

TOILING YOUTH

By HARRY GANNES.

(Continued from last issue.)

Thousands of defective young people thus become part of production. Even though the young worker's body be comparatively healthy, a few years in a modern factory may shatter his health. The girls in the Eastern textile mills that become consumptive are a case in point. The worst damage is done in the factories that actually employ the young by compelling them to work at injurious trades.

Here is an instance that could be multiplied a hundred thousand times: A young man I once knew had for five years—from the day he was sixteen until he was twenty-one—made two movements of his hand each second, 72,000 mechanical movements each year, and was at the time of his death, at the age of thirty-five, broken down, drunken and diseased. . . . (Poverty). A peculiar example of the effect of the monotonous labor done by the young in the modern workshop recently came to the attention of a young fellow while riding home in the street car late after a day of exhaustive work, while sleeping he moved his arms in a mechanical fashion, as if he were working at a machine. Some- one asked the young fellow and told him what he had been doing while sleeping. He replied, "that's what I do at work all day."

A government pamphlet on "Physical Standards for Working Children" states: "The child who goes to work between 14 and 18 years of age is in need of special protection if he is to arrive at maturity with good health and a well-developed body. During these years he is passing through the most important period of his physical development. . . . If at the same time he is subjected to the mental and physical strain of occupational life, the result upon his immature physique is a double one, and special precautions must be taken if normal growth and development are not to be endangered."

And yet there is but one state in this country, Virginia, that specifically provides for periodical physical examination of the youth who work! In all other states, so long as the juvenile laborers have passed the preliminary examination where it is required, it makes no difference what becomes of them. They are left to the will and the mercy of the particular boss for whom they might be making profits.

At the beginning of the modern system of production the young fellows were apprenticed to learn trades. Very early in United States history, apprenticeship was a form of slavery.

Thousands of orphans were sold out as apprentices by the keepers of orphan asylums. But the apprenticeship system of the old type has entirely disappeared. The development of industry makes apprenticeship on a large scale unnecessary since the youth are employed as parts of the machine.

Out of the six million young workers, 300,000 are apprenticed, and but a small number of these can be called apprentices in the strict sense of the word. Apprenticeship is restricted to the most highly skilled trades as the printing and building industries.

The number of skilled workmen of every kind is rapidly dropping. The same reason, as we showed before, is the technical improvement and use of machinery in production which makes skill and knowledge of the production process a secondary requirement. The labor unions in the skilled trades have not been aiding this development by rigidly restricting the number of young fellows who learn such trades as those of electrician, plumber, steamfitter, bricklaying and others of the same type. While the skill needed in all of these trades has been reduced by the high perfection of industry, some training is necessary. The employers of labor gain an advantage over the unions by recruiting young workers into special trade schools where they can learn their work in a very short time and are then sent out at lower wages to compete with the older skilled workmen. However, in spite of all, the American youth is mostly limited to unskilled labor.

The city of New York, with a population of over 7,000,000, and with 115,000 children in the building and electrical trades, there are but 3,095 apprentices.

Most of the apprentices in the skilled trades belong to trade unions. Although the union regulations are antiquated, at least these young workers have some means of bettering their immediate working conditions through their unions. They have an instrument at their finger tips, and for training and skill, though little, is something the boss must reckon with.

But what of the six million young workers in mill and factory, in the store and on the farm? How do they fare?

The working youth in these places are totally unorganized; their wages are low, and their hours are determined by the employers.

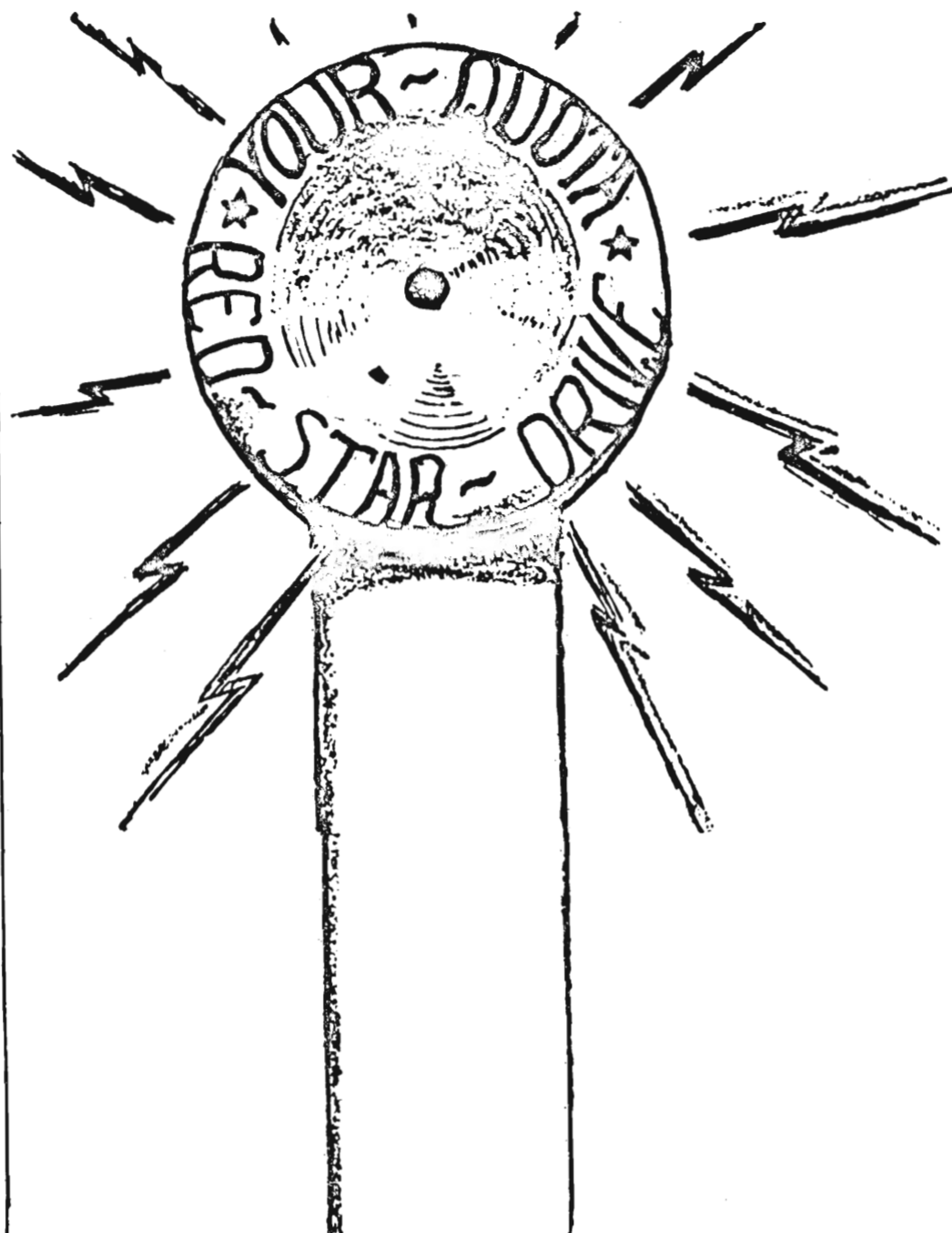
There have been no statistics gathered on the average wages of young workers. The union rates vary, and the wages paid to the young workers in different states vary.

Some figures have been gathered on the wages paid to girls in industry since the special agitation for minimum wage laws for women.

From a survey made in 1923 of 60,000 working girls and women over 16 years of age in New York state, it was found that more than half received less than \$15.00 per week; a large number received less than \$14.00 per week, and many thousands got \$10.00 and under. In Wilkes-Barre, Pa., girls employed in the silk mills got as low as \$7.00 and \$8.00 a week; the hours are long, the work, surroundings, and toilet facilities in many cases are too filthy for description, according to a health inspector's report.

(To be continued.)

Chicago Again Hits Hardest Blow of Week



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MEMBERS MUST DOUBLE ACTIVITIES IN EVERY FIELD OF LEAGUE WORK

By BARNEY MASS.

During these few months prior to our national convention, it is necessary to increase our activity on every field of work. To be noticed in a large degree, is the reluctance of a big part of our membership in responding to the instructions for work that are sent out at regular intervals in circular form. This must be corrected and the most effective way of doing it is to place in the position of the nucleus or branch secretary comrades who see the necessity of representing the activity and life of their respective units to the national office.

Importance of Branch Secretary.

The position of nucleus or branch secretary is more than merely a corresponding agent. If justice is done to this job, then the national office is continually informed of the activity of the particular unit. It also facilitates matters in every respect, such as saving the writing of many unnecessary letters, precluding any possibility of misunderstanding and the issuing of undue harsh criticism. In fact, it is the medium thru which the contact between the national office and the lower units is cemented.

Send in Industrial Registration.

Since issuing the late improved industrial registration, only about 40 per cent of the entire organization has sent in returns. New York, for instance, has never in its history sent in one single copy of the registration of its membership, in spite of the fact that we have already taken at least four times the industrial registration of our membership. Unless we have this essential information, the national committee is unable to know the social character of the membership, the possibilities for establishing nuclei, the number of members in the unions, etc. In fact, the economic trade union work suffers fatally as a result of this rotten condition. Once more, comrades, let this be the last appeal, send in your industrial registration.

Intensify Negro Work.

Our work among the Negro young workers has indeed been very limited. Our membership as a whole has very little understanding of this work and much less experience in it. In a previous issue of the Young Worker a pro-

gram for this work was published. The immediate task of each individual member is to study this program, discuss it at your meetings and see to what extent it can be applied in your locality. Send in all information you may have relative to the status of the young Negro worker in your vicinity.

Into the Unions.

In spite of the fact that for the past year or so, the necessity of joining the union and working in it has been systematically agitated, yet a big portion of our membership which is eligible to joining the trade unions, do not belong. How can we fight for the issues of the youth unless we are represented in the trade unions. How can we form youth fractions unless our members are in the trade unions. We have made very little progress with our slogan "INTO THE UNIONS." But it can't go on, so let us begin hammering away at this slogan until every member belongs to a trade union.

Youth Fractions and the T. U. E. L.

From recent experience, it has been discovered that some of our comrades are confused in understanding the purpose of the "Youth Fraction."

Some have interpreted it as meaning the formation of youth fractions within the T. U. E. L. The "Youth Fractions" are the expression of the Young Workers (Communist) League in the trade union movement. We function as members of the T. U. E. L. and enlist the aid of the T. U. E. L. in our fight. We carry on a joint activity with the T. U. E. L. in all trade union activities; we realize the existence of functioning "Youth Fractions" throughout the country, it is necessary to carry out the following organizational steps:

1. Call industrial group meetings.
 2. At these meetings, small committees should be selected to work out specific demands for the particular industry.
 3. We must interest all the members to attend the meetings of the T. U. E. L.
 4. Work out special lines of strategy to gain admittance into the unions according to the conditions prevalent in your territory.
- Of course, by sending information to the national office, the national industrial committee will be in the position to furnish more concrete advice.

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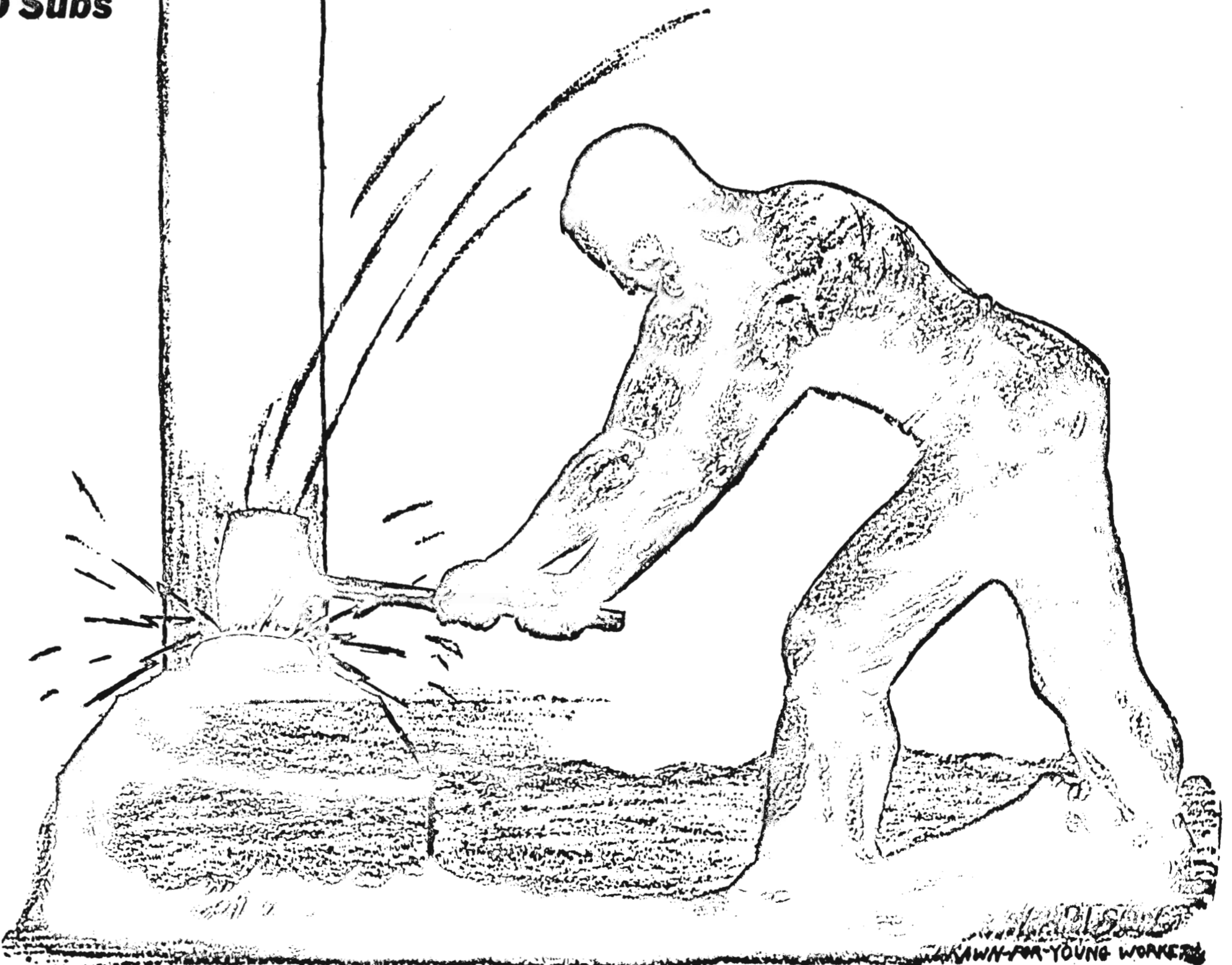
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