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# **YOUTH IN INDUSTRY**

**by**

**Grace Hutchins**

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# YOUTH IN INDUSTRY

By GRACE HUTCHINS

*Tom*

"IF I can just finish high school," thought Tom, as he walked home one afternoon, up the hill past the great culm pile of anthracite coal.

He was sixteen and had been in junior high school for two years. It wasn't that he liked school so much, but he wanted, secretly, to be an aviator. If he could take all the science courses in high school, and graduate, then maybe he could get a job at an aviation field and learn to fly.

"Besides," he reasoned, "Pop wants me to finish high school. He never had the chance for much school himself. And he wants to keep me out of the mines."

Tom knew that most of the boys of his age, in this Pennsylvania town, were already at work, some in or around the mines, some down in the town. In his class at school, there were no other sons of miners. Mostly the boys and girls were the children of foremen or superintendents, mill managers, or business men who had stores and offices downtown. They looked down on Tom, because their clothes were better than his; they lived in larger houses, and their fathers had automobiles. But he didn't care—much—because he wanted to graduate from high school.

It was time for Pop to be home. He had worked for over 20 years at the big No. 3 colliery, as a breaker-boy when he was younger than Tom, and as a skilled miner before he was 20. He had belonged to the United Mine Workers in the old days, but the union officials had cheated the men, he knew now. Union officials had grown fat and rich, while the miners worked for them, just as the coal company officials had grown rich off the miners' work. He for one was done with the old union. There ought to be a new kind of union

that would fight, and young, energetic organizers who didn't get any more money than the miners themselves got.

Tom's father came in to the house and sat down as heavily as if he were an old man.

"No. 3's shut down," he said.

"How long for?" asked his wife.

"Forever. Company doesn't need this mine now, they say. The boss told us this afternoon. They've a big new electric breaker at one of their other mines, and they've plenty of men without us. There's no more work here."

Tom left school that same week. His dream that a miner's son could go through high school, under American "prosperity," burst like a soap bubble. He put away his books, and went out to look for a job.

His father also went out to look for another job. Everywhere he went, he was told that only boys and young men need apply. Was he then old at 36? He had been 20 years in the mines and they thought he was an old man. But didn't men often live to be 70 or over?

Finally after many weeks, Tom was taken on at a silk mill. He became a quiller earning \$7 a week. Every morning he left home at 6.30, punched in at the plant at 7, and worked till 6 in the evening.

What Tom learned about other young workers of his age is told in the following pages. He learned it from experience in strikes, from reading everything he could get on the class struggle, and from talking with fellow workers. He found out, too, about a new world across the ocean, where workers see straight and build squarely. He found out that here in capitalist United States there *is* a new kind of unionism, building for a new world, the kind his father had thought there ought to be. And he discovered that only by continuous struggle can young and older workers together gain better conditions and organize for the final freeing of the working class.

## *The Working Army of Youth*

“Cock-eyed capitalist world—you’ve said it.”

Tom was talking with other young workers in the mill about the state elections in November. They wanted to vote for a working class candidate after hearing him speak at a mass meeting, but they couldn’t vote because they were too young.

“Old enough to do a man’s job,” said Tom, bitterly, “but not old enough to vote.”

“Of course not,” they told him. Didn’t he know yet that young workers under 21 were disfranchised, denied the vote? “Best fighters, young workers are, too. But the ruling class doesn’t want them to vote, maybe because they’d vote for revolutionary change. And if workers have to move, they lose the right to vote, and in some states workers can’t vote because they don’t own property.”

More than 5,000,000 young workers under 20, “too young to vote,” are at work in the mills, mines, shops, or on farms in the United States. This working army of youth is used, exploited, by the employers at pay much below what older workers doing the same jobs would get. The employers pocket the difference in increased profits.

“The capitalist buys children and young persons under age,” as Karl Marx put it. . . . “Those whose bodily development is incomplete, but whose limbs are all the more supple. Capital makes them into mere machines for the fabrication of surplus value.”

In addition to the 5,000,000 working boys and girls between 10 and 19 in the United States, about 6,000,000 other young workers in all industries are between the ages of 20 and 24. At least 1,600,000 agricultural workers under 20 years old are doing heavy work on farms for several months in the year. About two-thirds of all young workers are boys and one-third girls. At least 600,000 are Negroes. Over a million are under 16, and about 350,000 are under 14 years old. Of 1,400,000 young factory workers under 20, about

260,000 are textile workers, and nearly 200,000 are in the metal industries. Young mine workers number 105,000, of whom 83,000 are employed in coal mines.

### *Displacing Older Workers*

The "deadline of 40" has come to be the dread of countless workers in industry who know that if a middle-aged worker loses a job it is almost impossible to find another. Most of the larger corporations in the United States have an age limit for new workers ranging from 25 to 45. Women workers are now called "old even at 29," according to the U. S. Women's Bureau, and advertisements for Help Wanted in the daily papers are apt to specify the age as "18 to 25." What happens to the displaced older workers, the employer neither knows nor cares.

During the present economic crisis (1931) while older workers in automobile plants have been laid off by the thousands, Ford plants have actually doubled the number of 12-18 year old boys employed. *Ford News*, official publication, stated in its issue of September 1, 1930, that the Ford trade school had more than doubled its capacity. "There are now 26 class rooms instead of 10 as formerly and the number of instructors in the River Rouge plant has been increased to 200. . . . A total of 500 machines is at the disposal of the students instead of 200, the total before the move."

The Ford trade school employs boys when 12 years old at 15 cents an hour. They alternate two weeks of work with one of school. They work in the class rooms until 16 when they are placed with the men in departments. Other automobile capitalists have found their profits increased by firing the older men and hiring boys and girls 18, 19, and 20 years old at about one-third less in wages. The Packard Co. and the Hudson Co. both played this game in 1928. Other Detroit industries, at the height of the 1930 crisis, advertised for boys to work without any pay. An ad of the Scott Bros. Electric Co. reads: "Wanted—apprentice boys to learn electric motor work; no pay for three months."

Workers in a dozen other important industries report that middle-aged men and women are fired while boys and girls are hired to do the same jobs at lower wages. The foremen find that young workers are "faster and fresher." This displacement of older by younger workers is further described in the story of speed-up. Even in the coal mines, for example, where experience of older workers still counts more than in factory work, machinery has reduced the working force and older men find themselves crowded out. *Coal Age*, employers' trade paper, advises the bosses that only young men under 30 should be taught to operate a new machine, and there are plenty of young men to choose from.

### *What Little Children Are Doing*

In reporting over a million working children under 16, the census not only fails to include seasonal workers in agriculture; it fails entirely to report on working children under *ten* years of age.

"Investigation has shown," comments the National Child Labor Committee, "that there are many thousands of these (children under 10) at work in sugar beet fields, cranberry bogs, cotton plantations, and other forms of industrialized agriculture, as well as in street trades, tenement home work, domestic service and canneries."<sup>1</sup>

Canneries are among the worst exploiters of child labor. Although canning is a kind of manufacture, yet the canneries are usually exempt from labor laws and can legally use small children to work 16 or more hours a day, under the worst possible conditions. Even when the labor laws are supposed to apply, child workers in canneries, as in other industries, can be hidden during the inspectors' visit.

"Beat it, here comes the inspector," yelled the boss in a Baltimore cannery. "All kids who have no permits, outside the back door! Don't worry, you'll get your pay."

Children only eight and nine years old disappeared until the inspector had made his rounds, jollied the foreman, and de-



OYSTER SHUCKERS, 8 AND 10 YEARS OLD, WORK 10 HOURS A DAY.



parted. The children then returned to work for which they were paid one-half of what an adult was getting for the same job.

On the six and a half million farms in the United States, hundreds of thousands of children are at work, as the federal government admits in a survey, *Children in Agriculture*. The whole story of these child workers on grain farms, in beet fields, cotton fields, fruit and hop picking, cranberry bogs, and truck gardens is a ghastly picture of exploitation. Back-breaking, crippling work from sun-up to sun-down, 13 or 14 hours a day, is the lot of countless children not only in the South but also in the North and West. Here are just two snap-shots:

Four children, ranging in age from nine to 13 years, came to the Colorado beet fields with their parents. They worked at thinning and blocking, 14½ hours a day, beginning at 4:30 A.M. They took five minutes in the morning and again in the afternoon for lunch.<sup>2</sup>

In blistering heat the writer has just seen boys and girls, seven years old and up, crawling on hands and knees, weeding long rows of onions where they worked from daybreak till dark.<sup>3</sup>

### *Class Basis in Education*

Behind these reports on working youth is a story of thin pay envelopes, exhaustion, hunger, stunted bodies, blighted lives—all to satisfy the employers' greed for profits which the workers are forced to produce for the owning class.

Capitalists like to boast about free education for all in "democratic" America. The facts are that 1,400,000 children between the ages of seven and 14 are not in school at all; and that many of them are already laborers whose small earnings are needed to help make up the meager family income.

Few children of workers can hope to get beyond the grammar grades. Here is the story in cold figures: Out of 1,000 children who start school—

- One out of every 10 children never reaches the 6th grade;
- One out of every 7 children never reaches the 7th grade;
- One out of every 4 children never reaches the 8th grade;

Only one in four children of the school age population graduates from high school.

Negro children are continually discriminated against in the schools of many states. Relatively little money is spent for their education. In Alabama, for instance, the amount spent (1927) for educational purposes for each child of school age was \$26.57 for white children and only \$3.81 for Negro children.

While upper class youth may go through preparatory school, college, and often professional school, with every protection and opportunity for study and sport, working class boys and girls of the same age are already at work, creating the wealth for privileged youth to enjoy.

An example of this class basis of education is seen in Reading, Pa., a city now run by a Socialist Party administration. Half of all the children between 14 and 16 years of age are forced to leave school and go to work for a living. Reading recently dedicated the largest continuation school in the great industrial state of Pennsylvania. Yet a continuation school simply means that boys and girls who ought to be getting five days of school a week are getting only one day while the rest of the week they have to work at meager wages for the profit of employers. In the one state of Pennsylvania over 25,000 working children are in continuation schools.<sup>4</sup>

While many states have laws on the statute books setting the age limit when children may leave school and go to work, such laws are continually violated. Many of the state laws that apparently give protection to young workers are so full of loopholes and exceptions as to be almost worthless. Only by revolutionary struggle will child labor be abolished and full educational opportunity be secured for the working class.

### *Faster and Fresher Boys and Girls*

“Instead of strength and skill, machinery demands an alertness and a dexterous rapidity which youth alone can give.”

Thus a professor<sup>5</sup> in a business school, whose job it is to teach college men to be successful executives, explains one

important reason why the number of young workers in industry has been increasing. Admitting the nervous strain of keeping up with a machine, he continues, "By the use of machinery it is possible to speed the worker to his greatest possible exertion by forcing the human eyes and fingers to keep pace with those of electricity and steel. . . . Workers, new or old, who cannot maintain 'the pace that kills' are forced to quit."

A foreman at a branch of the Pacific Mills at Lyman, S. C., made the same statement in less academic language. "Nice fast worker, ain't he?" he exclaimed, pointing to a youth who was working at top speed. "Yes, only the youngsters can stand the pace that way. But there are plenty of 'em."

Textile mills, employing more young workers than any other manufacturing industry, have gone far during the last two years in introducing new methods of speed-up. The spirited southern cotton mill strikes of 1929 were largely against the "stretch-out" system which forced workers to stretch themselves out and produce more.

The automobile industry, known to workers for the cruel speed of its "lines" and "belts," has been called a "young man's industry." This is largely because, as Robert Dunn points out in *Labor and Automobiles*, the older worker cannot match the speed, endurance and energy of the young fellows. Personnel managers in auto plants state frankly that "their policy is to hire workers as young as the law allows and to use them for eight or ten years during the period of their most vigorous productivity. Then they discharge them. Is it any wonder that Detroit workers have been known to dye their hair to disguise their age?"

Automatic conveyors in canneries, candy, bread, and biscuit factories are geared deliberately to the speed-rate of the fastest workers, and those who cannot keep up are fired. In canneries, the work is done under special pressure of speed, to save the perishable fruit and vegetables, more precious to the bosses than young workers' lives. Girls and boys stand continuously on damp floors for 11 to 12 hours or even

longer,<sup>6</sup> lift heavy baskets and buckets, and often work through the night, to pile up profits for the cannery companies, which are usually exempted from all labor laws.

At the Schrafft candy factory in Boston, one of the largest candy factories in the world, a new speed-up plan has been tried. Young girls not yet out of school are taken on as apprentices. With one week in the factory at less than \$12 a-week, and then a week back in school, the girls are so young and fresh that they can work faster than full-time factory workers. After one week, the company found the children were producing more than the average worker had produced at the end of six months. They were faster and fresher after a week's "rest" in school. Getting less in wages they were producing more—and bringing more profits to the Schrafft company.

Speeding up of young workers in agriculture is revealed in a government report, quoting the statements of workers. "Children all get tired, because the work is always in a hurry." "Children scream and cry because they are all tired out." "Children get so tired that they don't want to eat and go right to bed."

### *Some Driven, Others Jobless*

The bosses' drive to increase speed of production is increasing unemployment, not only of older workers, but also of young workers. When 10 boys and girls can be made to do the work formerly done by 20, the other 10 are fired and the company saves the difference in "labor cost." The following examples are typical:

At the Pairpoint Mfg. Co., New Bedford, two years ago, 80 workers were making glass door knobs in the glass department. A team of seven, five young and two older workers, could make 528 door knobs in a morning. Now only 40 workers, more than half of them youths, are employed in this department, while a new machine turns out 2,000 knobs in one morning. The other 40 workers have been fired.

On a tunnel-building job in Chattanooga, Tenn., young Negro and white men are working, as part of the city's plan for un-

employment "relief" to be carried out through the winter of 1930-31. The day shift of 10 hours is often lengthened, even doubled, but no more workers are taken on for another shift. The rule is, "Don't let a man lie down; plenty more outside." One gang, whose job it was to pour concrete, was laid off and another gang was forced to do the work of two.

How many of the 9 to 10 million workers wholly or partly unemployed, in 1931, are under 21, no one knows. In the one state of New York, jobs available for boys and girls decreased 38% from November, 1929, to November, 1930, according to the state Bureau of Junior Placement.

During the terrible winter of 1930-31, when many working class youth were driven to despair and even to suicide, the daily papers were carrying such items as the following :

#### *74 Girls Arrested for Trying to Keep Warm*

New York—74 girls were arrested in one day on charges of shoplifting in New York stores. Their ages ranged from 17 to 22. Unable to pay fines, most of the girls are spending five days in jail.

Almost every girl asked clemency of the court on the grounds of dire necessity. No jobs, no money, nothing to eat and sudden cold weather were their reasons for the thefts.

Other unemployed youths of the working class have been forced to feed themselves from garbage cans outside the hotels and clubs where the rich held their dances and dinner parties.

That children in families of the unemployed are often marred for life is admitted by Grace Abbott, head of the U. S. Children's Bureau. "They will be undersized because they have been undernourished. Large numbers will fall victims of tuberculosis as young wage earners."

#### *Youth in Danger*

Turned out of school to work for a few dollars a week, boys and girls are already handicapped by conditions at home. The father's wages have been too low to provide enough food

of the right kind for growing children, or the space for play, or the sense of economic security which is necessary for healthy human development. No industry in the United States pays its wage earners an average of \$42 a week throughout the year, although that amount is estimated, even by conservative economists, as necessary for health in a minimum budget for a family of five.

It is no wonder, then, that countless children of the working class, even before they have been exposed to the dangers in industry, are found to be suffering from serious physical defects. Hoover talked sentimentally about the protection of childhood at his conference on child "welfare," but he admitted that out of 45,000,000 children in the United States,

6,000,000 are improperly nourished,  
1,000,000 have weak or damaged hearts,  
382,000 are tubercular,

"And so on, to a total of at least 10,000,000 deficient, more than 80% of whom are not receiving the necessary attention." <sup>7</sup>

Two studies of continuation school boys 14 to 17 years old, on part-time work, have been made recently in New York City.<sup>8</sup> Of 2,700 working boys, less than one in seven was found free from physical defects. One-fifth of them were underweight from undernourishment. Three-fifths needed dental care. Defective eyesight, adenoids, undeveloped chest, poor muscle tone, heart conditions, diseased tonsils, anemia and tuberculosis scars were common. Most of these difficulties could have been prevented.

Undernourishment leads directly toward *tuberculosis*, more dangerous to working youth than to older workers. The danger is increased by conditions on the job where young workers stoop continually over a bench, before the lungs have reached their full development, or work for long hours in a dusty atmosphere.

Writers in capitalist papers cover up what physicians admit is true—that poverty, poor food, bad housing, crowding, over-

work and worry diminish resistance to tuberculosis. The disease is common among young textile workers who must spend 10 to 12 hours a day in damp, bad air, working for wages too low to provide good food. The Workers' Health Bureau found that six out of every 100 textile workers examined in Passaic, in 1926, were suffering from tuberculosis.

Fifteen to twenty is the most dangerous age for tuberculosis and also for heart disease, according to the director of child health education of the National Tuberculosis Association. "The death rate from tuberculosis and heart disease in children between the ages of 15 and 20 is greater than it is at any other age level. . . . One of the great problems which has given rise to this condition is outside employment of school children. All persons must have rest and the adolescent at school is especially in need of it." The heart is weakened or injured for life by too heavy work or too long hours of work in youth.

*Pellagra* is another disease which is more dangerous to working youth than to older workers. It is the disease of poverty, of malnutrition, most common in southern textile centers where wages are so low that milk, fresh meat, and fresh vegetables are unknown in textile workers' families. Pellagra killed more people in North Carolina in 1930 than all the contagious diseases put together, according to the state health officer. For the first 11 months of the year, 945 pellagra deaths were reported, and the victims were many of them young cotton mill workers, for whom the economic crisis meant lower wages and worsening conditions of work.

*Lead poisoning*, most serious of industrial diseases, is known to be particularly dangerous for young workers. A study of 15 lead industries in New York State showed that 88% of the boys and girls, 16 to 18 years old, were poisoned by lead. The average for all ages was just over 60%. Physicians recommend that youth under 18 should not be allowed to work in lead industries.<sup>9</sup>

New York State officially keeps children under 16 from

certain industries using lead and includes lead poisoning as one of the very few industrial diseases for which there is some meager workmen's compensation. Compensation at best is a poor substitute for protection, but even this beginning of social insurance against industrial disease is lacking in most of the states.

In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, young workers under 18 are not allowed to work in any occupation that is dangerous to health, and all workers are fully insured not only against industrial diseases but against all illness.

### *Accidents Increase*

Disease kills slowly. Accidents injure and kill swiftly. And the industrial accidents killing and injuring young workers are increasing with the greater speed of industry.

Fatalities to working children under 16 in New York State in 1929 showed an increase of 567% over 1928. Over 2,100 children were injured by industrial accidents in the one year, 1929, in the "Empire State," and this record is an understatement since countless minor injuries are not recorded.

Reported accidents to workers under 18 in Illinois increased in 1929 to 1,113 or 159 more than in 1928. Power-driven machinery, on or near which children under 16 are supposedly forbidden to work in that state, caused one-third of all the accidents to children.

Workers of 20 to 24 have an accident rate higher than those over 45, according to reports of the Michigan state department of labor and industry. Injuries to these young workers were three times as many as to the older workers.<sup>b</sup>

One boy under 17 in Connecticut, required to climb up to a machine to oil it, in violation of the dangerous trades law, was hurled to the floor and killed. Another boy of 15 was required to take the belt off a pulley while the machinery was in motion. He was jerked up into the shafting, and lost both arms at the shoulders. For this he got only \$6.50 a week for 10 years.

These are but two examples from the heavy toll of acci-



dents to young workers in one year in the United States. A complete record would fill many volumes. Little has been done in the United States toward legal protection of working youth from dangerous occupations, and such laws as have been forced upon the capitalist state are continually broken. Those states which officially prohibit certain occupations for children under 16 or 18 still plunge these young workers into many dangers. Meanwhile children of 14 are permitted by law to

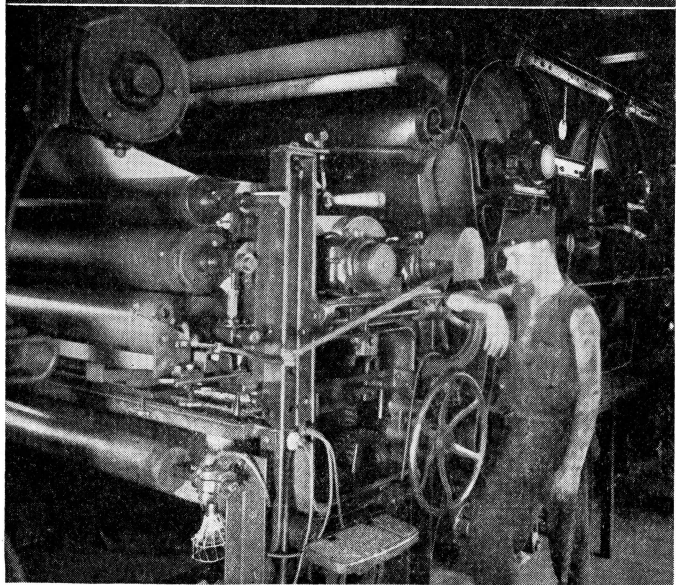
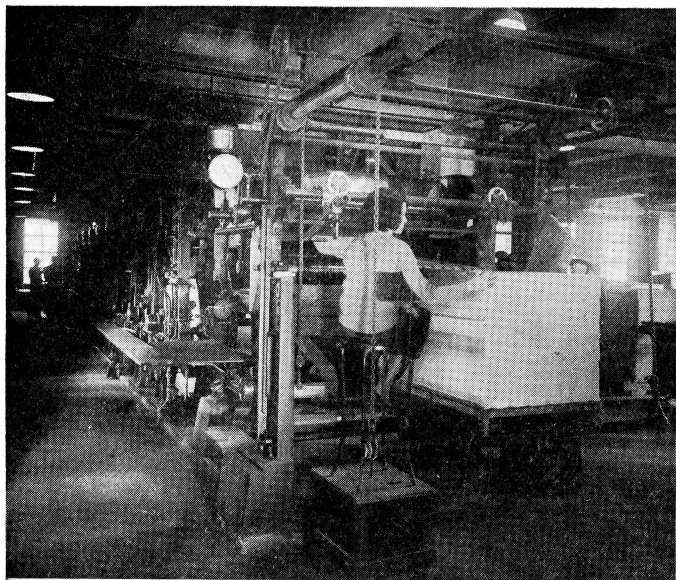
Oil and clean machinery in motion, in 15 states.  
Work on scaffolding, in 30 states.  
Work around explosives, in 24 states.  
Run elevators, in 19 states.  
Work on railroads, in 27 states.<sup>10</sup>

Workmen's compensation benefits are denied to boys and girls, when illegally employed, in 15 states. Thus the employers, taking advantage of young workers and paying them less, do not even give them compensation when injured. In their greed for profits they save the expense of safety devices and then contest the payment of awards to the injured. Employers are especially bitter in their fight against any award of extra or double workmen's compensation to illegally employed children in the seven states which officially require such payment. Four states, Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, and South Carolina, do not provide any compensation whatever to any injured worker.

Full social insurance to provide against accidents and illness, including all industrial diseases, is one of the immediate major demands to be made by all young workers' organizations.

### *Work More, Earn Less*

Since the capitalist class uses young workers in place of older workers in order to get more production at less labor cost, it goes without saying that their wages are lower. Children in agriculture are generally paid less than 10 cents an



A MAN'S WORK AT A CHILD'S WAGE.

hour. Henry Ford's 12-year old trade school boys start work at 15 cents an hour. Young workers are usually expected to do for 25 to 35 cents an hour what older workers do for 40 to 55 cents an hour. Wages of young Negro workers are usually from one-third to one-half less than wages of white workers for the same job.

How little can be earned by boys and girls in continuation schools is admitted in several state surveys. In Seattle, Wash., more than 10% of the continuation school boys and girls cannot earn as much as \$10 a week, while in New York state more than a third earn less than \$10 a week.

Wages have recently been cut in practically all industries throughout the United States. The Standard Statistics Co., a capitalist statistical concern, was forced to admit in October, 1930, that the annual income of the working class had declined about 20% in 1930 as compared with 1929. This, it was frankly stated, was due to "wage cuts and part time employment." These wage cuts, of course, affect young workers no less than older men and women.

Apprenticeship restrictions established by most American Federation of Labor unions prevent young workers from earning full union wages. A typical example of such restriction is the wage agreement for apprentice plumbers in Wisconsin as instituted by local union No. 31 of the United Association of Journeymen Plumbers and Steam Fitters. By this scheme the young worker, 16 to 20 years old, is held down to a certain scale, beginning at 15% of the journeyman's weekly wage and advancing to 70% of the union rate only in the fifth year of apprenticeship.

Even the *Wisconsin Apprentice*, official paper of the state Industrial Commission, while boosting the scheme, admits, "In spite of the fact that apprentice wages are relatively small, some of the boys are helping support needy families out of their earnings."

Office workers often think they are superior to workers in factories and mines, because they may earn a little more for a shorter working day. But offices are fast becoming fac-

tories for mass production, and young office workers sell themselves in the labor market for a factory wage. Stenographers in Boston are working 50 to 60 hours weekly for a wage as low as \$10. Some office workers, not included even in such labor laws as there are, must stay on the job until 10 o'clock at night, piling up overtime for which they receive no pay at all.

Young metal workers in Ohio write to *The Young Worker* to tell of a 12-hour night shift at a plant of the Murray Ohio Manufacturing Co. Although a law against night work for children under 16 stands officially on the statute books in practically every state, yet boys and girls only 16 and 17 years old may legally work at night in a majority of states. In eight states children under 16 are permitted by law to work 9 to 11 hours a day, 51 to 60 hours a week. In Pennsylvania more than half of the 14 to 15 year old child workers were on the job more than 48 hours a week. This fact was admitted even by a state survey.

To replace such conditions as these, young workers, organized in revolutionary unions and leagues, demand the 6-hour day for all young workers under 18, and equal pay for equal work. Wage rates for young workers should be up to the scale demanded by these fighting unions.

### *In the Workers' Republic*

While in the United States and other capitalist countries youth labor is the cheapest of all labor, in the Soviet Union it is the most expensive labor. Only in this one country in the world, in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, does the working youth receive equal pay for equal work. And he works only six hours a day.

If by special permission and arrangement a young worker, 16 to 18 years old, is allowed to work eight hours instead of six, then he is paid for the two extra hours at a double rate. For the hours he spends in school he is paid, as for his factory work. 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 7 to 8 hours a day in the factory. In most industries the working day has now been reduced to seven hours for all adult workers, with one day off every five days.

In the workers' republic the worker's wages are above the pre-war level and are rising year by year. Real wages in 1930 were 40% higher. And if the benefits which the worker derives from social insurance funds and social welfare provisions are included, wages and living standards have risen by about 85%. A complete system of social insurance provides a full wage for all workers who are ill or temporarily disabled, protection against unemployment, and a pension for infirmity or old age. The entire cost of all social insurance is borne by the industries. All medical treatment, including dentistry, is free to the worker.

With the development of the Five-Year Plan of industrialization, unemployment has been practically abolished and there is an actual shortage of labor. Thus the benefits from increased production return to the workers, because the working class is ruling the country. It does not toil for capitalists, but for itself. The land and the factories are the property of the industrial working class and the peasants. The workers are building Socialism, and in this vast work of construction youth is taking a leading part.

Education is now compulsory throughout the Soviet Union. In 1930 there were 12,000,000 children in elementary schools, or 50% more than in pre-revolution days. And the young worker is encouraged to go just as far in education as his abilities will carry him.

Tens of thousands of young workers are trained as apprentices in the factory schools. By a collective agreement with the union, every factory must train a certain percentage

of adolescents, and this training is carried on from two to four years, partly in the factory itself and partly in the factory school. As the Five-Year Plan has developed in the last three years the number of students in the factory schools has been steadily increasing.

But education does not stop with the factory school. A young worker may go through high school, technical school, and university. After entering the factory on full-time work, he finds a wide variety of courses open to him as part of the regular cultural-education work of his factory, his union, and his club. All young workers join the union as soon as they enter the factory on part-time work, usually at the age of 16, and from then on they have full voting rights in the union.

While in capitalist countries only privileged youth of the leisure class can afford expensive sports, in the Soviet Union it is the working youth to whom the gymnasiums, boats, swimming pools, tennis courts, and athletic fields belong. Young workers finish the day's work early enough to have strength and zest left for play, and girls as well as boys take part in sports and recreation as a matter of course. Visiting young worker athletes from other countries enter the Soviet international sport tournaments and field meets.

At a recent congress of the Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union, delegates representing 3,000,000 members poured into Moscow. Their enthusiasm had been kindled white hot by the "shock brigade" campaigns in every factory and national enterprise, and those who addressed them recognized that their spirit was rushing forward where faint hearts would shrink and shiver. Such young Communists are "the vanguard of the mighty host that fights for socialism."

### *War Looms*

Just because it is so successful that it challenges the entire capitalist world, the other nations are preparing for war against this workers' republic. The ruling class in these imperialist nations—United States, Great Britain, Japan,

France, and others—declare war to protect and increase their profits; young men and women of the working class fight the war and bear its burdens.

Capitalist nations have openly sought war against the workers' republic. They have refused recognition, as has the United States; they have attacked Soviet embassies and consulates as in Great Britain, Germany, and China; they have committed such acts as the seizure of the Chinese Eastern Railway by China, with the backing of the capitalist powers. They have surrounded and isolated the Soviet Union by treaties among themselves, giving financial aid to the border fascist states to maintain armies near the Soviet frontiers. They have conspired with anti-working class forces within the Soviet Union in attempts to wreck the achievements of the Five-Year Plan.

The capitalist nations arm for war as never before in history. The total annual world cost of preparation for war is over \$3,500,000,000. War expenditures of the United States showed an increase during the year ending July, 1930, of more than \$200,000,000 over the previous year.<sup>11</sup> Contracts with corporations are already signed for the instantaneous mobilization of industry, on declaration of war, to produce war materials.

About 180,000 men in the National Guard and 38,000 in the Citizens' Military Training Camps are for the most part young men, a majority between 19 and 24 years old. Over 120,000 more are privates in the standing army and about 80,000 in the navy. They find themselves taught that their "duty" is to break strikes and to defend capitalism against "Reds," while lies about the Soviet Union are served up to them daily.

As an extension of war preparedness, the capitalists have organized the Boy Scouts of America with a membership now of over 800,000 boys. "Be prepared" (for war) is the motto of this militarist organization, which is teaching boys to be ready to slaughter the workers of the Soviet Union as well

as strikers at home. A similar organization, the Girl Scouts of America, has a membership of about 200,000.

But young workers must not be fooled by this organized propaganda in preparation for another bosses' war for "democracy." War against the Soviet Union is a war against the working class of the world. It is the duty of all workers to defend the working class and the Soviet Union.

When soldiers realize that strikers are fellow-workers, they refuse to act as strike-breakers. So in the New Bedford and Gastonia strikes, the mill owners had to bring militia from outside towns, because guardsmen from the strike centers refused to bayonet the strikers.

### *On the Picket Line*

From the day, more than 100 years ago, when girl textile workers walked out of the mills in Dover, N. H., down to the strike of woolen workers in Lawrence, Mass., in 1931, youth has taken an active and spirited part in strikes to win better working and living conditions. Beaten with police clubs, shot down by militia, arrested, jailed, back on the picket line and jailed again, young workers have fought to the finish against the corporations and against the selling out of a strike by old-line labor officials.

Strikes in Lawrence, 1912; Paterson, 1913; the steel industry, 1919; West Virginia and Herrin, 1922; Passaic, 1926; New Bedford, 1928; Gastonia, 1929; Flint and Danville, 1930, are only a few typical strikes of the last 20 years in which fighting youth has played a leading part. In Lawrence a child striker, Johnnie Ramie, was bayoneted to death by a militiaman; and a young girl striker, Annie Lo Pizzo, was shot and killed by police. In the great steel strike of 1919 a 19-year old Negro boy, unable to write even his own name, refused to turn strike-breaker when brought into Pennsylvania for that purpose, and threw in his lot with the strikers. In Passaic a young girl leading the picket line was knocked down and then clubbed into unconsciousness by the police. In New Bedford a girl led the left-wing strikers in



protest to the hall where local officials of the United Textile Workers (A. F. of L.) were preparing to betray the strike. In the Flint auto workers' strike in 1930 young workers led a big strikers' parade through the heart of the city in defiance of police edict. The police chief of Flint later admitted to the Fish Committee that the young workers were so strongly massed he had not interfered with them, being "anxious to avert disorder." These are only scattered instances of militant young workers who have resisted drives to worsen their conditions.

Wherever and whenever workers have so resisted, the ruling class has used against them the full police power of the state, aided by its church, press, courts, and prisons. But the spirit of young workers is unbreakable.

Recent defense cases conducted by the International Labor Defense are largely of workers under 24 years old, arrested for organizing fellow workers. Five young organizers, including two girls and two Negroes, were arrested in Atlanta, Georgia, because they held a meeting of Negro and white workers. Lil Andrews, member of the national executive committee of the Young Communist League, and two others were convicted of "criminal syndicalism" by a steel and coal jury in Ohio. In California, leaders in the Imperial Valley organizing campaign, mostly young workers, are serving sentences of 3 to 42 years for "criminal syndicalism." Harry Eisman, 15-year old member of the Young Pioneers, served six months in a New York reformatory for taking part in Communist demonstrations. Thomas Holmes, 18-year old young Communist, serves an 18-month sentence in the Pennsylvania Industrial Reformatory, under the state sedition law. His sole "crime" was handing out unemployment leaflets to workers at Ford Co. and Viscose Co. plants near Chester. These are only a few of many defense cases, during 1930, in which young workers were arrested and jailed for activity as organizers.

## *Enemies of Youth*

This challenging, militant spirit of working youth is feared and opposed by officials of the old trade unions who have repressed, discouraged, and held back young workers.

Every worker who has sat through A. F. of L. meetings, whether local, state or national, knows that the officers and those who are allowed to take part in the proceedings are usually as conservative as the employers themselves. So far from organizing the working youth or encouraging them to take active part in trade union work, many of the A. F. of L. unions have established the most restrictive apprenticeship regulations which seriously handicap young workers.

Apprentices in these A. F. of L. unions never have full voting privileges or the right to hold office. The number of those accepted as apprentices is strictly limited by the union. The wages of apprentices are usually kept down to less than half the union scale during the first three years and to less than three-fourths during the first five years.

But A. F. of L. officials and the employers with their judges, their police and their armies are not the only enemies of working youth. One of the capitalist organizations which still has a tremendous hold on working youth is the Amateur Athletic Union, with a membership of 2,500,000. This large sports organization, claiming to be a "peace-loving body" with the "physical uplift" of youth as its aim, has among its leaders Col. Theodore Roosevelt, militarist and imperialist, two majors, and other army officers. The union is financed by large contributions from millionaires. By means of factory industrial leagues with many thousands of members in non-union factories, this association extends its influence over young workers. It has become the state athletic association in a number of states, as in Illinois and New York.

Another capitalist sports organization, the Sportsmanship Brotherhood, of which Matthew Woll of the National Civic Federation, is president, makes a point of enlisting employers in its cause. It aims to show how plant morale can be built

up by athletics and by a "code of honor." Encouraged by large corporations, the Brotherhood has enrolled athletic teams in many industrial plants, including several of the General Electric Co. All funds are paid by business men.

Church and religious bodies are also actively engaged in teaching young workers to be submissive slaves, taking the fight out of them, encouraging them even to act as strike-breakers. Among the religious organizations making a special appeal to young workers, always in the interests of the employing class, are the Knights of Columbus of the Roman Catholic Church with 637,000 members, the Epworth League of the Methodists with 622,000, the Baptist Young People's Union with a membership of 175,000, the Girls' Friendly Society with 50,000, and the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Associations.

With the lure of swimming pools, gymnasiums, ice-cream parties, recreation centers, and cheap lodging houses, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the churches are trying "to win young workers to Jesus." This means they avow "to honor and obey the civil authority," and to "submit to all governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters." These same spiritual pastors work hand-in-glove with the corporations, the state, and often with the A. F. of L. unions. They work against all independent, revolutionary workers' organizations.

The Y.M.C.A. has still such a hold upon boys and young men that its membership in 1930 totaled 1,034,019. Its operating expenses for the year were \$60,609,000. The Y.W.C.A. with a membership of about 600,000 had a budget of nearly \$30,000,000. Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who is on the National Board of the Y.W.C.A., is said to have donated to the organization \$1,102,500 in one year. It is the toil of workers, many of them young workers, that produces the Rockefeller millions, while the Rockefellers themselves pose as "benefactors" by providing subsidized cheap lodgings and gymnasiums. Workers prefer wages to charity.

Churches and religious institutions are always supported

by the capitalists and one of their chief aims is to keep the working class "in its place." In practically every religious flophouse, stool-pigeons of the corporations spy on the workers, overhear their talk, and report to higher-ups about those who talk rebelliously.

Aroused by these facts, after experiencing a sojourn in a Y.W.C.A. flophouse, a girl worker wrote: "Girl Workers! Wake up, organize for work and for decent living rather than the bunk and charity handed out to us instead of jobs. Fight against conditions that drive girls out on the streets or on the breadlines."

### *Organizing for Struggle*

What these conditions are, we have seen. Capitalism uses young workers and little children as mere machines for the production of wealth on which the leisure class may live without working. Exploiters do not care how soon the young worker's body is used up and thrown out, as long as they have at their disposal a vast reserve army of other young workers and children coming along to take the places of those discarded.

By methods of so-called "welfare" work, the companies try to hide their real purpose, which is, of course, to make the largest possible profits for the owning class. It is always to the employers' interest to prevent any true union organization, and that is why they use every possible weapon against the workers in the class struggle,—spies, raids, police, militia, third degree torture, courts, jails, churches, press, and school system. While the American Federation of Labor lines up with the employers as their friends in this struggle, the Left Wing unions stand squarely on the basis of class conflict,—producers against owners, oppressed against oppressors, working class against capitalist class.

Recognizing that now more than ever before the question of youth in industry is of overwhelming importance, the Left Wing unions, affiliated with the Trade Union Unity League, are actively organizing young workers. Leaders of the mili-

tant unions know that working youth have both the capacity and the readiness for struggle.

Young organizers are playing an important part in building new unions in the textile, mining, metal, clothing, shoe, lumber and other industries. Youth sections in these unions represent the special interests of young workers, plan out strike strategy, and take a fearless lead in the organization. In contrast to the A. F. of L. unions, with their restrictions and their deadness, the Trade Union Unity League rises as a living enterprise, as a genuine rank-and-file workers' organization. In place of the narrow, blind provincialism of the old-line unions, the T.U.U.L. shows its international spirit and is affiliated with the Red International of Labor Unions.

Young workers are joining these Left Wing unions which stand four-square on the class struggle basis, against the whole capitalist class. And they find not only the revolutionary unions with their special youth sections, but also other youth organizations, organized on the basis of day-to-day work and struggle.

### *In Sports*

While capitalism, exploiting youth for profit, makes millions of dollars out of professional sports, a workers' organization, the Labor Sports Union, is now organizing sports on a non-profit making basis. Affiliated with the international workers' sports movement, this union has tremendous significance for the working class.

The Labor Sports Union not only organizes athletic contests, games and other sports by workers, for workers as workers. It stands for the rights of young workers to all athletic grounds, municipal swimming pools, playing fields and gymnasiums.

Negro worker sportsmen, so widely discriminated against in the Amateur Athletic Union and in all college and professional athletics, are on an absolute equality with others in the L. S. U. It fights against all racial discrimination and for the rights of all workers regardless of race or color to use

the public athletic facilities. It demands that more gymnasiums, swimming pools and athletic fields should be built in working class neighborhoods, under the control of committees of worker sportsmen.

### *Youth Adopts a Fighting Program*

But organization on the economic field and on the sports field is not enough. With all the forces of government lined up in support of the capitalist class against the working class, the conditions of the working youth can never be permanently bettered under capitalism. Exploitation of one class by the other class can be lessened by immediate struggle, but it cannot be ended until the power of the capitalist class is overthrown. Only after revolutionary conflict and the establishment of a workers' government will the working class win real economic freedom and security.

Class struggle is therefore a political struggle. Economic organization on the industrial front must be accompanied by organization on the political front. Politically, young workers are organized in the Young Communist League, affiliated with the Young Communist International. The League opposes all forms of capitalist militarism. But it is no pacifist organization. It recognizes that only by revolution, as in the Soviet Union, will the working youth be truly free. At the same time, the League fights, in solidarity with older workers, for certain immediate demands, under capitalism, for the bettering of conditions. The program of demands shows where Communists stand on the questions which as we have seen most affect the working youth. These demands include:

1. The right to vote in all elections for all 18 years of age and over. Old enough to work, old enough to vote.
2. Abolition of child labor under 14, with government support for all children now employed under that age.
3. A six-hour day for all young workers under 18, with full pay.
4. Equal pay for equal work. No night work. No piece work. No work in dangerous occupations. No speed-up.
5. Establishment of work schools in factories for the training

- of young workers. These schools to be controlled by the workers. Full wages to be paid during attendance.
6. An annual four weeks' vacation with pay for all young workers under 18.
  7. Social insurance, including accident, illness, unemployment, old age and maternity benefits, to be provided by the government for all workers. Insurance funds to be administered by the workers.<sup>12</sup>
  8. No young worker to receive less than \$20 a week in wages.
  9. Full social, economic and political equality for Negro workers.

To achieve these demands, young workers must unite in a more intense and revolutionary struggle. They fight not only for these immediate aims and interests of the working class, but in the present movement they are also building the future. And the future belongs to the working youth.

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