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**Letter from Vocational School Director**  
**Regarding Child Labor Legislation**

Essex County Vocational Schools  
Newark, New Jersey  
March 10, 1930

Miss Katherine G.T. Wiley  
Executive Secretary  
Consumers League of New Jersey  
56 New Street  
Newark, NJ

My dear Miss Wiley:

I return with this letter as requested copy of Senate Bill 81 and also the substitute bill.

The general idea of passing legislation intended to protect boys and girls from engaging in occupations dangerous and detrimental to their health is very commendable. Care, however, should be taken in drawing these bills to be very explicit in defining the exact occupations so that we will not put obstacles in the way of boys and girls who need to enter employment at the age of fourteen, because of economic necessity.

We shall never remove the accident or health hazard by legislation. It is rather a matter of education and of control by those qualified to have authority in the matter. The bill would prohibit boys from working on electric wires including telegraph and telephone wires. I suppose this means outside wires on poles and in underground conduits. The bill does not definitely say so, however, and it could be considered to mean that boys or girls could not do any work on electric wires that are of low voltage and practically harmless. It would be quite proper, I think, to legislate against work on high tension wires but there is a great difference in the hazard. The bill refers to the operation of motion picture machines. There are many machines on the market today that use non-inflammable films and the operation of which involves no unusual hazard. The bill would prohibit acetylene or electric welding. There are of course large electric welding machines which juniors should not operate but under the terminology of the bill we might even prohibit girls from welding electric light filaments together. These little machines are electric welding machines. The same is true of wire stitching machines. Some are hazardous and others involve no danger to the operator.

I question very much whether legislation of this kind is a thing which is needed to furnish the protection which we want to give our boys and girls. A machine can be dangerous or harmless as it is constructed or guarded. It would seem to me that a question of this kind might well be left to the Commissioner of Labor to pass upon and that he should be given power to prohibit the employment of boys and girls in any type of employment, that was hazardous, according to his judgment. I should be very glad indeed to confer with your committee if it proposes to draw and submit another bill.

Very truly yours,

Robert O. Beebe, Director