



THE LABOUR PARTY

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*Reports on*

A CHILDREN'S CHARTER

*and*

JUVENILE EMPLOYMENT  
AND UNEMPLOYMENT

*to be presented by the Standing Joint Committee  
of Industrial Women's Organisations to the*

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# A CHILDREN'S CHARTER

The purpose of this report is to indicate the social provision which the community should make for its children.

## THE STATE AND THE CHILD

1. It was in the past taken for granted that the care and wellbeing of the child was the responsibility solely of its parents. Every new demand upon the state or local authorities on behalf of children was taken in some quarters as further evidence of a "weakening of parental responsibility." Actually the reverse was true. Labour women who have consistently asked for wider social provision for the needs of childhood, have done so out of a growing sense of responsibility both as mothers and citizens, derived from their Socialist conception of human personality. They reject the view that a child is the "property" of its parents, an investment for their own future; they regard every child as an individual, and potential citizen, with a personality to be respected, and the right to the conditions which will ensure its healthy development—physical, mental, emotional.

Everyone is agreed that the mother has a special responsibility for the wellbeing of her child, and that the child has a right to the security which a happy home provides. But many of the needs of children can better be met collectively by the community than by the individual home—and this would still be true even if the burden of extreme poverty were lifted from the thousands of homes overshadowed by this burden to-day. For the view is based on a surer knowledge than our fathers and mothers had of the physical and mental needs of the child, and of the laws of its growth.

## CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCES

2. As Socialists we believe that every child has a right to a share in the nation's resources, and that, in a Socialist

*Children - Care and Hygiene*





state, with these resources co-operatively owned and controlled, we should meet this claim by an adequate provision of social services along with a system of allowances paid to mothers in respect of their children.

But we do not regard a complete system of children's allowances as immediately practicable in present circumstances.

With wage-standards in some industries disastrously low, and the bargaining power of some sections of workers weakened through economic depression and prolonged unemployment, the introduction of a system of family allowances covering all children to the end of school life, would react harmfully on wage levels. There would be an inevitable tendency to level out the difference between the wage-rates of men and women workers, not by raising the women's standard, but by driving all adult wages down to that standard, and in the end there would be no increase in the standard of life.

The second reason is that a complete system of family allowances would be exceedingly costly, and in present circumstances would jeopardise other urgent extensions in social services—health, housing, pensions, education, nursery schools, open-air schools, school meals, a pure milk supply. All these are factors in the social environment on which the welfare of our children depends in very large measure.

The greatest good to the children and to the community would be secured by concentrating in the first place on an extension of these and other social services, with a partial system of children's allowances, first to cover the extra year at school when the school age is raised.

Consideration should also be given to the most appropriate next step, to be carried out when practicable. We suggest that this might be the provision of cash allowances to cover the first year, or two years, of the child's life.

### **SOCIAL SERVICES**

3. Whatever provision we make now or later of cash allowances to mothers to enable them to carry out their

responsibilities towards their children free from anxiety, the community must still provide collectively for many of the needs of childhood, and our problem is now to plan to make the best use on behalf of the children, of the resources available now and during the period of transition to a Socialist society.

What are the main responsibilities of an enlightened community towards its children?

We should recognise it as a social duty to secure for every child, first of all, equal opportunities for healthy physical growth; and second, equal opportunities for the free development of personality and individual capacity. In other words, we owe it to the nation's children to abolish class distinction in health and class distinction in education.

### **CARE OF INFANCY**

#### **4. The Handicap of Poverty**

Class distinction in health is a phrase that sounds harsh to the ears of those who prefer to attribute the results of poverty to any cause but poverty. The figures of infant mortality give the answer. While the infant death rate has shown, for the country as a whole, a remarkable decline over a period of years, the contrast between figures for the poor area and the comparatively prosperous area, or the overcrowded ward and the residential ward in the same borough make it clear that poverty is a handicap to a child from the moment of its birth; that three or four times as many babies die in the first year of life in the poor areas than in the well-to-do; that poverty-stricken districts with a comparatively low infant death rate, are districts where the community, through the Local Authority, has provided housing conditions and medical and other social services which have meant a definite improvement in the standard of life in the homes, and so have given the babies a fairer start.

#### **5. Pre-Natal Care**

How can we develop and extend our social services to improve the nurture of our children in the early period of life?



The Maternity and Child Welfare Act gives very wide powers to local authorities for the supervision of expectant and nursing mothers and children up to five. The powers are insufficiently used in many areas.

A child's future is determined before it is born, and to lay the foundations of healthy childhood, we must begin with the expectant mother. We must urge the Authorities to increase the provision of ante-natal clinics to ensure adequate medical supervision throughout pregnancy, and to make use of the Midwives Act to ensure nursing care for mothers at and after childbirth. These measures are in the interests of the child as well as the mother.

### 6. Child Welfare Centres

The provision of child welfare centres is generally more satisfactory than of ante-natal clinics, but in very few areas is there any attempt to supervise the health of all children up to five. It is taken for granted that mothers should bring their babies to the centre only until they are twelve months, or at most, two years old. There is a 'gap' between two and five in the health supervision of children, but if the Maternity and Child Welfare Act were carried out fully, there would be no gap.

It is true that mothers would in many cases be unwilling to continue coming to the child welfare centre after the baby is a year or two years old, especially the young mother who has other children.

### 7. Care of the Toddler

But the general failure to supervise the health of children after the first year is not mainly due to the mothers, but to the fact that the child welfare service is almost everywhere organised to deal only with early infancy and no attempt is made to provide clinics and staff sufficient to cope with older children and with the toddlers, nor to educate the public in the need for continuous supervision up to school age.

Further, there has been a tendency, strengthened during years of widespread poverty and unemployment,

to look upon the Child Welfare Service only as a method of helping poor mothers. It is, of course, important that the welfare centres should be used as fully as possible on behalf of poor mothers, but it is equally important to emphasise that they provide a service which **all** children need and which can better be met collectively than by parents individually.

We cannot reap the full fruits of the increased care which is being provided through the centres for children during their first year, unless we ensure that this care continues until the child passes to the supervision of the School Medical Service.

### 8. Development of Child Welfare Services

Local Authorities should be required to organise a system of child welfare centres and health visitors adequate to ensure health supervision of all children up to two, and also of children between two and five, who cannot immediately be included in Nursery Schools or Nursery Classes. The importance of such provision cannot be over-estimated, and the value of the Toddlers' Clinic has been proved, for example, in Woolwich and other boroughs, which have been alive to the need for closing the gap which exists between two and five.

In boroughs and closely populated urban districts separate toddlers' clinics should be established—attached to the existing child welfare centres. While providing facilities for the treatment of all defects, they should be regarded primarily as centres for supervising health and preventing defects, not as centres to which children are brought **only** after some defect has become apparent.

### 9. Day Nurseries

Local Authorities can provide Day Nurseries where mothers who are at work may bring their children to be looked after. This power should be used more fully. Day Nurseries should be organised as far as possible to meet the needs of the mothers and children, and while they should take any children below school age, it is preferable to have Nursery Schools for children after the age of two.



## 10. Good Nutrition

The supreme need of the child before birth and in the first years of life is good nutrition, and the most important factor in good nutrition is good food. It should be the duty of the community to ensure that the expectant mother, the nursing mother and the infant have an adequate supply of the right food. If the mother is not properly fed during pregnancy, her baby's health will suffer, if not at birth, by the time it is a few months old.

The Maternity and Child Welfare Act gives power to the Local Authority to provide food, free or at cheap rates, to "necessitous mothers and young children, but figures show how inadequately this power is used. In 1935 seven million gallons of milk were distributed free, or at cheap rates, through Maternity and Child Welfare Authorities in England and Wales. This means a daily average of only 150,000 pints of free or cheap milk to expectant or nursing mothers and children up to five.

Maternity and Child Welfare Committees should be asked to use the power to provide food much more generously and so long as the free provision of food is limited to "necessitous" mothers and children, they should be urged to place the income limit as high as possible. The provision of dinners to mothers should be encouraged, especially in areas where poverty is severe. A number of Local Health Authorities make such provision at present with very good results.

## 11. Importance of Milk

For the expectant mother, the nursing mother and the young child, milk is an all important food. Sir George Newman has said that the expectant mother should have two pints of milk per day and all authorities suggest a pint per day as the minimum for young children and a higher minimum for older children. In homes dependent on unemployment benefit or on very low wages it is clearly impossible at present for mothers or young children to obtain anything like the quantity of milk the experts say they need. The Household Budgets enquiry which we carried out last year showed that in 37 per cent.

of the unemployed homes no fresh milk was bought and in many of these homes there was an expectant mother and in a large number of them there were young children.

But in many homes well above the unemployment benefit standard, and well above the income limit recognised for free milk by the most generous Local Authorities, it is impossible to buy sufficient milk for the needs of mothers and children.

## 12. Milk for Mothers and Young Children

Steps should be taken to plan a national scheme which would guarantee to all expectant and nursing mothers and children below school age an adequate daily supply of milk. It might be arranged that every mother attending an ante-natal or child welfare centre would automatically receive an order for milk for herself or her child to be renewed through the Welfare Centre at regular intervals; and that mothers outside the scope of any child welfare centre should be granted an order for milk on intimation being sent to the Medical Officer for the area either by her doctor or by a Health Visitor.

The milk orders could be made on any retailer approved by the Health Committee.

While it seems desirable to aim at a scheme which would provide milk free for all mothers and infants, if a completely free scheme were impracticable at first, we suggest that the milk be free to those below an income limit (to be fixed reasonably high) and supplied at 1d. or 1½d. per pint to those above the limit.

We would urge the Party to give attention to planning a scheme on the lines suggested which would secure a daily ration of milk to mothers and young children. This, together with adequate medical supervision, would lay the foundations of a healthier nation.

## EDUCATION

### 13. Education and Environment

The foregoing measures are designed to ensure health throughout infancy. When we turn to education, we are not passing to a separate question. Education is not



merely a matter of the hours spent in school, but of the whole social environment by which physical, mental and emotional development is influenced. Good food and good housing conditions are perhaps the most urgent **educational** reforms. Our educational institutions are too often forced into a struggle with social conditions which defeat the purpose of education.

But educational methods and institutions must be improved and reorganised in order to achieve equal opportunities for all children.

#### **14. Three Stages in Education**

Education should be regarded as a continuous process in stages corresponding to the three stages in the development of the normal child.

1. Nursery School—two to seven years.
2. Primary School—seven to eleven.
3. Secondary School—eleven to sixteen.

#### **15. The Nursery School**

The Nursery School should not be regarded as a mere adjunct—not even a “desirable adjunct” (to quote the words of the Consultative Committee to the Board of Education)—to our educational system. It should be an integral part of that system; the essential foundation for further stages of education.

The number of Nursery Schools in England and Wales is only 84—with accommodation for 6,350 children.

#### **16. Educational Arguments**

Nursery Schools should be available for all children, irrespective of home conditions. The most important argument for bringing the child to the Nursery School at two years of age is the child himself: his awakening faculties and developing senses. At this age his world is beginning to take shape and colour, and discoveries are made; he is beginning to learn through his senses. The nursery school provides an environment more suited to his needs than the home—even the fairly well-to-do home.

For in the home, life is organised mainly for adults; furniture and equipment are measured to adult needs; the child's natural instinct to look at things, to touch and handle things must be repressed. Because almost everything in his home is designed for adults, grown-ups are constantly doing things for him which he could very well do for himself—serving his dinner, or putting his toys away in the cupboard. At home he cannot enjoy the society of his own contemporaries—and we are beginning to understand that the two-year and three-year-olds need the companionship of others of their own age as well as the affection of parents and the companionship of brothers and sisters.

But the Nursery School is in no sense a rival to the home—it is an extension of the home, and provision is made for the association of parents in the life of the Nursery School.

#### **17. Social Considerations**

The purely educational argument for the Nursery School is reinforced by other considerations. Between a quarter and a third of the children admitted to the infant schools at 5 are already damaged in health. Most of the defects, some slight, some serious, are preventable, and as figures show, can be prevented by the Nursery School.

Bad social conditions further strengthen our case. The following quotation from the memorandum which was endorsed by the National Conference of Labour Women in 1933 is as true to-day as it was four years ago:—

“In overcrowded industrial districts and slum areas, the need for Nursery Schools is most urgent. In the homes in such districts it is impossible often for children to know quietness or to enjoy refreshing sleep; there is no bath and no hot water supply; and if, as is likely, the father is receiving low wages or is unemployed, suitable clothing and adequate nourishment are lacking as well. . . .

In such districts, too, the street is frequently the only playground and every year with the increase of traffic it becomes a more dangerous playground. From London, Durham, Manchester, and other districts, we have received information about the growing dangers of street traffic for young children, and the lack of alternative playgrounds. . . .



The prolonged industrial depression gives an additional reason why Nursery Schools should be provided for young children. Most mothers strive heroically to save their children from knowledge of the terrible struggle and worry which prolonged unemployment brings, but the atmosphere of anxiety and hopelessness which hangs over thousands of homes in the depressed areas to-day is bound to communicate itself to the young children and to influence their outlook. One mother has written us as follows: 'In the Rhondda the children need to be rescued from the atmosphere of depression and apathy caused by low wages and unemployment. There is now growing up here a generation of children who have never seen their fathers work.'

### 18. Board of Education Attitude

During the period of the Labour Government direct encouragement was given to Education Authorities to build Nursery Schools, but the National Government in 1931 reversed the process and a number of schemes were postponed.

Local Authorities were asked rather half-heartedly in January, 1936 (Circular 1444) to consider the question of Nursery Schools, but in this circular the view is expressed—and is repeated in the pamphlet on Nursery Schools and Classes published a little later by the Board of Education—that the Nursery School is primarily a palliative for bad home conditions, a place for those children whose mothers are at work outside the home, or a remedial centre for children already debilitated.

This attitude is deplorable—and so, too, is the tendency of the Board to encourage the second-rate makeshift apparatus, and the Nursery Class in preference to the Nursery School.

While the Nursery Class in some districts may be the only practicable alternative to no provision at all for children under five, the policy of the Board should be the Open-air Nursery School. Where it is necessary to adopt the Nursery Class, the usual Nursery School equipment and staffing should be insisted on.

### 19. Future Developments

While we think it desirable that all children, irrespective of home conditions, should attend Nursery Schools, we do not suggest that attendance should at present be made compulsory.

We propose, however, that the Minister of Education should (a) request every Education Authority to establish at least one Nursery School in its area within a given period; (b) require Education Authorities to provide Nursery Schools wherever there is a request from at least 40 or 50 parents of children between 2 and 5; and (c) insist that in overcrowded urban areas and in depressed areas adequate Nursery School accommodation is provided speedily for all young children.

Existing Nursery Schools, with few exceptions, take children from 2 to 5, but there is a great deal to be said for raising the age to 7. New Nursery Schools should provide for children from 2 to 7, and existing infant departments and classes should be reorganised on Nursery School lines. It is undesirable that there should be a break, or a transition to the infant school, at the age of 5, for those children who come to the Nursery School at 2. The point was clearly put in the pamphlet "From Nursery School to University," published some years ago by the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress: "From the physiological standpoint the first seven years of life make one epoch, and the conditions of a good Nursery School are those best adapted to this age."

Nursery School buildings should be simply constructed, open to air and sun, and surrounded by spacious garden playground. They should have hot water supply and bathing facilities, and suitable equipment for play and "lessons."

The provision of meals should be part of the routine of every Nursery School.

### THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The children will pass at seven, from the Nursery School or the Infant School to the Primary School, and we must see that our schools are fit to receive them.



## 20. School Buildings

Many existing schools provide a totally unsuitable environment for children; antiquated, unhealthy, badly ventilated and badly heated, deficient in cloakroom and washing accommodation, with no facilities for meals, and surrounded by old playgrounds which collect pools of water on every rainy day.

In May, 1936, the President of the Board of Education stated that there were 1,076 defective schools. The term "defective school" is a choice example of official understatement, for many of the defective schools are qualified for the "black list," a word which, under the stress of reaction, has disappeared from the official vocabulary. There are still classes with more than 50 pupils, and a very large number with over 40. These conditions are injurious to the children and unfair to the teachers.

The Board of Education should fix a date by which all unsuitable buildings are replaced, and all defective buildings remodelled.

New school buildings should conform to modern standards: they should be built to admit sun and fresh air. We should also increase the number of open-air schools.

All schools should have ample facilities for practical and physical instruction, and, wherever possible, should have a school garden as well as a playground attached. Every new school should have a dining room, or a hall suitable for the purpose of meals, as well as proper facilities for cooking meals.

Playing fields should be provided by every Authority for primary as well as for secondary schools.

The holding of classes in parks, or out-of-doors during fine weather should be encouraged.

## 21. Size of Classes

A date should be fixed by which all classes must be reduced to forty with a view to a further reduction to thirty at the earliest possible moment.

## 22. Defective and Ailing Children

The needs of children who are unable to attend the ordinary primary school should have special consideration, but it is certain that with a widespread provision of nursery schools, there will be fewer children at the primary stage unable to take part in the work of the school because of defects—physical or mental.

Every Education Authority should, however, make suitable provision—where necessary jointly with other Authorities, and by means of residential schools in sparsely populated areas—for the education of blind, myopic, and deaf children. Special classes for backward children, and special schools for mentally defective children should also be available.

In addition to special schools for children with physical defects, open-air schools and convalescent homes should also be provided for children who are ailing or recovering from illness.

## 23. Playgrounds for Children

The only playground accessible after school hours to large numbers of children is the street. The street is an unsuitable playground, and every year it becomes a more dangerous one. Local Authorities should be required to make provision for children's playgrounds, in addition to school playgrounds, and on new housing estates sites should be reserved for this purpose, as well as for Nursery Schools.

## THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

24. Primary school education should normally end at 11, when the children should pass to the secondary school. Drastic changes are urgent in our system of post-primary education. We agree with the words of the Hadow Report (published in 1927) that "all normal children should begin some form of secondary education about the age of 11." Had the reorganisation suggested in that Report been carried out, a system of secondary education for all would have been by now in existence.



## 25. Government Policy

But educational advance has had a severe setback in recent years. The Government refused after 1931 to sanction the expenditure necessary for complete reorganisation; it abolished free secondary education, raised fees and restricted free places in secondary schools; the Education Act of 1936 purported to raise the school age to 15, but will permit exemptions for "beneficial employment," reflecting the familiar Tory view that the needs of industry and not the welfare of children should determine the length and quality of education provided for the mass of working-class children.

## 26. Raise the School Age

Secondary education is the right of every child. To-day it is denied to the vast majority of our children. While secondary education is regarded as the right of the well-to-do, for the working-class it is considered a special privilege, open only to a few.

A longer school period is necessary if we are to plan a proper system of secondary education for all children and to ensure that they derive the fullest benefit from it.

The school age should therefore be raised immediately to 15, and a date fixed after which children must remain in school till 16. Maintenance grants should be provided to parents for the extra school period.

## 27. Abolish Fees

Fees in secondary schools should be abolished and secondary education should be free to all children.

## 28. A Unified System

All post-primary schools should be unified in one single system and administered under the same code of regulations.

Central and Senior Schools which at present come under the elementary regulations, and Technical and other schools which are under the regulations for further education, should be brought under the same code of

secondary school regulations, and the standards prescribed for secondary schools should be required for all schools.

Equal standards should be laid down not only in regard to staffing and equipment, but in regard to accommodation, structure, playing fields, etc.

The secondary school should include various types of courses to suit the various aptitudes and capacities of children. These courses should be of equal status, and the capacity of the child and not the income of his parents, should determine the type of course which the child enters at the age of 11. But there should, of course, be sufficient elasticity to enable a child to pass from one type of course to another if his inclinations alter after a year or two.

The view of the Hadow Committee that "a liberal education is not one given through books alone but one which brings children into contact with the larger interests of mankind" is one with which we agree. Secondary education should be general education and not vocational in the narrow sense. If we are to relate education "to the larger interests of mankind", the necessity of earning a living cannot be ignored, but the secondary school is not the place to train children for particular occupations.

The secondary school should aim, therefore, at the development of general capacity and intelligence and at fitting boys and girls for citizenship and for their leisure in after life, rather than for a particular job.

## EMPLOYMENT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

29. The law permits the employment of school children at twelve years of age out of school hours. Such employment is definitely injurious to the interests of the children. The child who comes to school in the morning after having spent an hour or two delivering milk or newspapers, probably insufficiently clad for cold or wet weather, is not in a state to give his best to or to receive the best from the day's work in school. He is likely to



suffer from lack of sleep in view of the early hour at which he must start his job. The reason for taking the job is, in almost every case, economic pressure in the home, so that the children who regularly do an hour or two of paid work in addition to their school work, are likely to lack nourishing food and therefore are least able to stand the additional strain.

It cannot be said too emphatically that children of school age should not have to bear the burden of poverty in the home, and legislation should be passed immediately to prohibit the employment of children out of school hours up to the school-leaving age.

## NUTRITION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

### 30. School Meals for All

A mid-day meal at school should be part of a complete system of free education. This proposal is justified on educational grounds, though it appears to give rise to fears about the break up of home life.

But in many secondary schools to-day a mid-day meal is provided for those who care to take it, and there is no evidence of any disturbance of family unity as a consequence. It is difficult to see how home life or family unity are preserved by a small boy rushing home from school at lunch hour, bolting much too quickly the meal his mother has prepared, unwilling even to sit down at table because of his anxiety to be back in the school playground for 15 minutes' play before the afternoon bell rings.

A normal healthy child is not very conscious of family affection between half-past nine in the morning and four in the afternoon. During that period his world, naturally and properly, is the school. His education is not just a question of a teacher, books, and blackboard, and his relation to them; it is essentially a social experience in which his classmates play an important part. It is desirable that the school period every day should be continuous and unbroken, and that the children should have their mid-day meal together as part of the day's routine.

If any parents have strong objections, the school meal need not be compulsory, but we believe that once it is an established part of the life of the school, the children themselves will settle that point.

There is a strong argument for school meals on educational grounds, even if every child could have a dinner at home. But there are thousands of children to-day whose mothers, spending their incomes with the utmost wisdom, cannot possibly provide a good dinner at home. The only way to ensure that these children are fed is to make school meals available for all. No method of providing free meals on the basis of an income test—and this is required by existing legislation—can ensure that those who lack food at home have meals at school, for children, as well as parents, are reluctant to admit poverty, and often prefer to go without the meals which are the sign of their poverty.

### 31. Immediate Measures

School meals for all is therefore a sound policy, and experience in areas where school meals are at present supplied shows that the cost is comparatively small. But a Labour Government faced with the need for legislating over a very wide field to eliminate bad social conditions and to assist the victims of the present economic order, would find it difficult to introduce at one step a universal system of free school meals.

We should, however, take steps in that direction, with a view to improving as speedily as possible the nutrition and health of school children.

Two facts will determine our immediate demands: (1) the importance of safeguarding health in early years, and (2) the prevalence of underfeeding.

### 32. Health of Toddlers

It is estimated that three-quarters of the 7,000 deaths which occur annually in the age group two to five could be prevented. Many of them are due to conditions associated with poverty. Nursery Schools, by providing



suitable conditions for growth and nurture, would undoubtedly save the health and the lives of many of these children. The conditions which kill some children impair the health of many more, and of the children who enter school to-day at five years old, one-third or more are found to suffer from defects (apart from dental defects) many of them requiring treatment. These defects are frequently the direct result of inadequate diet.

### 33. Nutrition of School Children

Facts and figures published annually by the Board of Education inspire the comforting conclusion that all is well with the nutrition of school children. But reports from many areas, both rural and industrial, tell a different story, and a close study of these reports underlines the fact which we have referred to elsewhere. (See pamphlet: "Nutrition and Food Supplies") that generalisations about nutrition based on averaging a mass of information compiled on different standards from district to district are often very misleading.

### 34. What is "Normal Nutrition"?

School Medical Officers are required to classify children for nutrition under four heads—Excellent, Normal, Sub-Normal and Bad. The figures they produce depend on the interpretation of the word "Normal." When Medical Officers take the heights of school children they use a common measuring rod—an inch is the same in London as it is in Glamorgan. In assessing nutrition there is no common standard and it is clear that Medical Officers have widely differing views about "normal" nutrition. Some doctors probably have in mind some sort of ideal standard—the level of health of children who are really well fed and housed. Others have in mind some sort of average for their own district. If the district is a poor one with a low standard of health the Medical Officer in that area is likely to label as "normal" many children who would be classified as "sub-normal" by a fellow Medical Officer in an adjoining area who has a higher conception of normal nutrition.

### 35. Lack of Common Standard

The School Medical Officer in Accrington last year found that less than one per cent. of the children in the borough were sub-normal, and none at all were bad. In the Isle of Wight the Medical Officer found 18.4 per cent. sub-normal and 1.6 per cent. bad. Can we really believe that in the Isle of Wight there are proportionately twenty-five times as many under-nourished children as in industrial Accrington, with its unemployed and low-paid cotton workers? Is it not more likely that the doctors responsible for the two sets of figures had quite different conceptions of "normal" in their minds when they set down their figures about nutrition?

It is desirable that the Ministers of Health and Education should try to get their medical advisers to make an effort to arrive at a common measuring rod for assessing the state of nutrition. It would also be common-sense to drop the two separate classes—"Excellent" and "Normal." "Excellent" in this connection has no meaning, except on the assumption that there must be class distinction in health. If excellent nutrition is attained by some children it should be regarded as attainable by all. Why not, therefore, make "Excellent" the standard to be aimed at, and say that those who fall below a really high standard are "Sub-Normal"?

There is evidence that the health of school children in poor districts is generally below the level reached by children in more prosperous districts. Some Medical Officers in industrial areas report that rickets is on the increase. In South Wales the death rate from tuberculosis is 35 per cent. higher than for the country as a whole; the rate there shows an upward tendency, and the victims are mostly young people, who develop the disease within a year or two after leaving school.

### 36. Evidence of Teachers

The plain meaning of such facts is that there is widespread underfeeding among children of school age, as there must be when incomes over a vast section of our people



cannot possibly purchase even the minimum diet prescribed by experts for the maintenance of health.

The following sentences are taken from a Report on the Depressed Areas prepared by the National Union of Teachers ("Schoolmaster," 18th February, 1937):—

"The teachers in the schools . . . have before them children who come from homes which they know, from their own experience, cannot have the necessary income adequately to feed and clothe the children. Many of the teachers are parents themselves and know how much it costs to bring a child up, properly fed and clothed, and they cannot believe, in spite of clinical tests, that the children they teach are adequately fed according to the standards derived from their own parental experience. The teachers feel that undue mental or physical pressure on these children might be productive of serious consequences. There are no satisfactory clinical tests for the ascertainment of malnutrition until it reaches its secondary stage and organic impairment is observable. It is insidious in its gradual effect and only becomes easy of detection when permanent damage has been done."

It is the duty of the community to feed its children before it tries to educate them. In a rational society it would be considered a crime to attempt to educate an underfed child. But hundreds of teachers must tackle that job to-day.

### **37. Free Meals in Nursery Schools**

The provision of meals is part of the routine of the Nursery School. We suggest that milk and meals should be supplied free to all children in attendance. Good food, plus the open-air environment, will check epidemics and prevent the development of defects which may do irreparable damage by the time the child is five. This is already proved.

### **38. Free Milk in Schools**

A daily ration of milk should be available, free, to all school children. The daily ration should be increased from one-third to at least two-thirds of a pint per day. The "Milk-in-Schools" scheme under which cheap milk is available to school children covers roughly half of the school population. This figure includes those children who receive the milk free, because of poverty. We are

assured officially that the other fifty per cent. do not participate in the scheme because of parental indifference or distaste for milk, but because of poverty.

It is certain that poverty is a much more important cause than the Government is prepared to acknowledge and that a very large number of children prefer to say they don't like milk than to admit that their mothers cannot give them 2½d. every week to pay for it. A headmaster in Blaina (South Wales) wrote recently in "The Schoolmaster":

"At the beginning of this term, out of the 125 boys whose fathers were unemployed, an average of forty-six per day (eighteen get clinic milk free) paid their half-pennies for milk. When I offered (with money from sympathisers all over the country) to pay for milk for any boys who would like milk, I had sixty-one extra. The number jumped to 107. They all welcomed the milk. . . . But some of those boys had previously said, to be loyal to parents whom they knew to be too poor to afford it, that they did not like milk."

### **39. School Meals—Discretion of Local Authority**

But milk, though it is a most important food for school children, is not enough. Many children are in need of solid meals as well. We must demand a much more extensive use of the School Meals Clauses of the Education Act to ensure that all children in need of meals receive them. The original School Meals Act was designed to ensure that every child should be fed before being subjected to mental and physical instruction. There are still Education Authorities which make no provision for school meals.

The Education Authority has a very wide discretion in this matter. It is not compelled to put the School Meals Clauses into operation: it must decide the basis of selection for free meals, and income scales for this purpose vary tremendously; it is encouraged by recent Circulars from the Board of Education to add a medical test to the income test and to provide meals only if malnutrition as well as poverty is proved. Further, the Milk-in-Schools scheme is clearly regarded by some Authorities as an excuse for not providing free meals. While the number of Authorities providing meals in-



creased from the year 1934-35 to 1935-6, the number of children fed and the number of free meals (apart from free milk) declined.

#### FREE MEALS (OTHER THAN MILK MEALS)

	No. of Meals	No. of Children
1934-35 ...	25,500,000	156,448
1935-36 ...	23,000,000	143,179

The most recent report on "The Health of the School Child" (published annually by the Board of Education) says:

"The reduction in the number of children receiving solid meals is probably mostly due to the improved industrial position of the country. **It cannot, however, be viewed altogether with equanimity as it seems probable that there are in many areas children who would be benefited by an extension of the provision of free meals in addition to the provision of milk.**"

#### 40. How School Meals Clauses should be Used

All Education Authorities should be required to take steps to provide meals under the School Meals Clauses of the Education Act. While a free mid-day meal for every child is not **immediately** practicable, a scheme should be prepared under which dinners will be available for any child. The co-operation of parents should be invited to enable all children who live at a distance from school, and any others who wish, to have dinner at school. A charge should be fixed which will cover the cost of the food, and the income limit below which free meals are allowed should be fixed as high as possible—high enough to ensure that children shall have meals free, where the parents' income is insufficient to provide a diet at least on the standard suggested in the pamphlet, "Criticism and Improvement of Diets," published a few years ago by the Ministry of Health. There should be no medical test in connection with school meals.

There should be no distinction between the children who pay for their meals and the children who receive free meals, and Education Authorities should arrange some other method of collecting payments from those who pay, than through the children bringing the money to the teacher.

It should not be difficult to carry out such a scheme in newer secondary and central schools which have more adequate facilities for cooking and serving meals. All new schools, primary and post-primary, should be built with adequate facilities for meals, and Education Authorities should be required to provide the necessary domestic staff.

#### SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE

41. The School Medical Service has been of incalculable benefit to school children, but until it is backed by a sound nutrition policy, its real constructive function will be subordinate to the remedial aspect.

The service should be extended to ensure that all children shall pass under review more than three times in their school life. With a continuous system of Education from Nursery to Secondary School—from 2 to 16, instead of from 5 to 14—this will be important. More doctors and nurses will be needed to maintain supervision of the nursery school children from the vital early years up to sixteen. Treatment, as well as advice, should be available for all defects which occur during school life, e.g., special clinics for rheumatism, orthopaedic centres, ultra-violet ray treatment, and open-air recovery schools for ailing and convalescent children.

#### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

42. The Government's policy of promoting health through more intensive physical exercises requires to be carefully watched. Everyone will agree that physical fitness is an important factor in national wellbeing, that it is good that children should know how to keep their limbs supple, and to exercise their muscles properly. But the basis of real physical fitness is good nutrition in childhood and healthy surroundings. It is too late to seek the perfection of healthy bodies by devising new courses of physical instruction for older children who have been inadequately fed in childhood—and probably still are



inadequately fed—and who had not the space and freedom in which to run about and exercise their limbs and muscles in the years between two and five.

The Government has offered financial assistance to Education Authorities for the provision of gymnastic costumes and shoes so that children may derive greater benefit from physical instruction. Additional financial provision for school meals would have been sounder policy. That there is a case for improving the quality of physical education in many of our schools, no one will deny. But to impose additional physical instruction on children who are not properly fed will do further damage to their health. The underfed child cannot afford to spend energy on physical exercises.

The physical wellbeing which we admire in the youth of other nations—for example, Sweden—is not due mainly to physical training—though that plays its part—but to the better nutrition of the people.

Given a sound nutrition policy, we should encourage physical exercise to maintain fitness, especially by the provision of playing fields for games—outside the cities where possible—and also the organisation of school hostels in the country or by the sea, for holidays and recreation.

### **CHILD GUIDANCE CLINICS**

43. The “difficult” child presents a problem in almost every school, and the failure to understand him and to deal with him properly, may result in anti-social conduct during or after school years. The emotional disharmony and insecurity which produce the “difficult” child are usually the result of unfortunate home conditions and frequently are attributable to poverty. Every Education Authority should have a Child Guidance Clinic, under the charge of medical and psychological experts, to which difficult or problem children could be referred for advice and treatment. If proper guidance were available to teachers and parents of “difficult” children, it would reduce delinquency and save endless unhappiness and waste in later years.

### **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

44. The treatment of the child who offends against the law is a special problem. The Children's Act of 1907 recognised that the problem of the juvenile offender was different from that of the adult and the Act of 1932 made possible a further advance in dealing with this problem.

Most of the children who come to the Juvenile Courts come because they are the children of poor parents. The well-to-do boy has a school playing field where he plays football; the poor boy has nowhere but the street, and it is an offence to play football in the street. Most children have a healthy and natural craving for sweets and fruit. The well-to-do child has pocket money to buy them; the poor child without a copper to spend, is tempted to steal, and he comes before the Court. If a well-to-do child steals or commits damage, the parents can adjust matters and offer to take the child to a specialist—and no charge is brought against the child.

Measures designed to reduce or eliminate poverty will lead to a decline in juvenile delinquency—and so, too, will a wider use by teachers and parents of the child guidance clinic to help difficult and maladjusted children.

There is need for improvement in our methods of dealing with children who come before the Juvenile Courts. In the court it is the child, not the offence, which matters, but that fundamental principle is still too often ignored.

Younger magistrates are needed in many Juvenile Courts, as it is of the greatest importance to have magistrates who understand children, and have a knowledge of social and economic conditions.

The birching of juvenile offenders should be abolished by law. In the past two years there has been a deplorable increase in birching, and it is clear from press reports of the speeches of magistrates who have ordered birching, that they are completely unfit to sit in Children's Courts.

It is desirable, too, that the age should be raised from eight to ten at which a child may be charged in the Court with an offence. No child under ten should be sent to



an Approved School, but should be boarded out, and magistrates should be allowed to decide the period for which a child should be sent to a school and not be compelled as at present to commit them for three years, or till fifteen. The Child Guidance Clinics of the Education Authority should be available for the Courts and also Observation Centres where children could reside if necessary during the period of observation.

### THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

45. In the preceding pages we have attempted two things—first to outline “A Children’s Charter” which will ensure nurture and education for all from birth to the age of sixteen; second, to indicate an order of priority, by distinguishing between measures terribly urgent and likely to yield the greatest social returns in a short period, and those which might be postponed until the more urgent have been carried out.

Economic conditions strengthen the arguments for certain of our proposals, but a substantial improvement in the standard of life would not weaken them. The strain and pace of factory life and the prevalence of unemployment add to the urgency of our demand that all children should be kept out of the factory and out of the labour market till sixteen; the record of physical defects in childhood makes a wider provision of child welfare services and nursery schools an imperative necessity; the prevalence of underfeeding requires extensive provision of free milk and school meals.

With factory conditions improved and hours of work shortened, the fundamental argument for extended education for all children, would still stand; with slums wiped out and wage standards raised, the case for nursery schools and for collective provision of school meals would remain.

For a Children’s Charter, which will give children the right conditions of nurture from birth, and the opportunity of an education shared with others from two to

sixteen, is based on the Socialist demand that every boy and girl in the land should, as a natural right, have access to the conditions of healthy growth and to the best education we can give. Our duty as citizens is to provide for the child the fullest opportunity to live and grow in his own world—which is not the world of adults—to develop his faculties, to excite his curiosity, and to prompt the disposition to enquiry on which the wise exercise of the rights of citizenship in later years depends.

Mothers who belong to the Labour, Co-operative and Trade Union movements, have power through their organisations to win the majority of mothers in the country to the high conception of motherhood and citizenship involved in that demand: the belief that it is the primary duty of a mother to share in the job of making the world a fit place for her child.

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# JUVENILE EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

## NUMBER OF EMPLOYED JUVENILES

1. In July, 1936, the number of juveniles from fourteen to eighteen engaged in insurable occupations in Great Britain was :—

	Boys	Girls	Total
14 to 16	515,000	415,000	930,000
16 to 18	564,000	451,000	1,015,000

In certain industries and occupations there is a very large proportion of juvenile labour. The number of young persons in the distributive trades for example, between the ages of fourteen and seventeen—448,600—represents about one-fifth of the total number of insured distributive workers. The distributive trades account for a little over a quarter of all insured juveniles between fourteen and eighteen years of age; and they include more juveniles of fourteen and fifteen years than there are *in the aggregate* in all the following industries :—

Coal-mining; general engineering; construction and repair of motor vehicles; cycles and aircraft, metal industries; tailoring (manufacturing); bread, biscuits, cake, etc. (productive); printing, publishing and book-binding; building and laundry service.

## WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF WORK

2. There are three main methods of regulating wages and condition of work of juveniles as of other workers; (1) Trade Boards, (2) Joint Industrial Councils, (3) Collective Bargaining: that is, direct negotiation between the trade unions and the employers' organisations.

There is a fourth group of industries in which wages are so far practically unregulated.

## 3. Trade Boards

Forty-seven Trade Boards covering a wide variety of industries fix wage-rates for juveniles at various wages, as well as for adults. Trade Board rates vary considerably; for example, rates for girls between fourteen and fifteen vary from 3/8 (Drift Nets—44 hours week) to 14/- (Tobacco), and for boys at the same age from 8/7 (Dressmaking, Scotland—46 hours week) to 17/6 (Tobacco). Rates rise, according to age and experience, until the qualifying age for the adult rate, which is eighteen for many trades, for others twenty-one.

Trade Board rates are as a rule fixed on the basis of a 48-hour week; in a few cases a 44-, 46-, or 47-hour week.

The rates quoted are time-rates, but the majority of workers in Trade Board Trades are piece workers, for whom higher rates are usually fixed. All rates are on an hourly basis and workers are paid only for the hours actually worked.

Many Trade Unions have agreements or other arrangements, either with individual firms or collectively with Employers' Associations, for the payment of rates above the minima fixed by the Trade Boards—for example, substantial increases in the rates of pay in the wholesale tailoring and shirt trades have recently been secured by Trade Union negotiations. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that there is great scope for Trade Union activity in Trade Board Trades in securing rates of pay higher than the minimum, payment for holidays, better control by the workers of speeding up processes and piece prices.

## 4. Joint Industrial Councils

In a number of industries juvenile wages are regulated by Joint Industrial Councils, composed of equal numbers of employers' and Trade Union representatives—for example, cocoa and chocolate, chemicals, sugar, confectionery and jam, and several others. Again the rates fixed vary, though variations are less than in the Trade Board rates. The lowest rate at fourteen for both boys and girls is 10/- per week. The rates increase year by year and at seventeen rates vary



from 16/8 to 33/6 (boys) and 16/8 to 24/- (girls). Piece-rates are fixed so as to yield 25 per cent. above time-rates.

Some Joint Industrial Councils have introduced a shorter working week—for instance, in the match industry and in some sugar confectionery firms—without reduction in pay.

### 5. Trade Union Agreements

The wages in the trades covered by agreements vary mainly according to the strength of Trade Union organisation. In the great engineering group the time rate varies from 12/- at fourteen to 25/- a week at eighteen (piece work basis 25 per cent. above the time rates for a working week of 47 hours); in artificial silk from 15/- to 18/- per week for girls. Juveniles employed in the machine departments of the printing trades are paid in accordance with the standard agreement relating to all the trade unions, viz., 48 hours per week, payment for all bank and statutory holidays, and a week's holiday in the summer with pay. Wages of juniors, both boys and girls, in the printing and binding industries are fixed by agreements.

### 6. Unorganised and Unregulated Trades

It is impossible to give an accurate picture of the wages and conditions of work of juveniles in occupations which are not covered by Trade Boards, Industrial Councils, or Trade Union agreements, and where the workers are not organised. These include bakelite, fancy leather goods, wire mattresses, vacuum cleaners, toilet accessories, and also wireless and gramophone, which are only partly organised.

A large number of juveniles are employed in unregulated trades such as the Catering and Entertainment Industries, and as van boys and messengers in other sections of industry.

The Home Office Departmental Committee which has been considering the hours of employment of young persons in certain unregulated occupations has now published its report, and on the question of hours their recommendation is as follows:—

**“Pending comprehensive legislation for all young persons which should aim at restricting their weekly working hours to something substantially less than 48, with suitable provision for further day-time education, we recommend, as an immediate step, the following restrictions:—**

- (a) the normal working week should not exceed 48 hours, exclusive of intervals for meals and rest;
- (b) the daily period of employment, including all intervals, should not exceed 10 hours;
- (c) a strictly limited amount of overtime should be permitted for young persons of 16 and over, but overtime should be entirely prohibited for young persons under 16;
- (d) night work for a period of 11 hours, including the hours between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., should be prohibited;
- (e) intervals for meals should be fixed by statute;
- (f) young persons employed on Sunday should receive a compensatory holiday during the week;
- (g) a half holiday from 1.30 at least should be allowed on one week day in each week.”

The Committee adds “that it is essential that immediate steps should be taken to afford statutory protection to the unregulated young persons with whom our Report deals.”

### 7. Office Workers

The general position in regard to the employment of juniors in offices, i.e., workers up to twenty or twenty-one years of age, is that there is a shortage of such workers. It is difficult to say how far the shortage has been created by attempts on the part of employers to staff their offices with a higher proportion of juniors than was formerly the case. Whatever the cause, unemployment among trained juniors is practically non-existent at the present time.

This position has obtained, more or less, for the past two years, and the effect has been to raise the salaries paid to junior workers. Juniors up to twenty-one years of age can command salaries up to 45/- per week in London. This is still below the senior rate and the employer, if he can persuade himself that he is getting the same work from a junior as a senior worker, is satisfied that he is effecting a saving.



Office hours rarely exceed 48 per week and in many cases are much less than this. Young girls are employed in cash desks which is considered blind alley work, and in the printing trade blind alley work is performed by juveniles in connection with newspaper insurance, publicity schemes and competitions.

### **8. Distributive Workers**

Distributive workers are largely unorganised outside the Co-operative movement. Wages and conditions of Co-operative employees, including juveniles, are fixed under Trade Union agreements. There has been a marked and welcome increase in Trade Union membership among distributive workers employed by other firms during the past two years, and agreements on wages, hours and holidays, covering many distributive workers, have recently been secured as a result of Trade Union activity.

## **SOCIAL LEGISLATION**

### **9. National Health Insurance**

Though boys and girls may start work at fourteen, they do not come within the scope of National Health Insurance until sixteen. While we believe that school is the place for all young people up to sixteen, until the school age is raised the age of entry into insurance should coincide with the beginning of employment. The Government has promised legislation for this purpose. It is important to insist that young people shall not be brought into insurance "on the cheap". It has been suggested, for example, that young people below sixteen should receive medical care but no cash benefit during illness, and that the fee paid to doctors in respect of young persons on their panels should be reduced as young people are less liable to illness.

Such proposals should be resisted. The young worker should receive cash benefit during illness, and the doctor should receive the same capitation fee as in the case of other patients on his panel. To fix a lower fee in respect of a section of workers on the ground that they are less liable to illness is to reject the principle that the National Health Insurance Scheme has a *preventive* function.

School medical records should be passed on to the panel doctor as soon as boys and girls become insured, and it is desirable that the doctor should examine all young workers on his panel once or twice before they reach the age of eighteen.

### **10. Trade Union Approved Societies**

If boys and girls between fourteen and sixteen are brought within the scope of the National Health Insurance system, it will mean more than half a million new entrants and it is of extreme importance that they should become members of Trade Union Approved Societies. Out of about eighteen million insured persons only about one-and-a-quarter million are in the Trade Union Approved Societies. If the Trade Union Movement is to speak effectively for the workers, not only in regard to economic questions—wages, working hours, etc.—but on social questions like Health Insurance the workers should enrol in the Trade Union Approved Societies. The women in the home can probably do more than anybody else to direct the steps of the young people into the right channels

### **11. Unemployment Insurance**

Young people between fourteen and sixteen are included in Unemployment Insurance. They pay a contribution of 2d. a week. The employer and the State also contribute 2d. each. Young people are not, however, entitled to benefit in their own right, but if the parent is unemployed and the child is also unemployed, then the parent may get dependant's benefit in respect of the child. This restriction is indefensible as the contributions are deducted from the child's earnings in the ordinary way and he certainly ought to be entitled to benefit in respect of them. The Unemployment Insurance Act should be amended to make this possible.

### **12. Factory Legislation—The New Bill**

The law at present in force was passed about thirty-six years ago, and, of course, it is hopelessly out of touch with modern industry. After repeated promises the Government have introduced a new Bill which, although far short of



what our Movement demands, shows an advance on present legislation in regard to safety and welfare provisions, but little advance in regard to working hours. The hours allowed for women and young persons at present amount to sixty per week in some classes of factories, but the new Bill lays down a forty-eight hour week. There are, however, provisions for overtime—up to a possible of 150 hours—which could largely nullify the new hours.

There are many other points in the Bill which will have to be fought, but on the whole, as stated, it is an advance on previous legislation. Vested interests will try to prevent the Bill from becoming an Act, but our Movement will use every opportunity to improve it.

### 13. Overtime and Accidents

In industries where there is little or no Trade Union organisation the tendency will be for employers to introduce overtime. Up to a 100 hours in a year and in certain trades 150 hours in the year may be worked by juveniles over sixteen. During recent years the chief inspector of factories has shown grave concern about accidents of young persons. Accidents of juveniles from 1928 to 1934 show an increase of 15 per cent. Indeed the accident rate for juveniles is higher than the accident rate of adults. The question of safety of young persons has been sacrificed for cheap labour. It would be fitting at this stage to define the nature of the work on which young persons may be engaged and insist that a clause on these lines be added to the Bill, in order to reduce the high accident rate among juveniles.

### 14. Necessary Improvements

We should press for some restriction on the type of work on which young persons are engaged, for the deletion of the clause relating to overtime for young persons, for the limitation of the hours of work for young persons to forty hours a week, and for adequate leisure for continued education: for a reduction in the maximum spell which may be worked without a break from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours to 4 hours; and for the immediate operation of the clauses dealing with ventilation and space in factories.

### 15. Shops Act, 1934

This Act provides for the Regulation of the employment of young persons under the age of eighteen employed about the business of a shop or in Retail Trade elsewhere, and in particular for limiting normal hours of employment of such young persons to forty-eight hours per week.

In addition to the normal maximum working hours provision is made for overtime on occasions of seasonal or exceptional pressure for young persons between the ages of sixteen and eighteen subject to the following conditions:—

- (a) Overtime must not be worked in any shop in more than six weeks, whether consecutive or not, in any year.
- (b) No individual young person may be employed overtime
  - (i) in any year for more than fifty working hours,
  - (ii) in any week for more than twelve working hours.

It should be noted that no young person under the age of sixteen may in any circumstances be employed overtime. The Act also contains restrictions on night employment as far as young persons are concerned, together with special provisions applicable to the Catering Trade, the sale of supplies or accessories for Aircraft, Motor Vehicles and Cycles. Records must be kept showing the hours of employment worked by young persons employed about the business of each shop.

Intervals for meals with special reference to young persons are also laid down in the Act.

Other provisions of the Shops Act, 1934, apply to all workers, not only juveniles—e.g., provisions relating to the health and comfort of shop-workers generally, including ventilation, temperature and lighting, sanitary conveniences and washing facilities, and an additional provision making it the duty of an occupier of a shop to permit female assistants to utilize seats provided for by the Shops Act, 1912, whenever such use does not interfere with their work.

In order to provide for the discharge of the additional duties imposed by the Act, the London County Council increased the number of inspectors in the Metropolitan Area from thirteen to nineteen full-time appointments. These officers will have the assistance of twelve part-time inspectors drawn from other departments of the Council.



## 16. Two Shift System

The Employment of Women and Young Persons Act, 1936, empowers the Home Secretary to permit the employment of young persons over sixteen years of age on the Two Shift system. The workers must be consulted by ballot before authorisation is granted, except in the case of new factories which it is intended to organise permanently on the basis of the two-shift system, and of factories where the two-shift system was in operation immediately before 1st January, 1937, the date on which the Act came into operation.

## JUVENILE UNEMPLOYMENT

### 17. Numbers Unemployed

On 14th December, 1936, there were 81,566 unemployed juveniles under eighteen years of age on the registers at Employment Exchanges and Juvenile Employment Bureaux in Great Britain. These juveniles were distributed as follows:—

Division	Boys	Girls
London ... ..	1,717	1,553
South Eastern ... ..	1,807	2,347
South Western ... ..	2,072	2,457
Midlands ... ..	1,692	1,946
North Eastern ... ..	2,989	3,721
North Western ... ..	7,798	6,159
Northern ... ..	6,579	7,070
Scotland ... ..	9,883	8,331
Wales ... ..	6,503	7,033
Totals	40,949	40,617

### 18. Uneven Distribution

The very uneven distribution of these unemployed juveniles is particularly to be noted. There is a great concentration of unemployed juveniles in the Northern, North Western, Scottish and Welsh Divisions and at the same time a comparatively easy position in the London, South Eastern and Midland areas.

Of the total given above, only 31,471 boys and 27,545 girls are *insured* juveniles. Some are non-insured occupations and some have not yet had their first job and are, therefore, as yet uninsured.

The following figures give a more detailed analysis of the position:—

Age	Unemployed Boys		Unemployed Girls	
	Total	No. Insured	Total	No. Insured
14 to 16 ...	16,914	9,393	20,612	10,099
16 to 18 ...	24,035	22,028	20,005	17,446

A comparison of these figures with the numbers of insured juveniles given in the opening paragraph, shows that employment amongst juveniles is slightly over 3 per cent. compared with the percentage for all insured workers of 11.9 per cent.

### 19. Periods of Unemployment

It is illuminating also to compare the periods of unemployment of adults and juveniles applying for benefit.

	Men over 16	Boys 16-18	Women over 18	Girls 16-18
Less than 3 months unemployed	% 54.8	% 88.7	% 72.9	% 90.9
Over 6 months unemployed	34.6	1.0	15.7	0.7

These figures show that it is easier for young people to find jobs than for grown men and women.

### 20. Children versus Adults

One may well ask why the percentage of unemployment amongst juveniles is so much lower than it is amongst the total insured population. The difference compels attention to such questions as whether juveniles are being given a preference over older persons, and what happens to these juveniles when they themselves become adults. Juvenile employment clearly has a direct bearing on adult employment and unemployment. In an earlier paragraph reference is made to the high proportion of juvenile labour in the distributive trades, where it is usual to dismiss many boys and girls at eighteen—when adult wages have to be paid. The



same practice has developed in many of the new industries with the growth of mechanisation and the use of the automatic machine. The children who find jobs straight from school are often at eighteen unemployed, without any sort of proper training and with no prospect of a career. It is difficult to find statistical evidence of the extent of blind alley work, but there are very solid grounds for the complaints of educationists, parents, and trade unionists that it is widespread.

While it is generally true that young people find it easier to obtain jobs, and have shorter periods of unemployment than adults, the significance of the uneven distribution of juvenile unemployment must not be overlooked. Actually in some areas there is little prospect of work for boys and girls when they leave school. This is true generally of the depressed areas, dependent on mining and other old-established heavy industries, and it is in these areas that the large majority of the unemployed juveniles are found.

The existence of over 80,000 unemployed boys and girls throughout the country is a serious social and economic problem. If the age-group fourteen to fifteen (and later fifteen to sixteen) were permanently removed from the labour market, a considerable part of the problem would be solved. It is impossible to estimate what will be the effect of the Education Act of 1936, if it comes into effect in its present form in September, 1939, because the Act will not keep all children at school until fifteen but will allow exemptions at fourteen for "beneficial" employment. In so far as exemptions are granted—and there is only too good reason to believe that they will be widespread—both the educational and industrial advantages of the higher school-leaving age will be lost.

## 21. Junior Instruction Centres

There is now a statutory obligation requiring unemployed juveniles to attend approved courses of instruction. In the majority of cases these courses consist of Special Junior Instruction Centres organised by Local Education Authorities under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour.

At present there are 186 of these centres in Great Britain. There are also special Junior Instruction classes in places where the number of unemployed juveniles is not high enough to require a Centre. In addition, some unemployed boys and girls attend normal classes at various educational institutions.

The number of boys and girls at present in attendance at these various courses is about 29,000.

The scheme of approved courses is at present being reviewed by the National Advisory Councils for Juvenile Employment. There is a Council for England and Wales and one for Scotland, their function being to advise the Minister of Labour on problems of juvenile employment and unemployment.

The Councils have presented reports to the Minister of Labour urging that he should take powers to provide milk and meals for juveniles in attendance at the centres. At present there is no power to provide meals, and milk is provided only on medical recommendation. It is asked that milk and biscuits be provided to all juveniles as a normal part of the routine of the centres, and that the Education Authorities responsible for the centres should be granted the same powers for the provision of meals as exist for the provision of meals to children in elementary schools.

These measures would safeguard the health of juveniles, especially in the depressed areas where the incidence of unemployment is heavy and many boys and girls show the effects of prolonged underfeeding.

## 22. Transference of Juveniles

The only practical attempt to deal with juvenile unemployment is the system of transference of juveniles from depressed areas to other areas which began in 1928. At that time the scheme applied only to juveniles from the depressed mining areas. There was a gradual extension of the scheme and a growth in the number of juveniles transferred up to 1934, in which year some 5,000 juveniles were transferred. In 1935, following the recommendations of the Commissioners for Special Areas, 10,000 juveniles were transferred. In 1936, over 14,000 juveniles were transferred.



This rapid growth of the transference scheme has naturally raised a number of questions as to its operation and as to its effect on the juveniles transferred, and on employment conditions in the areas to which they have been transferred.

### **23. Conditions for Transfer—Official Scheme**

In operating the official scheme the Ministry of Labour lays down certain conditions which are to be observed when juveniles are transferred. These conditions may be summarised as follows:—

- (a) Juveniles introduced into an area must neither displace local adult labour nor prejudice the engagement of local juveniles suitable for the same jobs.
- (b) The situations offered to transferred juveniles must provide prospects of permanent and progressive employment.
- (c) Wages must not be less than those normally paid to local juveniles of corresponding age engaged on the same type of work.
- (d) Suitable lodgings, inspected and approved by the Ministry, must be found for the juveniles.
- (e) Suitable after-care arrangements must be made in the areas receiving transferred juveniles. After-Care Committees are established under the auspices of the local Committees for Juvenile Employment. In each case the After-Care Committee arranges for each transferred juvenile to be placed under the care of a "friend".

It is the duty of these "friends" to help the juveniles to settle down in their new environment; to introduce them to local juvenile organisations, and to transferred juveniles from their home area, to see that the juveniles are satisfactorily fixed up in their lodgings, to write to the parents of the transferred juveniles in the early stages, and to report to the After-Care Committee.

Where the wages paid to a transferred juvenile are insufficient for his upkeep, a grant in aid is paid by the Ministry of Labour which will leave the juvenile, after paying for his lodgings and for any travelling expenses in going to and from work, with 4s. to 5s. per week for other purposes. When necessary additional grants are made during periods of illness, unemployment or short time. If the transferred juvenile does not settle, his fare home is paid.

### **24. Unofficial Transfer Schemes**

In some areas individuals and voluntary societies arrange for the transference of juveniles, but there is no control over these schemes either in regard to conditions of employment, lodgings, or after-care. In addition a considerable number of young people leave the depressed areas to go to jobs elsewhere which they have secured as a result of private efforts—replying to newspaper advertisements, or hearing of jobs through friends.

### **SOCIAL PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH JUVENILE EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT**

The previous paragraphs summarise the salient facts about juvenile employment and unemployment. While these questions are essentially part of the general industrial problem of employment and unemployment and cannot be isolated from it, they raise social problems that deserve special consideration.

### **25. Strain of Modern Factory Work**

Let us consider first the nature of the work of a large proportion of employed juveniles. Work in a modern factory is in many ways less exacting than factory work in pre-War days, but it is infinitely more exhausting. Boys and girls are caught up by the machine at an age when their mental faculties need scope and freedom for growth, but the monotony and pace of factory work inevitably stifle them. The high accident rate among juvenile workers to which reference has already been made is significant and must be attributed to the pressure of the machine. Mothers of young boys and girls employed in factory work frequently remark that after the day's work the young people are too exhausted for any activity which requires mental effort, too tired for any effort more exacting than to look at a film occasionally. Mechanised work calls for mechanised recreation.

It is impossible to turn our backs on mechanisation, but we cannot ignore its effects both on adults and juveniles, and we must press relentlessly for such drastic reduction in working hours and improvements in conditions of work as will counteract these bad effects.



## 26. Raising School Age

The only way to save young workers from permanent injury is to keep them out of the factory completely until they have reached the age of sixteen. Such a measure would also benefit the generation immediately older.

## 27. Blind Alley Work

The factory uses young boys and girls ruthlessly, but does not use them long. At eighteen, many are dismissed to make room for another stream of boys and girls straight from school. A great deal of modern factory work is blind alley work, and so too are many of the jobs in the distributive trades to which children come at fourteen. Uncertainty about the future, the feeling that a job is likely to lead to nothing but unemployment in a few years, does not encourage a sense of social responsibility. That uncertainty is one of the main reasons for apathy towards Trade Unionism among young workers who most need the protection which only a strong Trade Union can give.

## 28. Indifference to Trade Unionism

Under such circumstances parents who are themselves Trade Unionists find it difficult to persuade their boys and girls to join a Union. And if the boys and girls between fourteen and eighteen are the breadwinners, with fathers "too old at forty-five" dependent on them, and feeling bitter and humiliated at their enforced dependence, you have a delicate personal and domestic situation in which parents feel even more reluctant to give advice than their children would be to take it. This reversal of the usual relation between parent and child is all too common to-day, and is the cause of much domestic unhappiness.

## 29. Effects of Unemployment

On the other hand, in mining areas and areas which have been severely hit by unemployment and have been in the main dependent on one industry, we see the disastrous effects of unemployment between fourteen and eighteen—and after. Boys and girls grow up without prospects, with no hope for the future. The consequences of unemployment are infinitely worse for young folk during the impressionable

years of adolescence than for adults. It is pointed out in an earlier paragraph that young people under eighteen, *for the country as a whole*, are unemployed for comparatively short periods, but in the depressed areas, many boys grow to adult years without having worked.

It is impossible to measure the social waste and personal misery which result. The sense of frustration of the young boy or girl that comes from the feeling of not being wanted, is very deep, and is frequently expressed in an anti-social outlook, and an indifference to social obligations. The older generation is supported through years of unemployment by the tradition of organisation and self-respect and civic responsibility learnt in better times, but that tradition does not pass easily to the youngster of another generation who is conscious only of one social fact—that the world has no place for him.

## 30. Transference Schemes

The problem of juvenile unemployment where it is most acute is part of the problem of the depressed areas. Only a determined policy of national economic planning will revive old industries and bring fresh industries to those areas, which, because of the neglect and apathy of the Government, are becoming derelict. The Transference schemes of the Ministry of Labour have covered only a small proportion of the young folk—yet they have meant a steady decline in the population, the break-up of family life, and the removal at too early an age of many boys and girls from any home influence. These facts are bitterly resented by parents, who have, however, accepted the Transference scheme under protest, just as the Trade Unions have done; because, in the absence of any real constructive effort on the part of the Government to revive the depressed areas, the Transference scheme brings the only chance of hope and work to some of the boys and girls who are compelled at the beginning of their lives to bear the burden of the depressed areas.

## 31. Need for Vigilance by Parents and Trade Unions

While the conditions laid down by the Ministry of Labour appear to be good everything depends on how they are



applied in practice. Two things are essential—vigilance on the part of parents, and continuous contact between the official committees responsible for operating the scheme and representatives of the Trade Union movement.

In the national sphere, this contact is provided by the Trade Union representatives who sit on the National Advisory Councils for Juvenile Employment. In the localities these contacts depend on Trade Union members on local Committees for Juvenile Employment and on representatives on the After-Care Committees responsible for looking after transferred juveniles in the areas to which they are sent. The local Committees for Juvenile Employment are kept informed as to the transfer of juveniles into their areas and their advice is sought by the Ministry.

Trade Unionists on these Committees may, therefore, play a large part in ensuring that transferred juveniles are only sent to suitable employment; and through Trade Union effort a number of complaints regarding conditions of employment and transfer have been successfully dealt with.

Continuous vigilance is necessary both in the districts from which the children come and the districts to which they go, to improve the scheme in the interests of the children concerned. The paramount consideration must be the welfare of the boy or girl, not the shortage of labour in a particular place or factory.

### 32. Defects in Transference Scheme

There is very widespread resentment among mothers against the transference of children straight from school a few months past fourteen, while there are older boys and girls in the district still unemployed. Parents in the depressed areas as well as After-Care workers in the areas where the children go, are almost unanimous in saying that fourteen or fifteen is too young to remove children from their homes to new and strange surroundings.

While conditions with regard to inspection of lodgings and supervision appear to be satisfactory, complaints sometimes arise, which show that ultimately it is impossible to supervise the private lives of any section of workers. In

the case of young workers beyond the influence of home or parents, where supervision breaks down, they may easily get into trouble.

The inspection of lodgings by officials in some districts is perfunctory and overcrowding is permitted. Arrangements with regard to After-Care are frequently inadequate, and children have sometimes returned home through inability to settle down, due to sheer loneliness. There is a temptation sometimes to leave the officially approved lodgings for cheaper, and possibly undesirable lodgings, in order to have a shilling or two more to spend.

Bad feeling develops in some areas between transferred and local juveniles because the former have their wages supplemented through the Employment Exchange.

### 33. Safeguards Needed

To safeguard the interests of the children we would urge:—

- (1) continuous Trade Union co-operation and criticism in the Juvenile Employment Committees, both in areas which send and the areas which receive children, in order to ensure that the employment is suitable, and wage rates satisfactory, and that the condition is observed that competition with local juveniles shall be avoided.
- (2) no children under sixteen should be sent to factory or industrial work under transference schemes.
- (3) stricter inspection of lodgings both before and after the children arrive, and prohibition of overcrowding.
- (4) Labour and Co-operative, as well as Trade Union women, should be willing to serve on After-Care Committees and to act as "friends" to the transferred juveniles.
- (5) steps should be taken to inform parents as far as possible as to the conditions and safeguards attached to official schemes, and to warn them not to be associated with private transfer schemes which are subject to no supervision.

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## WELFARE OF YOUNG WORKERS

34. The main demands we put forward for the industrial welfare of juveniles may be summed up as follows :—

- (a) The removal as speedily as possible of all children from industrial employment until sixteen. This step should be achieved in two stages.
- (b) National economic planning to bring industries to the "depressed" areas where to-day children from fourteen to eighteen carry a very heavy burden, and so provide work for young people as well as for adults.
- (c) Provision of milk and meals at Junior Instruction Centres.
- (d) Improvements in transfer scheme for juveniles on lines proposed in previous paragraph.
- (e) Reduction of hours of factory work to forty, with prohibition of overtime for juveniles under eighteen.
- (f) Legislation to enforce in unregulated trades hours and working conditions similar to our demands for factory workers.
- (g) Facilities for employed juveniles to attend technical and instructional courses.

## TRADE UNIONISM

35. Finally we would impress upon all parents, and especially upon mothers, the importance of persuading their boys and girls to enrol in their Trade Unions. The conditions which at present appear to defeat the courage of so many young workers cannot be altered without Trade Union effort. We welcome the recent increase in Trade Union membership in industries and occupations where Trade Unionism has been weak and recruitment is difficult, and we welcome especially the fact that these increases include many young workers as well as adult workers. We hope, therefore, that every mother in the Labour, Co-operative and Trade Union movement will play her part in furthering recent Trade Union advances, by using her voice where it can be most effective, with her own boys and girls at home.