

CHILDREN UNDER CAPITALISM

by
**Grace
Hutchins**

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CHILDREN UNDER CAPITALISM

BY GRACE HUTCHINS

Two Children—Two Classes

I SAW a baby die of undernourishment. His father is a long-shoreman, earning 67 cents an hour, but he has only a few hours' work in the week. The family live in two basement rooms and the sun never shines into rooms below the city sidewalks.

Milk was what the baby needed, but there wasn't any. The older children are thin, undersized, white-faced. But the baby's face took on the expression of a little old man's, lined, colorless, withered like a dry leaf. Day by day through the first six months, when a healthy baby would have gained steadily in weight, this child lost. His ankle was no bigger around than a grown-up person's thumb. His worried mother left the other children to look out for themselves, and took the baby outdoors to get what sunshine there is in a city street. But it was of no use. He died. And was buried in a box two feet long.

Lucy Cotton Thomas is 7 years old and lives at 995 Fifth Ave., New York City. Her father was a wealthy sportsman, banker and publisher, and her grandfather made millions out of the labor done by workers on low wage rates. Lucy has a yearly income of more than \$80,000 from a trust fund set up by her grandfather, and her mother claimed in a petition to the Surrogate Court that the child needs over \$3,000 *a month* for living expenses. These expenses include \$800 a month for rent; \$325 for chauffeur, maid service and incidentals; \$600 for food for herself, her mother and the servants; \$400 for miscellaneous expenses (French, music and dancing lessons, books, flowers, stationery, etc.), and other amounts bringing the total up to more than \$3,000. The court granted the little millionaire an allowance of \$36,000 for the year or practically \$100 *a day*. (*New York Times*, February 8, 1933.)

Such contrasts between the situation of children in workers' families and in leisure-class families have long been typical of capitalism in the United States, as in other countries, but the contrasts have now been greatly sharpened by the economic crisis.

Today after four crisis years, in the families of nearly 17,000,000 jobless workers, countless numbers of children are keeping themselves alive only by what they get from garbage cans. Others are dying of starvation. A quarter of a million boys in their teens, 12 to 20 years old, are homeless wanderers, uncared-for, moving from town to town, in search of food and a place to sleep. Over 3,000,000 children of school age, 7 to 17, are not in school. Over 2,000,000 of these boys and girls, deprived of school advantages, are at work in factories, mines, or in the fields, producing wealth for the rich and *their* children to enjoy.

Children of the capitalist class are thus literally fattening off the bodies of workers' children. Nourishment which should go to a working class boy or girl, goes instead to the child of a parasite, and more than mere nourishment,—an excess of good things beyond all the normal needs of a child. What is a parasite? The dictionary gives this definition, exactly fitting the capitalist who feeds and cares for himself and his children out of the wealth created not by himself but by the workers and their children:

A parasite, one who eats at the table of another. . . . A plant or animal living in, on, or with some other living organism (called its host) at whose expense it obtains its food, shelter or the like.

Two classes. Capitalist class children, drinking all the milk they need, eating fresh vegetables and other good food, sleeping in quiet, airy rooms, playing in the sunshine, secure, protected from disease and accidents and anxiety, provided with the best teachers and the best schools, receiving all that children need for health and general welfare.

Working class boys and girls, many of them without enough milk to drink, without proper clothing, without sunshine, without a safe place to play, without any of the things doctors and educational experts advise for the health and welfare of children.

Children of two classes. And the great majority of the 43,000,000 children under 18 in the United States (Census of 1930) are children of the working class.

Workers' Children at Home

"Every baby should be born under circumstances which insure a healthy and vigorous start in life," state the child health associations and the child welfare specialists.

. . . a room should be given up to the exclusive use of the baby, since it is hard to give him the quiet he should have in a room that must be used also by other members of the family. . . . A bright sunny room should be chosen for the nursery. . . .

A very young baby should sleep from 20 to 22 hours out of the 24. . . . He should always sleep in a bed by himself. . . .

Sunlight is necessary for the proper growth of a baby. . . . If the baby does not get enough direct sunlight and cod-liver oil, his bones will not develop normally, his muscles will be flabby, and his skin will be pale. He will probably have rickets.¹

How impossible it is to give the child such quiet and such sunshine, working class parents know only too well. The worker's child starts his existence already handicapped in the race of life. His mother is worn down by a great burden of work, not only housework but often work outside the home also. The home is dark, overcrowded, and the child cannot possibly have clean sunshine, a quiet room or a bed to himself.

Nor can the working class family possibly afford the food that should be provided for every child. Here is the list of what a child, between one and six years old, should have to eat and drink:

Milk is an essential part of every child's diet. The average child should receive a pint and a half daily. Some children grow best if they receive a quart a day. . . . Fruit once or twice a day. . . . One or more fresh vegetables a day. . . . A "starchy vegetable" once a day. . . . An egg daily. . . . A serving of meat or fish daily by the time the child is 18 months old. . . . Cereal once or twice a day. . . . Bread and butter two or three times a day. . . . Cod-liver oil daily (for those under two).

For lack of milk and of these other necessary foods, workers' children are dying by the hundreds in this rich country. The

U. S. Children's Bureau has made studies of infant deaths under one year old in many different cities and states and has revealed that in low-wage working class families nearly three times as many babies die as in the families of the well-to-do. The more money the fathers earn, the fewer babies die.

As the child grows out of babyhood he needs constant care and attention, but what can a working class mother do when she must go out to work herself and has no relative with whom to leave the young children?

Some parents are forced to leave their small children in overcrowded "day nurseries." However, most of these nurseries, whether run by some settlement house, religious mission, or other agency, have no full-time trained teacher service, no skilled service of any kind, and the food is poor. Even for this kind of a day nursery, the parents must pay from 5 to 25 or even 50 cents a day.²

Hot, breathless city tenements in the summer breed disease and death. Workers and their families often spend the nights on tenement house roofs, only to see the children lie awake through the night in the heat and noise. Meanwhile the city houses and spacious apartments of the ruling class stand cool and empty through the hot months, while the parents take their children to summer homes by the seashore or in the mountains.

To secure for their children the food and other necessities of life that all children need, working class parents are demanding wage increases and are heroically fighting against the employers' drive to cut wages in these crisis years. Those who have jobs and those who have not are uniting to demand immediate cash relief for the unemployed and a complete system of unemployment and social insurance for all workers to protect them and their families against starvation and the ravages of unemployment.

Millions Not in School

All children of school age in the United States supposedly have a right to an education. But the fact is that 3,326,152 children of school age, from 7 to 17, inclusive, are not in school. (Census of 1930.) Where are they and what are they doing?

These boys and girls who ought to be in school, but are not, are mostly in the southern states and many of them are already at work, as we shall see. Do the employers and their state and city governments, then, increase the expenditures for education and attempt to absorb into the schools these 3,000,000 and more who haven't an opportunity for an education? Far from it. Instead they are reducing the school budgets in every state, North as well as South, slashing the expenditures for new school buildings and other equipment, cutting down teachers' salaries, doubling up classes and in many communities closing down all schools. The U. S. Children's Bureau sums up the situation, in a statement issued January 1, 1933:

In a steadily increasing number of communities, the public schools . . . have closed their doors, thus denying children the right to an education. In many more, school budgets have been so cut that one after another activity has been abandoned.

The National Survey of School Finance reports that "more than a third of the school children in the United States are being deprived of essential instruction." It estimates that about 9,500,000 pupils are receiving inadequate instruction and the standards for millions of other children are endangered.

In Arkansas, 26 schools have been entirely abandoned, and in four out of five counties the school terms were cut short, it is admitted by the Office of Education in the U. S. Department of the Interior. The New York state aid for the common schools is reduced by about \$9,000,000. Similar reductions have been put through in other states.

This further narrowing down of school facilities, already inadequate before the crisis broke, affects not only the children but also the teachers who are themselves exploited as wage workers under the capitalist system. (A fuller discussion of the whole school situation will be found in a forthcoming pamphlet on schools to be issued in this International Pamphlets series.)

In the face of this general reduction in expenditures for education, workers through their various organizations are demanding of the state and city governments that additional funds be made

available for new schools to be built in working class neighborhoods. All dangerous fire-trap school buildings should be destroyed. Free books and free school supplies should be furnished for all workers' children. Hot school lunches should be provided free for the children of the unemployed.

What Child Workers Are Doing

I worked beside a child slave in a tobacco factory in New York City. He was not yet 15 years old, and under the state law he was supposed to work only eight hours a day, 44 hours a week. But the law did not worry the big American Tobacco Co., making its stupendous profits each year. If a state inspector came around during the day, he chatted with the superintendent, received a box of the best cigars, and departed without inquiring about law violations.

The boy was undersized and so thin that his clothes hung on him as if his body was a stick with cross-bars for arms. His face was colorless, naturally, because he never saw the sunlight except on Sundays. He came into the plant with the rest of us at 7 A.M. and left it about 6 P.M., was on his feet all day, carrying bundles of tobacco leaves to feed the machines, and during the noon three-quarters of an hour, he tried to learn how to roll cigars in order to earn more money. He was a typical child laborer.

With thousands of children like this boy, the army of child workers under 17 in the United States now numbers 2,145,959, about one-third of whom are girls and two-thirds boys. (Census of 1930.) Over 660,000 of these children are from 10 to 15 years old, in other words under 16, while more than 235,000 are under 14. But the census figure is a serious understatement of child employment, since it does not include the children under 10 years old. Nor does the census say anything about the great numbers of children in seasonal agriculture, such as beet cultivation, truck-gardening and fruit-picking, whose work does not begin until after April 1, the date on which the census was taken.

Even without including thousands of children in seasonal agriculture, the census lists nearly half a million children as farm

laborers. Here are the figures on the numbers of boys and girls under 16 at work in the United States:

OCCUPATIONS OF CHILD WORKERS, 10-15 YEARS (*inclusive*)

<i>Occupational Group</i>	<i>Number</i>
Agriculture	469,497
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	68,266
Chiefly: Laborers and semiskilled operatives in	
Textiles	20,625
Clothing	8,650
Building	7,380
Lumber and furniture	4,790
Food and allied industries	4,324
Iron and steel and other metals	3,236
Trade	49,615
Domestic and personal service	46,145
Clerical occupations	16,803
Transportation	8,717
Extraction of minerals	1,184
Other, including public and professional service, etc.	6,891
	<hr/>
Total 10-15 years old	667,118

While much is said in the capitalist press about the decrease in child labor between 1920 and 1930, the U. S. Children's Bureau admits frankly that this decline "cannot be considered as permanent. . . . Children will doubtless be again drawn into industry in large numbers. . . ." Two states, Georgia and South Carolina, actually *increased* the number of children under 16 employed in manufacturing industries between 1920 and 1930. In Georgia the increase was over 5% and in South Carolina it was nearly 23%.

In some industrial plants, especially in the clothing industries, more than one-fifth of the operating force are children under 16 years.³

Nothing is said in the census about the great numbers of children who must work outside of school hours in the late afternoon, evening and early morning, in most cases forced by necessity to try to add a few cents to the family income. About 10% or one in every 10 of all school children under 16 are so employed,

according to the estimates of the National Child Labor Committee, and many of them are only 10 years old or even younger. From one-fifth to one-tenth of these children working outside of school hours are employed at night, when growing children should be getting 9 to 10 hours sleep. How can a school child get the play he needs or the chance to keep up with his school work if he must hurry to work as soon as the three o'clock bell lets him out of school and again in the morning before school begins?

Why these thousands of children have jobs when grown-up men and women are pounding the pavements in a vain hunt for work, is explained, of course, by the lower wages for which children are made to work. Even skilled adult workers are now slaving for the wages formerly paid only to young children, and the children's pay is forced down to correspondingly lower levels.

What Children Earn

Reports from different industries and different states indicate that starvation wages are almost universal. Rosie, eight-year-old girl, shucking oysters in a slimy-floored shed for 12 hours a day, beginning at 3.30 A.M., earns only \$1.50 a week or less.⁴ The air is foul with the stench of oysters and dampness. This small girl is one of several thousand children employed in canneries in the United States. It is difficult to find anything worse than the conditions under which these children work. Hours range from 10 to 14 a day, and often include night work. Speed-up is intense, for the fruit and vegetables are perishable and the employers, of course, wreck the children's health rather than lose any money on the goods.

Employers in the needle trades have restored sweat-shop conditions in many states and are using young children for long hours at such low wages that even state labor commissioners are admitting "conditions comparable to those existing 50 years ago." In Massachusetts the Minimum Wage Commission revealed wage rates in Fall River and New Bedford as low as five and ten cents an hour for girl workers. Hundreds were earning less than \$5 a week.

In Pennsylvania clothing factories, most of the 14- and 15-year-

old children are working 51 hours a week and about half of them are receiving less than \$3 a week, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Women and Children reported in December, 1932. For boys 14 and 15 years old in Scranton, Pa., the median wage was \$4.94 and for girls only \$4.20 during the first six months of 1932. (The "median" is a kind of average and means that half the boys earned more and half earned less than the stated amount.) Scranton is in the anthracite mining district, where the labor power of miners' daughters may be bought at lowest rates for work in the silk mills.

Wherever there is industrial home work in the tenements there is child labor and wage rates are at the lowest. Children lose their play time and their sleep in the family's struggle to earn something by home work, especially during the crisis when there are no other jobs to be had. In Connecticut, for example, a group of six children, the youngest five years old, were separating long strips of lace and all six together, after an entire day's work, had earned only 64 cents.⁵

In agriculture, employing twice as many child workers as all other occupations together, the work is often even more oppressive and exhausting than factory work. Children must do back-breaking jobs, usually for more than 10 hours a day at wages notoriously low. On truck farms in New Jersey and Maryland, in fruit and hop picking on the Pacific Coast, on cotton plantations in the South, in grain and general farming in Western states, countless children earn less than a dollar a day, in spite of working "from sun-up to sun-down" on long summer days.

In the Colorado beet fields where the big sugar companies have grown rich from the exploitation of child workers, a worker and his whole family are hired for the season at a specified rate per acre. In the spring and summer of 1932, a drastic cut from \$23 down to \$15 and even \$13 in the rate paid per acre, resulted in a two months' strike of 18,000 beet workers, including the children. The Colorado *Labor Advocate* reported that 95% of all Colorado beet workers went on strike. This heroic struggle of miserably paid agricultural workers, many of them Mexicans, called attention to the conditions under which they live and

work. The beet worker's child hardly knows what schooling is. From the time he is a little tot he is taken out into the fields to begin his slavery. Many of the Spanish-speaking children never have a chance to learn English, or even to learn to read or write in their own language. (For further information on long hours of work and the effect on the health of boys and girls, see *Youth in Industry*, International Pamphlets, No. 13.)

Through decades of struggle, workers' organizations have forced the adoption of laws in some states for the protection of child workers, but even such laws as stand on the books are constantly violated. During 1933, the fourth year of crisis, when millions of grown-up workers were looking for jobs, employers were openly ignoring the child labor laws or were trying, with the help of the state governments, to break down existing laws.

The Fight to End Child Labor

Workers' organizations in their fight for the abolition of child labor include the demand that all children under 14 now working shall receive state maintenance in order to prevent their being drawn back into industry. Working class families, in their bitter struggle for bread, often depend largely on the slender earnings of these child workers. Only a subsidy from the state paid to the family in place of the child's labor will make it possible for these children to stay in school. This demand by workers' organizations for state maintenance of children under 14, to be taken out of industry, is a basic demand to be pushed in every shop and center where there is child labor.

Workers point out the fact that there are thousands of younger children under 14 now at work,—far more than the 235,000 revealed by the 1930 Census. There are thousands of little children in agriculture not included in the enumeration. There are all those under 10 years old not even counted by the Census. These thousands must be removed from industry and maintained by the state, so that their earnings are made good to the working class family.

With the workers' program of demands for the abolition of child labor under 14, and for state maintenance of these child

workers, goes the demand for the 6-hour day, 5-day week, with no night work, for all young workers under 18. But with these greatly shortened hours, wages for all young workers under 18 must be on the basis of equal pay for equal work, with no piece work.

Other demands of workers' youth organizations include the following: no work in dangerous occupations; no speed-up; the establishment of work schools in factories for the training of young workers, these schools to be controlled by the workers and full wages to be paid during attendance; an annual four weeks' vacation with pay for all workers under 18.

Negro Workers' Children

From the time of his birth on, the Negro working class child has an even harder life than the white working class child.

In every state the death rate for Negro babies is higher than for white babies, because the Negro fathers' earnings are lower, and the family is therefore at an even greater economic disadvantage. Thus, where the infant death rate for native white babies is 93.9 out of every thousand babies born alive, and the general rate for all babies is 110.0, for Negro babies the rate is 152.3 out of every thousand. And in Negro just as in white families, the more money the fathers earn, the fewer babies die.

Unemployment, with all its terrible effects on the lives of workers and their children, is even worse among Negroes than among white workers. Starvation among countless Negro children is the result. Diseases of poverty such as malaria, pellagra and tuberculosis, developing from lack of food and from other conditions of unemployment, show higher death rates for Negro than for white workers and their families.⁶ And growing children even more than grown-ups suffer from these starvation diseases.

No one knows how many thousands of Negro children have died either from starvation itself or from the diseases that result from undernourishment. Often in southern agricultural states a Negro child dies because there is no Negro physician within reach and the white physician will not come to a Negro's house.

In schooling, Negro children in southern states never have an



A Negro unemployed worker's shack on the banks of the East River in the heart of New York City

equal opportunity with white children, and in northern cities also there is discrimination against the Negro working class in the matter of school buildings, teaching staff and the educational standards required. A recent study by the National Education Association reveals the difference in school expenditures for Negro children and for white children in many sections of the country:

In South Carolina, for example, the annual expenditures for education is \$4.48 per child for Negro children and \$45.45 per child for white children. In Georgia, where the Negro population is 36.8% of the total, the figures are \$7.44 per year for the Negro child against \$35.34 for the white child. Mississippi spends \$9.34 for the Negro child and \$42.17 for the white child, while the figures for Florida are respectively \$11.41 and \$75.07.

Negro boys and girls at work in various kinds of child labor are paid even less than white boys and girls. The lumber and furniture industry employs more Negro children than any other large child-employing manufacturing industry, and their jobs are always the worst and lowest paid. In "domestic service," of the

boys and girls under 16 working as servants and waiters, more than a third are Negro children.

In cotton and tobacco fields of the South thousands of those who bend for hours over the picking of cotton or the worming of tobacco are Negro boys and girls. They work longer hours than white children doing the same kind of work,—a fact revealed by a special study of child labor in Texas cotton fields. More than half of these Negro children missed school to pick cotton.

The average daily hours ranged from 9.3 among the children of white owners to 11.3 among the children of Negro owners. The Negro children worked consistently longer hours than the white children.⁷

When out of work and hunting for jobs, Negro boys are picked up and arrested for “vagrancy,” and often framed-up, charged with more serious “crimes” of which they are entirely innocent. Thus, the nine Scottsboro boys, two of them only 14 years old, riding a freight train on their way to look for work, were charged with raping two white girls and sentenced to die in the electric chair. Seven of them were held for nearly two years in the death house of Kilby prison, Alabama, and only the International Labor Defense, mobilizing workers all over the world in defense of the boys, has saved them thus far from electrocution. Ruby Bates, one of the main witnesses against the boys, repudiated her testimony as forced from her by the sheriffs.

In the struggle against such conditions as these and for complete social, economic and political equality for all Negro workers and their families, the Communist Party, the Young Communist League and the Young Pioneers are leading the way. These working class organizations are demanding that there shall be no discrimination against Negro workers or their children in any field of work or of social life. What complete Negro liberation will mean is explained in two pamphlets by James S. Allen, *The American Negro* and *Negro Liberation*. (International Pamphlets, Nos. 18 and 29.)

Child Misery Increases

Thrust out of the capitalist schools to hunt for jobs while their bodies are still but half grown, these child workers, Negro

and white, find their homes broken up by the relentless pressure of capitalism. What was true for many thousands of working class families even during so-called "normal" times has been intensified by the crisis until it has involved millions. The effect of this period on workers' children is beyond words to describe.

Young boys of 12 and younger have taken to the road and are "riding the freights"—looking for jobs that are not to be found, homeless, hungry, exposed to disease and accidents, always told to "move on, move on." These transient boys, from practically every state in the Union, number from 250,000 to 300,000 and the numbers are increasing each month.

Capitalist programs for the "solution" of this homeless youth problem include herding the boys into camps where they will be required to do forced labor, and recruiting for the army or the navy those who are considered physically fit. According to the Cutting bill, now (March, 1933) under consideration in congressional committees, \$15,000,000 would be provided for the "care" of these boys in military camps. General Pelham D. Glassford, who was chief of police in Washington when the bonus marchers were driven out, is actively pushing the bill for the militarization of these homeless youths.

Not only these boys who are "riding the rods," but countless numbers of younger children have been taken from their homes because their parents were jobless and penniless. The number of children placed in institutions throughout the country increased 48% between July, 1930, and October, 1932, according to Dr. C. C. Carstens of the Child Welfare League of America. In New Jersey, an increase of 187% in the number of children accepted for care by the state between January 1, 1930, and January 1, 1932, was reported by J. Prentice Murphy of the same organization.

An eviction, putting the worker and his family on the street, with all their possessions, is often carried out when the children are ill. And evictions are increasing. In five industrial cities of Ohio, for example, evictions increased from 26,900 in 1930, and 27,600 in 1931 to about 35,000 in 1932. Similar increases were reported in New York City and other centers. In the

record of one year's evictions in Chicago there were more than 26,000 children in the families evicted.

As a result of strain and anxiety in the families of the jobless, growing boys and girls only 14 or 15 years old have committed suicide or attempted to do so. Here is an example of a child suicide:

Eugene Olsen, 16 years old, a senior at George Washington High School, standing high in his classes and especially interested in scientific subjects, committed suicide by hanging himself with a dumbwaiter cord in the basement of a New York tenement house in June, 1932. The father, a carpenter, had been out of work for several months. Unable to pay rent, the family had been evicted and were occupying a basement storeroom rent-free. The father said the only reason he could give for the boy's suicide was worry over their financial condition. (Based on a *New York Times* news item, June 6, 1932.)

Starving to Death

In November, 1930, the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection admitted that out of more than 40,000,000 children in the United States, at least 6,000,000 were improperly nourished. How these figures on undernourishment and ill-health have multiplied during the crisis may be seen from the following examples:

Since 1930 the number of cases of malnutrition in the New York City schools has increased more than 33%, rising steadily from 13.5% in 1929 to 20.5% in 1932. More than a fifth of all school children in the world's richest city are now suffering from slow starvation. In Brooklyn the number of undernourished children has doubled in the past year.

In Pennsylvania the increase in undernourishment runs from 10% three years ago to 28% in 1932, according to Mrs. Helen Glenn Tyson, Assistant Deputy of Welfare in the state. She stated in January, 1933, that 20 to 40% of the school children in certain districts were reported as malnourished and 75% as suffering from some form of physical defect.

In the mining districts of West Virginia and Kentucky, investigators found that "91% of the children in the most destitute areas were seriously undernourished." This fact was revealed in

an appeal for relief funds in January, 1933, by the Federal Council of Churches, quoting the American Friends Service Committee and other conservative sources.

Eating out of garbage pails has become a daily fact for countless thousands of workers and their children in practically every city of the United States. And when children eat from garbage dumps disease and death are the results. Here is a true story of four children who lived in New York City, in the streets below the handsome skyscrapers. It is told in a letter from a municipal hospital sent to the executive secretary of the Children's Welfare Federation in the early autumn of 1932:

We have had for a long time now, people coming in to us asking for food and stating that they have not eaten for several days, and it can be seen by their appearance that they are telling the truth. This week we have had four children admitted with the diagnosis of *starvation*. *One, who was found eating out of a garbage can, has died since admission. Another infant of three months is about to die.* The mother was feeding it sugar and water. (Our emphasis. G. H.)

Total lack of unemployment insurance in the United States means that jobless workers and their children are at the mercy of relief agencies, doling out the smallest possible amount each week, often not enough to keep the children alive. That relief in Pennsylvania, usually between \$2 and \$4 a week for a family, represents only a "*starvation diet*" was admitted by Mrs. Helen Glenn Tyson of the state Department of Welfare in her testimony before the Senate Committee hearings on the federal relief bill in January, 1933. Welfare officials in New York City have made similar admissions.

How It Might Be

There is a country without unemployment. A country where a worker who cannot work because he is ill or growing old is never afraid of losing the job, is never penniless or forgotten. A country where a woman can take a few months away from work to have a baby and receive her regular wages for the job that is still hers when she returns. A country where the welfare of children is a *first consideration*. The full name of this country is the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

Since the Revolution of October, 1917, a wide network of day nurseries, kindergartens and children's playgrounds has been established in this land where the workers rule. About 10 million children between the ages of three and seven are cared for in these institutions,—seven times the figure of two years ago. No worker from a capitalist country can visit the Soviet Union without being deeply impressed by the day nurseries for children in or near each industrial plant. These nurseries are run by qualified educational workers, with a nurse in attendance, and are usually housed in the mansion of the former Czarist factory owner,—now given over to workers' children, and always beautifully clean, sunny and attractive. The nursery is so near the plant that the young babies' mothers can come over easily for the half-hour nursing period, always arranged for the women workers. The mother is relieved from the strain of any double burden, because her working hours are only seven a day; the older children get their midday meal provided at school; the factory kitchens and the cooperative restaurant provide the worker's meals at low prices; there is a laundry to which her washing is sent; and housework is reduced to a minimum. She is protected by a full and complete system of social insurance, including maternity benefits.

The number of children in the elementary schools of the U.S.S.R. has grown from 10,000,000 in 1928 to 19,000,000 in 1932. The introduction of compulsory elementary education is being completed. In the cities, 100% of the children are attending schools and in the villages about 90%, as compared with only 47% in 1915.

By 1934, it is expected that all illiteracy will have been wiped out in the Soviet Union. Literacy among the population has grown from 67% in 1930 to 90% in 1932. Before the Revolution only 13% of the population were literate.

Results of the general concern for children's welfare and social education are seen in the appearance of the children playing on the streets. The *New York Times* correspondent, Walter Duranty, writing from Moscow in February, 1933, describes their health and happiness:

The writer is prepared to state that there is no city of 4,000,000 inhabitants in the world in which the children are healthier and happier than in the Soviet capital. . . . The chief reason is doubtless that Moscow has no slums like Western cities—no dark, airless courts and human rabbit warrens. . . . In the winter which brings gloom to children in most European cities, Moscow children play everywhere on skates and sleds. No family, it seems, is too poor to afford either or both. . . . No one interferes with the children or prevents them from playing almost everywhere. . . . Russian children rarely cry and seldom fight. . . . When they sing, which they do continually, they are invariably in tune. And one may see a dozen Russian children between 6 and 12 taking infinite pains to teach a babe of one or two how to sing.

Child labor does not exist in the workers' republic. The few young workers, 14 to 16 years old, who are allowed by special permission of the Soviet Department of Labor to spend four hours a day in the shop, with four hours in the factory school, are paid for eight hours' work. This experience in the shop as a vocational school, carefully regulated to alternate with classroom hours, is part of the youth's training for future work. Not until he is 18 years of age is a young worker allowed to work seven hours a day,—the adult working day in most industries.

The Struggle Against Child Misery

In the United States, on the other hand, as we have seen, not only child labor but child misery and starvation are common in workers' families in every part of the country. Homes are unheated in winter and stifling and airless in summer. Malnutrition increases faster than capitalist statisticians can tabulate it. Babies die for lack of milk.

In the face of these terrific conditions, workers' organizations have to carry on an unceasing struggle against starvation and the other conditions of poverty that affect the children of the working class. Children's hunger marches during the winter of 1932-33 brought the situation sharply to the attention of the financial rulers and their servants in the state and federal administrations. Under the initiative of militant working class organizations—the Unemployed Councils, the Workers International Relief and the Young Pioneers of America, with the support of the workers'



Children obtaining food for the strikers' families at the Workers' International Relief station during a recent coal miners' strike in Pennsylvania. The sign reads: "Don't Scab on Our Fathers."

political organization, the Communist Party—a campaign is being carried on to fight against child misery. All workers' organizations and sympathetic groups are called upon to support this campaign and to give attention to organizing the children of their members.

These organizations emphasize the struggle for unemployment insurance as the most important of all immediate demands for the protection of working class children. In the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill they propose federal unemployment insurance, at full average wages, to be paid for by the employers and by the government and administered by committees elected by the workers. Other forms of social insurance are included in the workers' bill, which demands that social insurance be paid to workers to the amount of full wages to compensate for loss of wages through sickness, accident, old age or maternity.

This campaign of working class organizations is in direct opposition to the plans of capitalist organizations in their continual propaganda to win the workers' children for the support of the

capitalist system. Much is said in the general press about concern for child welfare, and the illusion is created that capitalism itself is combating child misery. Bourgeois children's organizations are increasing in number and in membership. The Girl Scouts, for example, increased its membership from 262,000 to 300,000, in the year between 1931 and 1932. The Boy Scouts grew from 625,000 to 870,000 in the same period. Such organizations as these are interested in training children to become soldiers of capitalism,—ready to shoot down workers in a strike, ready for imperialist warfare, ready to attack the workers' state, the Soviet Union.

The Young Pioneers of America, on the other hand, is a working class children's organization which brings workers' children together in troops all over the country. Negro and white, foreign-born and American-born, girls and boys, city children and farm children, are united in these troops for the common struggle against child labor, against all the conditions of capitalism that now close every door to the children of the working class. "Always ready" is the motto of the Young Pioneers. They publish an illustrated magazine for the boys and girls of the workers and farmers, called the *New Pioneer*, a lively, interesting paper which should be in the home of every working class family.

Children alone cannot carry on the fight for bread, for milk, for clothes, for books, for better schools, nor the long fight against child labor. They are too young, too inexperienced and the conditions under which they suffer are the result of general working conditions, of wage standards and of poverty affecting the entire working class. Children of the workers will really come into a full and joyous life only when the capitalist system is overthrown and a workers' government established. But meanwhile, where determined efforts have been made by all workers acting together, children and grown-ups, the struggle has brought some immediate results.

In Chicago, for example, in October, 1932, a mighty demonstration of 20,000 workers, men, women and youth, forced the authorities to withdraw the 50% relief cut. One month after the cut was announced it was withdrawn.

In St. Louis, the Unemployed Councils won relief for 18,000 families that had been cut off the list.

Farmers in Nebraska, Iowa and a dozen other states, by mass action, have stopped mortgage foreclosures and evictions.

In North Carolina, Negro and white workers, acting together, won a new school for Negro children.

The Unemployed Councils in Pennsylvania coal and steel towns stopped evictions and won new milk stations.

At City Hall, New York City, a thousand children, many of them Young Pioneers, demonstrated with their parents, carrying empty milk bottles on which were painted in red: "Fill these up." As a result of this demonstration free school lunches were continued in many of the city schools where lunches had been stopped.

In Cleveland, Ohio, a committee of the workers went to the dairymen and secured from 800 to 1,000 quarts of milk to be given out each day, free of charge, for the children in working class neighborhoods.

These are only a few examples of successful struggles. What has been done in part in certain localities can be done on a broader front and with greater success. Every worker and every worker's child should be included in the mass movement for the protection of children. Hunger will not wait. There is no time to lose.

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