

Anti-Child Labor Amendments Up For Consideration in Congress As Child Slavery Increases

By MAX SHACHTMAN

Among the numerous resolutions which have been introduced in both houses of the Congress, the joint resolution by senator Shortridge of California which proposes an amendment to the constitution of the United States is the most typical. The Shortridge resolution calls for an amendment to the constitution which when ratified by the legislatures of three fourths of the states shall be valid to all intents and purposes as a part of the constitution. The resolution incorporates the following article: "The congress shall have power, concurrent with that of the several states, to limit or prohibit the labor of persons under the age of eighteen years."

After having gone thru two readings in the senate it was referred to the senate judiciary committee.

The fate of the two previous child labor regulations and prohibition laws which were passed by congress and signed by the president is well-known. The superannuated body of fossils and faithful flunkies of capitalism known as the the Supreme Court ruled that the laws were unconstitutional and held that the lives of the children of the workers of this country did not weigh an ounce in comparison with the deprivation of profits the law would entail to the exploiters of working children's flesh and bone.

Where does the Young Workers League of America stand on this question?

We know of the indescribable miseries of the exploited children of this country, unequalled in any other part of the world with the possible exception of China. In every part of the country little children, barely out of their teens, slave away so that the profits of capital may be greater and acquired without the troubles which adult and unionized labor usually gives to the bloated swine. Knowing as we do that the capitalists of this country, its real rulers, do not yield an inch where their profits are concerned, we are certain that no remedial measures for the child slaves will be adopted without a ferocious struggle against them by those who are interested in maintaining things as they are. After the Shortridge amendment is passed in the Senate and the House of Representatives and receives the president's signature, it will have to have the majority vote of 36 of the 48 state legislatures. And it has been computed that on this basis, approximately one-fifteenth of the population

of the United States, distributed among 13 of the smallest states, can kill the ratification of any amendment, even if it is passed in the Congress.

The amendment to give the suffrage to women, a proposition which did not attack the property interests of the rulers of this country anywhere near to the degree in which the child labor amendment does, took forty-two years to become a part of the constitution. The first amendment to give women the suffrage was introduced by Senator A. A. Sargent on January 10, 1878 and the final state to ratify it, after it had been worn almost to death in the congress, was Kentucky, on January 7, 1920.

A clinching fact in our argument is the history of amendments to the constitution. Of over 2000 which have been proposed to the constitution, only 19 have thus far been adopted. The first 12 were really part of the constitution, the next three were adopted only by force of arms—after the Civil War—and since then not a single amendment of a fundamental nature has been adopted.

The same fate awaits the Shortridge amendment and the others which have been introduced!

The southern states will kill it if the congress lets it pass thru—quite an improbability, not to say impossibility.

The Young Workers League of America, together with all other class-conscious working class elements in this country, is sick and fed up on investigations by governmental committees and uplift agencies, of fawning pleas by labor to the government's soft heart. We have had about enough.

We call upon the working class of this country to join us in an effective program for the remedying of this terrible state of affairs.

We demand:

1. The increase of wages of child laborers to 50 per cent. of the adult workers'.

2. Limitation to a maximum of 3 hours per working day for children.

3. Punishment by imprisonment and confiscation of property of child exploiters.

4. Free accommodations of undernourished and sick working class children in recreation and vacation homes, etc., the expenses to be paid by a direct tax on propertyed interests.

These are our immediate demands and do not include our ultimate demands which we know cannot be realized so long as capitalism still exists.

We ask that labor go along with us on these demands in the interests of the child of the worker and in their own direct interests. These demands can be accomplished by a determined stand on the industrial field, in labor's struggle with capital, and by the organization of a workers and farmers political party which shall incorporate these demands in its platform, and which shall pledge its elected representatives to stand for and fight for these elementary demands in the legislative bodies of the country.

The time for action has long been here. It is now time to act! We cannot let the lives of working children wait on investigation and constitutional amendments which will be passed from hand to hand with cynical indifference.

The workers of this country must take this matter out of the hands of politicians and see to it that ACTION is taken for once!

(For additional information on the growth of child labor and our demands, see article in this issue by John Williamson.)

League Secretary and 37 Others Dead in Johnston City Mine Explosion

By BARNEY MASS.

(Special to the "Young Worker")

JOHNSTON CITY, Ill.—Victor Lakotich, secretary of the Johnston City, Ill., branch of the Young Workers League, was among the 38 miners killed in the explosion in the Crerar-Clinch Coal Company mine here today. Ten minutes after the superintendent came up from the mine and announced that everything was safe, the explosion occurred. Rumor is rife among the miners that the company has been neglecting the regulation precautions against gas flooding the mines and resulting in the horrors of a mine explosion. The county coroner and Martin Bolt, state director of mines, are already busy on an investigation. This is the second terrible mine disaster in two days one at Shanktown, Pa., which snuffed out the lives of 49 toilers having come within 24 hours of the Johnston City explosion.

The Young Workers League branch here is holding a special memorial meeting.

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CHICAGO.—The National Executive Committee of the Young Workers League of America has sent the following message of condolence to the Johnston City, Ill., branch on the death of its secretary:

"The sad news of our com-