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EDITORIAL

CHILD LABOR AND THE AGE LIMIT.

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THE *United Mine Workers' Journal* of January 3, makes two separate statements in two different connections that are worth considering together because of their intimate relation to each other, notwithstanding the manner in which they were made. First, the *Journal*, in an item headed, "Free the Child Slaves," declares, "The most potent force to free the child slaves is organized labor." The *Journal*, being an official organ of the American Federation of Labor, it is safe to conclude it meant the A.F. of L. and similar bodies, when it referred to "organized labor." Second, in a four deck caption to an article on the age limit, the *Journal* asserts, "The age limit works as a result of child labor." This assertion is amply borne out by the context of the article. This shows that the age limit arises from the ease with which capitalism under the modern system of intensification can replace middle aged and old men with youthful labor.

It is further a fact that, despite "the great growth of organized labor," there has been a greater growth yet of child labor. The increasing agitation for the regulation and abolition of child labor, accompanied as it is with a formidable array of figures showing the spread of the evil attacked, should leave no doubt on that score. And so likewise should there be no doubt regarding the increasing intensification of labor and the constant lowering of the age limit, also despite "the great growth of organized labor": the growing figures of violent deaths and accidents relating to the former, combined with the increasing opposition to the latter, make that as clear as crystal.

The growth of child labor and the intensification of labor from which it springs, both despite "the growth of organized labor," being obvious facts, what is the obvious deduction from them? Is it that made by the *Journal* viz., "The most potent

force to free the child slaves is organized labor,” meaning thereby the A.F. of L. and similar bodies? Obviously not. Seeing that the growth of child labor and the intensification from which it springs, is due, despite “the great growth of organized labor,” to the latter’s inability to protect adult labor, it follows that the alleged potency of “organized labor” to “free the child slaves,” is mere assumption, being without any foundation in fact. Since the alleged potency does not exist, any conclusion based on its alleged existence, is a fallacy and a fraud, meant to mislead the visionary and those easily duped.

The inability of “organized labor” to protect adult labor, and, therefore, to limit or abolish child labor is due to its craft autonomy and capitalist principles. These divide labor against itself, and bind its members to the support of the very institutions which they fain would destroy. Thus, instead of being a potent force in the overthrow of slavery, child or adult, “organized labor,” always meaning thereby the A.F. of L., and similar bodies, is a potent force for its maintenance. Only industrial unionism, which unites the working class for the interests of all its members and the overthrow of capitalism, according to Socialist principles, can truly be said to be the potent force to achieve the laudable object so foully prevented by the *United Mine Workers’ Journal* and the A.F. of L.—the freeing of the child slaves through the freeing of adult wage labor.

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