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NEW CERTIFICATE LAW

REASONS FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE OF THE PROPOSED MEASURE.

The Pennsylvania Child Labor Committee Shows How the Present Law Has Been Evaded By Unscrupulous Parents and How This Evasion May Be Avoided Hereafter.

The strongest feature of the bill prepared by the Pennsylvania Child Labor Committee is that which requires, in addition to an affidavit before a notary, that all employment certificates shall be issued by school secretaries and principals and by deputy factory inspectors.

This feature is made still stronger by the clause which provides for a permanent record of these certificates.

Responsible manufacturers have long realized the disadvantage of depending on the affidavit of parents as to the age of their children. One manufacturer said: "As to child labor, whose fault is it, I should like to know, the manufacturer's, the parents' or the child's? The parent perjures himself by swearing before a magistrate or a notary that a child is of legal age, and presents a certificate to us, backed up by valuable assurances of its accuracy. I should like to know how we can be held responsible for the employment of a child."

The principal of a school says that employers at times refuse to take children without a certificate (in addition to the regular certificate) from a teacher that they are of legal age according to the school records. When this happens, the father or mother invariably attempts to persuade the teacher to make a statement at variance with her record.

The above stories are not only typical of other stories on record, but they will be at once recognized as characteristic of human nature and the inevitable result of the provisions of the present law.

In short, the employment certificate, as now issued, is the effective and final weapon of defense of a child who does not want to go to school; of the parent disposed to exploit his children for selfish purposes; of the employer in search of cheap labor. The employment certificate effectually defeats the purposes of the compulsory school attendance law and the factory law as it relates to children. Children of eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve years, armed with employment certificates which certify to their having reached their thirteenth birthday, may wave them in defiance at their teachers and face with indifference the truant officers or factory inspectors who attempt to enforce the laws—the laws which compel school attendance up to thirteen years and prohibit the work of children under that age.

School superintendents and other school officials from all parts of Pennsylvania are eager to see the present law revised and the issuance of certificates placed in the hands of officials who are interested in the education of the children. While the present law is in operation, they realize that there is no hope of stemming the tide of illiteracy. Children are at work and out of school before they can read or write, as a direct result of false certificates.

The Philadelphia schools show a rapid decrease in school attendance following the first grade:

Enrollment in public schools in 1897-1903: Grade 1, 35,203; grade 2, 25,823, 73 per cent. remaining; grade 3, 23,117, 66 per cent. remaining; grade 4, 18,069.

51 per cent. remaining; grade 5, 14,885, 42 per cent. remaining; grade 6, 10,222, 29 per cent. remaining; grade 7, 7,016, 20 per cent. remaining.

Supervising principals and teachers call attention to the fact that children who leave before they have mastered the art of reading or, in other words, before they have gained a facility for reading which makes it a pleasure, do not, and in many cases cannot, read in after life. They insist that a minimum amount of schooling should be required by law before a child is permitted to go to work. A few teachers fix the minimum at the fourth grade, but many believe that a child should reach the fifth, sixth or seventh grade in school to secure a permanent ability to read. It is sometimes claimed that this would be unfair to the foreign-born child, but the principal of a school, which is made up of foreign-born children, advocates an educational standard before permitting a child's employment. She says that a foreign-born child, landing in this country at twelve years of age, not having had any schooling at home and not understanding a word of English, can, under the present law, be detained in school for only one year, or until he is thirteen.

Evidence from all quarters shows conclusively that the high percentage of illiteracy and the extensive employment of children under legal age cannot be laid at the door of employers, factory inspectors, school authorities, nor can parents even be held entirely responsible. The experience of all states in the matter of employment certificates has been: First, that evidence of age other than the affidavit of a parent is necessary; second, that certificates must be issued by a salaried state or municipal officer whose reward is not regulated by the number of certificates issued; third, that duplicate certificates must be kept on file at a central office, so that all interested in the enforcement of the law may consult the file when inquiry into special cases is needed. So far, no officials have been found so competent to issue employment certificates as those connected with the common school system.

School authorities are the only public officials whose primary interest is the welfare of the child. In Pennsylvania, as in other states where the compulsory school law is in operation, school officials must pass on the question as to whether a child has complied with the school laws of the commonwealth. Employment certificates in the hands of school authorities virtually become certificates of discharge from school. The school official who issues the certificate says: "This child has complied with the school laws of the commonwealth. School authorities hereby surrender their custody and pass him over to the custody of the inspector of factories."

It is for this reason that the Pennsylvania Child Labor Committee endorses legislation which requires evidence of age other than the affidavit of the parent, or, in the absence of evidence, requires a minimum amount of school attendance, and places the issuing of certificates in the hands of the superintendents of schools of cities and boroughs, or, where there are no such superintendents, in the hands of the principal teachers of the common schools of the district in which the child seeking an employment certificate resides. The parent's affidavit will be made, as heretofore, before a notary, but the certificate will be issued by the school authorities.

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Philanthropic Men and Women Who Have Enlisted in This Worthy Cause.

Following is the membership of the Pennsylvania Child Labor Committee. Its personnel is a guarantee of sincerity in the treatment of this vital question:

- Hon. Lyman D. Gilbert, Chairman.
- Hon. Philander C. Knox, First Vice Chairman.
- Hon. W. U. Hensel, Second Vice Chairman.
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- Francis J. Torrance, Esq.
- Dr. Talcott Williams.
- John P. Wood, Esq.
- Miss Helen Marot, Secretary, 1027 Real Estate Trust Building, Phila.

No Right to Criticize.
 John Sharp Williams thinks that President Roosevelt is overrated as a writer, but it will be generally admitted that the man who wrote the speech delivered by the temporary chairman of the last Democratic national convention has no right to criticize either the literary or oratorical work of another.—Rochester Post-Express.

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They will tell you the wheel is a "Sarven patent," or a "compressed band hub," and "hickory," all of which is doubtless true, for all grades of wheels, from A to E, are made in these styles, and even "brash" hickory is "hickory."
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