazement she found that they not only did not know how to play, but that they actually did not know the meaning of the

word. These children had been completely deprived of the universal right of childhood.

The problems connected with child life are many and important, and, as the members of the Playground Association have done well to recognize, they are closely interrelated. Because this commingling of interests is so evident, the National Child Labor Committee has endeavored to secure the establishment in one of the departments of the federal government of a National Children's Bureau, where trained specialists could bring together the statistical results of the census, and could publish reports and bulletins, which would be of incalculable value to officials and the public.

Authoritative reports of successful methods of meeting problems presented in children's courts, of various ways of dealing with juvenile delinquents, of the advance of the playground movement, of the reasons for child labor and the operation of child labor laws, would immensely increase the effectiveness of the work now being done by many individuals, officials, and private societies. We trust that the Playground Association of America may cooperate with this National Child Labor Committee in its efforts for the establishment of this National Children's Bureau.

Whether the public school should provide a longer and more practical course for the young might well be considered. Our great school buildings represent a capital of many millions; their halls and classrooms are the only clean and wholesome rooms which many of their pupils ever see. That these rooms are generally closed and their facilities unused, except for a few hours daily during a part of the year, indicates that the schools might be made more useful. The additional fact that only one in five of the children of the first grade follows the course through to the eighth grade may be regarded as an indication that the common school course does not meet the needs of the people. But the school is doing much, and to it we must continue to look for the intellectual development of the young. As a factor in the movement for the restriction of child labor it is most important, but without a playground it is incomplete. For the physical development of the child who has been kept out of the army of laborers, and for his practical training in the essentials of democracy and social life, the importance of the playground is paramount.

The supervised playground has no less important a mission in behalf of the young worker who, as the result of legal restric-

tion of hours of labor, has some of daylight at his disposal. On the playground he can be guided in pleasurable exercise which may to some extent counteract the effect of the monotonous and frame-wrecking tasks of the factory. He may learn something of the rights and duties of the citizen, free from the surveillance of the taskmaster. The playground presents the greatest hope for the physical salvation of the working child and at the same time shows the way for his mental and intellectual invigoration; it affords the most effective reply to the objector who considers the children better off in the factory than on the street; it makes so obvious the fallacy of his argument that the wayfaring man, though a member of the legislature, need not err in choosing his way. The playground is a most welcome recognition of the principle for which the National Child Labor Committee stands, that childhood is playtime, that the strong body and the vigorous mind of the man are the outgrowth of the rational and healthful play of the child.

DISCUSSION FOLLOWING MR. LORD'S PAPER

A DELEGATE: Mr. Chairman: Something that was not mentioned in the paper, but something that happened to me this morning, struck me as very encouraging. On the way to the congress I met a gentleman, and we were talking about the playground movement. He told me that he was the chief engineer of one of the largest electrical plants in the country, and that the phase of the playground movement in which he was interested was the child labor question. He said: "These Child Labor people are going at it from the wrong end." I asked him what he meant. (He looked like a conservative man.) He said that the solution of this problem was not restriction upon the children or upon the parents, but the solution lies in recognizing the fact that in the large majority of cases the parents need the money that the children earn. His solution of the problem was to have under the guidance of the bureau of education in any town investigators who should find out exactly what cases were of this class; and then, where it was necessary, to pay to the parents of the children the money which the children would earn, in order that the children might go to school.

Of course, this coming from a rabid socialist would have had very little weight, but coming from the chief engineer of one of

the largest electrical plants in the country struck me as remarkable, as I have thought of it in connection with my experience in the South, in the cotton country, in the coal country. I think it should be one of the lines along which this reform should work, not to the neglect of any other; but for very many cases that would be the best solution possible.

A VISITOR: Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen: This is not so much a question of child labor and the playground as of the influence of the home. The object of our playground work should be to get closer to the home. I myself had an experience on the West Side among the better class last night. The children had returned home from the country. The boys were so noisy that the people in the upper part of this better-class apartment house were compelled to throw down water on the heads of the children in order to still the noise. These children having been in the country many weeks, on their return home had not yet lost that spirit of play and had not been influenced by their own home. They are children that should have been in their own home, because they are children of the better class. Therefore, I say if this congress can emphasize as a most important thing the necessity of getting in touch with the home, it will be one of the greatest reforming influences.

MRS. ELLEN SPENCER MUSSEY, of Washington, D. C.: You probably know that for the first time we have a child labor law in the District of Columbia, which the representatives that you have sent to Washington have made, with a great many imperfections. That went into effect on the first of July. It was thrown upon the Board of Education to exercise this law without any appropriation for it, not even for its inspectors. It was of interest to me as a member of the Board of Education to see why there are such a large number of applicants, and I noted particularly the mothers who came with those children. From the appearance of their dress I am sure it is because the parents are not willing to live on such a standard of living as the income of the adults can produce, and they therefore use the money of the children in order to permit them to live better. Of the two thousand children who asked for permission to labor, about 75 per cent. were granted that permission. Twenty-five per cent. were not granted it because of physical conditions, etc. A very small proportion of those children is ever seen in our Washington playgrounds. We have not yet been able to reach those

children. This is undoubtedly due to the home influence; we have not yet been able to reach those homes. That law must be modified in many ways if it is to be a good working law. As we do not control the Congressmen who come and make our laws, the way to do is to educate the men who come to Washington to make laws.

MR. LORD: I want to say just a word in connection with the comment of the first speaker. I want to say that the criticism suggested by the engineer that the National Child Labor Committee was not working along the right lines is hardly justified, since that very scheme which he has outlined is one of our schemes. If the gentleman will write to the National Child Labor Committee and ask for literature in regard to industrial scholarships, he will find that we are doing that and are urging to have that thing throughout the country.

QUESTION: Would you set any definite age at which a child may be allowed to go to work?

MR. LORD: I think age is not the best determining factor, but it is perhaps the most practical one. I should say that the age of fourteen might be accepted. It has seemed to be the age best adapted to our conditions. If we could have had what we want, it is that a child should not be allowed to go to work until he is physically and mentally qualified. That would, however, require a very difficult adjustment; and it is easier to fix the age at fourteen for the simplest forms of labor.

QUESTION: Have you already worked for fifteen years?

MR. LORD: No. Fourteen should be the minimum. There should be different ages for different lines of work.

QUESTION: Which State has in your opinion the best child labor law?

MR. LORD: I should hesitate to answer that question without some modification, because no State has the best laws in all forms. A child labor law is rather complex. We regard the law of New York State as one of the best laws; the law of Ohio is one of the best. Massachusetts has many good features in her law, but no State has what we consider a perfect law.

THE CHAIRMAN: I regret to say that Mr. Leland is unable to be present, but Mrs. Leland has kindly consented to read his paper on "Winter Organization of Playgrounds."

Mrs. Leland.