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**How Organized  
Labor**  
protects  
the working  
**Women**  
and  
**Children.**

**F**IVE million American women and children are working in gainful occupations. Three million of these labor outside the home. These women workers are handicapped by their physical weakness and unaccustomed environment. Yet they have entered our sharply competitive industrial system, and must often take up single-handed a struggle for existence in which the warfare is no less sharp because the weapons are the tools of manufacture and the stake the supply or failure of their daily bread.

The fact that they have been able to do this without loss of virtue, and with an increasing degree of justice from the men who are their competitors and employers proves chivalry to be something more than a beautiful dream of the past.

The great army of men represented by the American Federation of Labor are pledged to the fulfillment of these vows, not only by the ties which the human heart holds most sacred, but by the fundamental principle underlying the organizations, and the stern economical necessity that gives persistence and force to all their efforts.

Those little ones gather the spools and watch the endless threads of the cotton mills, or run to and fro on the countless errands of the great stores? These are not the carefully protected children of the capitalist or professional man. The frail young girl who stands long hours behind the counter or sacrifices health and eyesight in some basement work room is the daughter and sweetheart of a wageworker. In proportion as the conditions surrounding the working man's life become less brutalizing, his finer human sentiments urge him to insist on the protection of those bound to him by the tenderest of human ties.

The labor organizations are not only pledged to the protection of women and children workers by these most primitive and potent of human ties, but by ideals that give deeper meaning to the movement.

Economists assure us that wages are largely determined by the standard of comfort demanded by the workers. The high standard of the American workman is threatened, not alone by the competition of foreigners, unable to adopt it, but also by the more insidious inroads due to child labor, or to some forms of female competition. How is a child whose immature mind and body have been stunted by the deadening round of machine tending to learn pride of race or attain the manly vigor necessary to claim and defend the privilege of his class? Occasionally one of exceptional strength may overcome the difficulties of his youth, but the majority grow up to reinforce that class of incompetents, mentally, morally and physically, who prove heavy burdens within the unions, or without them menace their fellow-workers more seriously by their shortsighted readiness to accept the lower standard against which the unions are struggling.

Dr. Englemann, in a recent investigation of the health of women of the professional and working classes, finds that women who have undergone the severe mental training necessary for a professional career suffer much less from the ills peculiar to women than the working girls, with their long hours of standing and confinement. Direct observers, like the Van Vorsts, lay great emphasis on the universally unsanitary conditions under which women work, and the resulting prevalence of anaemic and distorted physiques. These women will be the mothers of the next generation of American workmen. The most effective and far-reaching efforts to promote class and national welfare will begin with their protection.

In the closing paragraphs of an article in the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Walter MacArthur says:

"The attitude of the American trade unionist is that of appeal to the spirit of independence and to a re-assertion of the truth that the worker is themselves the sole repository of power to better their lot. The solemn lesson of history, to-day and every day of our lives, is that the workers must depend upon themselves for the improvement of the conditions of labor."

Aside from inherited incapacity for organization, women have been deterred from any systematic and persistent effort to better their condition

as workers by the feeling that their employment was but a temporary expedient, from which they would be released by marriage. While this must continue to be true of a large number of women workers, still as a class there can be no question of the permanence of their position in the industrial world or of the necessity of developing the higher altruism which shall prompt temporary workers to guard the interests of less fortunate sisters, whose lives depend entirely on their conditions of work.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks to organization on the part of the women, their influence has not been entirely wanting in the organizations of the past. They were admitted on equal terms with the men in the old English crafts guilds, and seem to have received full recognition, both in the control of the affairs of the guild and in the consumption of ale.

Women's unions were not unknown in the early annals of the English trades unionism. We hear of them as early as 1833. To quote from history by Sydney and Beatrice Webb: "Nor were the women neglected. The grand lodge of Operative Bonnet Makers vies in activity with the miscellaneous grand lodge of the Women of Great Britain and Ireland, and the Lodge of Female Tailors asks indignantly whether the Tailors' order is really going to prohibit women from making waistcoats. Whether the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union was responsible for the lodges of Female Gardeners and Ancient Virgins, who afterward distinguished themselves in the riotous demand for an eight-hour day at Oldham, is not clear."

While women have been admitted to membership in the older, more conservative men's unions for over 20 years, their greatest advance in numbers and influence has been during the last ten years. To-day women not only sit as members in the central labor unions of the great cities, but also exercise the full rights of delegates in the American Federation of Labor. They have not received such recognition in any other national organization of men.

That this great central body has complete faith in a wise use of whatever power they may help put into the hands of women is proven by the adoption of the following resolution in favor of woman suffrage, which was introduced by Vice President Duncanson at the 1903 meeting:

"Resolved, That the best interests of labor require the admission of women to full citizenship as a matter of justice to them and as a necessary step toward insuring and raising the scale of wages for all."

The labor organizations have discovered that the principles of unionism are as applicable to consumption as to production; they are trying to influence the demand for the finished product, as well as the condition under which it is made. They hope to do this by means of the union label. In the recently published prize essay on the subject MacArthur says: "The union label enlists and arms in labor's cause those elements which determine the issue of every cause in civilized society, namely, the women and children."

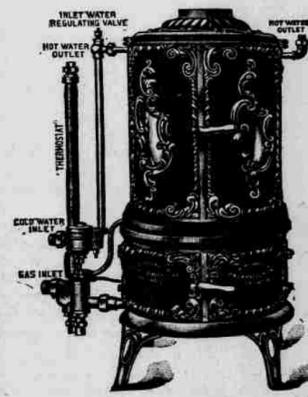
In many places there are women's union label leagues organized to promote the demand for union-made goods.

"The instincts of woman and the interests of labor are conjoined in the union label. Both stand for cleanliness, morality, the care of the young, the sanctity of the home; both stand against strife and force. The union label makes woman the strongest, as she is the gentlest of God's creatures."

One has only to look over the records of the American Federation of Labor to realize that the labor organizations are unqualified in their condemnation of child labor. Over ten years ago President Gompers declared "the damnable system which permits young and innocent children to have their very lives worked out of them in factories, mills, workshops and stores is one of the very worst of labor grievances, one which the trade unions have protested against for years, and in the reformation of which we shall never cease our agitation until we have rescued them and placed them where they should be, in the school-room and the playground."

Since then the president and delegates have repeated and indorsed these sentiments so often that they are now looked upon as axiomatic, the last committee on the president's report remarking, "that the child belongs in the school and on the playground instead of in the workshop and factory is as well known and recognized by those not blinded by personal interests as is the multiplication table."

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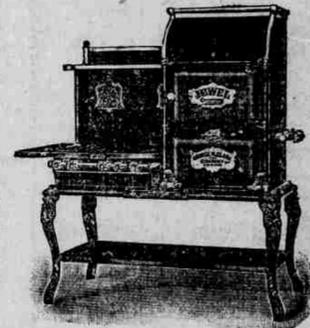
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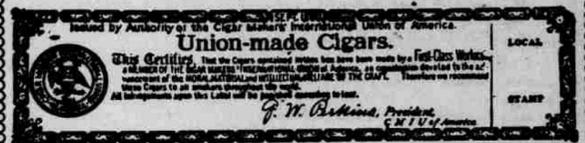
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