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National Child Labor Committee
Press Release, January 1936

Child Labor Day
January 25-26-27, 1936

Following a custom of more than a quarter century, the National Child Labor Committee has designated the last week-end in January as Child Labor Day – dedicated to the thousands of American children whose lives are still shadowed by the threat of industrial exploitation.

The breathing spell granted to child laborers for nearly two years by the temporary industrial codes came to an abrupt end with the Supreme Court Decision last May. Once again child labor is permitted in American history.

Extreme cases of exploitation have already been reported: children 12 and 13 years of age working in silk mills in Paterson, New Jersey; a 13 year-old boy working 11 hours a day and 7 days a week at a barbecue stand in Houston, Texas; a 12 year-old boy in Flint, Michigan, who broke his leg trying to jump onto the truck of the huckster who hired him and three other boys (one of them only 11 years of age) as helpers. Usually such cases become known only where the employer is actually prosecuted.

Less dramatic but equally significant are the reports of work permits issued to children under 16 which have come in from a number of state labor and education departments indicating a sudden increase in child employment during the second half of 1935.

Seven states now have laws prohibiting the use of children under 16 in manufacturing, at least during school hours, and it is to be hoped that others may be added to this list during 1936. But that the states where children most need protection will take this step of their own volition is a faint hope indeed. It is to nationwide regulation of child labor that we must look for a permanent remedy. This is attainable as soon as 12 more states ratify the pending Child Labor Amendment giving Congress the power to enact a federal child labor law. Twenty-four states have already ratified; eight others hold regular legislative sessions in 1936 at which favorable action may be taken. There is no time to be lost; without the Amendment, changing industrial conditions may at any time enlarge the thin stream of child laborers already returning to industry, into an engulfing flood.

Suggestions for the observance of Child Labor Day may be secured from the National Child Labor Committee, 419 Fourth Avenue, New York City.