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THE YOUTH

and the **RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**



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THE YOUTH—FIRST IN RUSSIA, LAST IN AMERICA

The contrast between Russia—the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics—and the United States is indeed great. The United States is the most prosperous country in the world. It has in its possession more than half the world's gold. It produces more than half of the most important of the world's goods. But—the United States is ruled by the bosses. All the riches produced benefits not the producers but the owners. The greater the productive power, the richer does the master class become, and the more severe becomes the exploitation of the workers.

Russia is very poor. Its resources are not developed. It is still rebuilding what was destroyed in the war, the blockade and the counter-revolutionary attacks. It has only begun to develop its industries. But—Russia is ruled by the workers. In Russia, whatever is produced is used for the benefit of the producers. All improvements, all discoveries, all inventions, mean better life for the workers.

When this is allowed to sink in, we can really understand the tremendous contrast between the conditions of the young workers in America and the young workers in the Soviet Union. In Russia, in spite of every difficulty, the youth comes first. In America, in spite of all the prosperity, the youth comes last. In Russia, it is taken for granted that young growing persons must receive the best that society can offer. In America, it is taken for granted that the youth are to receive the lowest wages, labor the longest hours and under the worst conditions—because they are not organized and cannot yet fight for better conditions.

The American Trade Union Delegation found that in

the Soviet Union no person was permitted to work who was under fourteen years of age.

In the United States, there are approximately two million children under that age gainfully employed on farms, in factories and offices, as errand boys and girls, in street trades, and in a thousand and one other occupations. They receive the lowest possible pay, and sometimes work as long as fourteen hours a day. So determined to the bosses seem to be to keep on exploiting these children, that when it was proposed to give Congress—the “people’s voice”—the power to regulate the employment of children under sixteen, there was a mass uprising of the bosses. The Constitutional Amendment on Child Labor was adopted by only six states out of the forty-eight in the United States. The State of Montana pays its children the honor of recognizing that they are at least on an equal footing with animals. It has a “Commission for the protection of children and dumb animals,” which is entrusted with the task of looking after the needs of both equally. Many states do not even grant the children that privilege. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal functions everywhere but nobody cares about the children.

The table printed in another part of this pamphlet shows that the young workers in Russia do on an average of about three hours’ work in a factory.

In the United States there is a fable about the eight-hour day. But it is not every young worker who can boast of its benefits. In the Southern states, for instance, where the young workers form the bulk of those employed in industry, about five per cent. of the workers work 48 hours a week or less, *which forty per cent. work sixty hours or more a week.* In the radio factories of New York and Chicago young workers are employed fifty-four hours a week. In the biscuit factories, the department stores and other places

where large numbers of young workers are employed, the eight-hour day is a rare exception.

In Russia, because the young worker is still more tender and less hardened, he received special protection, does not work at night or in dangerous occupations.

In America, because the young workers have not yet the power to compel it, they receive the least protection. They work at night. They work in all occupations, beginning with steel mills and the coal mines and ending with the most poisonous chemical occupations. Every year several thousands are the victims of their occupations, and they are not even eligible to compensation under the law that excludes all those illegally employed from compensation.

In America the youth are only considered as objects of exploitation. In Workers' Russia they are considered as the builders of the new society.

"When the American young workers follow the example of the Russian young workers, they too will learn to participate in government as the Russian workers are learning to do," said Frank Palmer, member of the American Trade Union delegation to the Soviet Union, and editor of the Colorado Labor Advocate. Russia's youth, organized in the largest youth organization in the world, the Communist Youth League of the Soviet Union, with two and a half million members, is setting the example for the rest of the world. The American young workers, altho on the whole still largely under the influence of the capitalists, have already take the first steps along the road made by the Russian young workers. It is not a mere incident that in the last miners' strike, in the Passaic strike, the young workers were the leaders. It is not an accident that at the head of the picketing Colorado miners who broke thru a cordon of thugs and Company police, was a nineteen-year-old girl. Nor is it an accident that in New York the plumbers' helpers went out on strike to support the strike of their older brothers, and

that they organized themselves into a union, even tho they were refused admission into the American Federation of Labor. The above are all indications of the one important fact—that a large section of American young workers are beginning to take the lead in the fight against the bosses.

At the head of all these movements, in the front line trenches, has stood the YOUNG WORKERS (COMMUNIST) LEAGUE OF AMERICA. Compared to the two and one half millions in the Russian League, it is indeed small. But it is active. It is militant. It is growing. And it is young. The Young Workers League has established itself as the only working class youth organization in America.. It is the only youth organization that gives the young workers any possibility of doing something for themselves. The Young Workers League invites all open-eyed young workers, all those who have been inspired by the achievements of the Russian youth, to join its ranks, and with the united power of the youth to do in America what the Russian youth is striving for in the Soviet Union.

HERBERT ZAM.

WHAT HAS THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION DONE FOR THE WORKING YOUTH?

I

From an object of exploitation, the labor of the young worker becomes the basis for Socialist education; it becomes subordinated to the purposes of education. In the capitalist factory, the youth was simply an appendage to the machine. Thru reorganizing the industrial work of youth under eighteen, the Soviet power brings up the young worker into a completely developed proletarian.—
Program of the COMMUNIST YOUTH LEAGUE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

The Soviet Revolution of 1917, in which the proletarian youth of Russia fought shoulder to shoulder with the adult workers to set up the rule of the workers, marked the beginning of a new era in the life of the Russian toiling youth. The reorganization of labor, the new conditions of education and of life provided the working youth with tremendous possibilities for physical and mental advance. The November Revolution paved the way for a thorough transformation of the miserable slave-like existence of the young worker and at the same time created all the necessary conditions for his emancipation, for his development into a free class-conscious worker and human being.

Let the capitalists and their followers in the ranks of labor try to prove that all we have are no more than pious wishes, that all our "wonderful laws are only on paper," that the conditions of life and labor of the youth in Russia "arouse rage and indignation." We do not listen to them; we believe facts only. The sober language of facts and figures will

show us how false are all the slanders of our enemies. We never maintained that the young workers of our country have already won the best possible conditions; we do maintain, and we are ready to prove that the conditions of the young workers in the Soviet Union are *improving from day to day*, that we are marching forward with giant steps, that all our efforts are based on the correct foundations, that the rule of the workers makes possible for us ever greater progress and ever healthier growth.

II

YOUNG WORKERS IN INDUSTRY

In order to make clear to the reader the significance of the part the young workers play in industry, we present here a little table showing the development of the young workers in industry in comparison with the total number of workers employed.

Year	.....	1914	1918	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926-7
Number	Y. W.	..	..	..	..	..	87,875	85,028	90,864	133,992
Perc't'ge	Y. W.	13.9	13.1	10.0	7.0	5.5	5.5	5.8	5.1	5.6

In spite of the fact that these figures are not complete, we can learn a whole lot from them. The thing that strikes us first is the large *decrease* in the number of young workers in proportion to the total number of workers employed. Some people may see in this a remarkable and perhaps even harmful development. But when we think this matter over a little more deeply, we see that not only is the development not harmful but, on the contrary, it is even beneficial. In employing large numbers of poorly paid young workers, the capitalist boss was interested only in the hunt for profits. The profits that could be squeezed out of the young worker

were in fact very high. One of the recognized experts on labor statistics, Strumilin, defines this as follows:

"The wages of a young worker amounted to only 35% of that of an adult. His production, however, was about 60% of an adult worker's. As a result he was exploited practically twice as much as the adult."

Wherever possible, we tried to replace the young workers by adults, and to free them from labor that was beyond their strength. When, besides this, we also remember that about a third of all workers began work at the very early age of twelve years, and that two thirds entered the factory when they were not yet fifteen years old, then it becomes perfectly clear how important it was to decrease the number of young workers in the factory, how harmful for the working youth was their excessive participation in production. The Soviet Power brought an end to the condition in which, literally, children were dragged into the factories and exploited mercilessly. The labor of children under 14 years has been prohibited by law. The fruits of the abolition of child labor were quick in maturing. In 1923, there was no more than .08% (eight out of 10,000) employed under 14 years of age; the rest were in educational institutions, and whenever and wherever possible, in health and pleasure resorts, children's camps, etc.

So now we see to whose advantage the decrease in the number of employed young workers was; it was for the benefit of the children and of the half-grown youth, who often had to do the work that taxed the strength of even adult workers.

But the withdrawal of the working youth from industry was accompanied by serious dangers:

First, the estrangement of the coming generation from the working class, and secondly, the interference with the normal training of skilled workers.

In order to avoid these dangers, certain measures were taken, the most important of which was a decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (May 22, 1922) according to which every factory must reserve a definite minimum number of places for young workers. At that time, this minimum number was about 7% of all the workers employed. Later this was made somewhat smaller. From 1924, however, until the present day, it has remained more or less the same, corresponding to the general rise of the economic system. Our youth has obtained a firm foothold in industry, but on an entirely different basis than before.

III

THE REORGANIZATION OF LABOR AND THE TRAINING OF YOUTH

Basing itself on the principles of Socialist education and labor, the Soviet Government looks upon the position of the young workers in industry from an entirely different basis than that of the capitalist countries. Whereas the capitalist employer hires young workers in order to squeeze out the greatest possible amount of profit, our policy has a very different foundation. The following two tasks formulated at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Youth League of the Soviet Union, are decisive:

“For industry developing upon a new technical basis we must provide trained workers corresponding to its demands.”

“The work-schools, the centers of the trade and general education and training of the half-grown youth, have the task of producing not foremen, minor technical officials (straw bosses) but only above all *class-conscious, intelligent, technically trained workers*. . . . The work-schools must supply the chief trades of the respective industries with such trained workers as require in general a rather long time to train.”

Thus, the training of the young workers has an entirely new aspect. Besides his trade training, the young worker receives in the work-school a general education, and graduates from the school a good, intelligent worker. In former times the young workers were not so much trained as broken in by force: work was piled on them, that had nothing to do with their usual training, and their so-called "education" prepared them for nothing in particular.

How are things now? From the material obtained by medical examination of the youth in the summer of 1923 we learn that in the main trades were employed 76.9% of all apprentices and in the secondary trades 10.8%. As assistants in offices, in stores, etc., 12.3% of all apprentices were employed.

These figures are clear enough; no comment is necessary.

Another question can, however, be raised: "Do these factory schools prove successful? Are the young workers actually educated and trained there?" Let us see how the management of various factories answer these questions.

From Tver:

"The managers and the technicians express themselves in the sense that the graduates of the factory schools make a thoroughly excellent record in the factories."

A similar report from Kariupol:

"The graduates of the factory schools satisfy quite well, as far as their qualifications are concerned; the demands of the factory and the workers themselves look upon them in a very favorable light."

A few more figures about the development and significance of the factory schools. In the beginning of 1922 there were only 43 of these schools with 2,000 students; in January, 1923, there were already 748 schools with 50,000 students.

Towards the end of 1924 the schools included 55% of the youth employed in industry. At the present time the schools are expanding rapidly and are becoming perfected; the training standards of the graduates is continually rising as well as their general cultural level. As a consequence it has become possible to draw in larger and larger sections of the youth into this splendid educational system.

IV

WORKING HOURS AND THE PROTECTION OF LABOR FOR THE YOUTH

The 8-hour day is the unshakable basis of our labor standards. On this basis special provisions are made to provide the youth with possibilities for physical and mental development. The chief points in the protection of youth are: young workers under 16 years work for four hours; young workers from 16 to 18 work 6 hours.

The following table gives us a general idea of the distribution of time of a student of a factory school:

Factory work . . . on the average	2.9	hours	daily
Theoretical study (classes, study, etc.)	3.8	"	"
Recreation and entertainment	3.3	"	"
Care of the body, etc.	2.1	"	"
Eating	2.0	"	"
Miscellaneous	1.3	"	"
Sleeping	7.6	"	"
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Total	24.00	hours	

It is obvious from this distribution of time that the life of the young worker is thoroughly normal and is very favorable for his physical and mental development.

V

WAGES

The development of the wages of the young workers is associated very closely with the development of the wages of the adult workers. After wages had reached their lowest point in the years of the civil wars and general economic decline, there began at first sudden rises and then a more regular but therefore surer development upward. Wages have not reached and surpassed the pre-war level; but the present position of the working youth cannot be compared in any way to the position of the young workers before the war on that basis. Paragraph 61 of the code of Labor Protection says: "The shortened work day of young workers is considered as a full day in so far as wages are concerned."

What the young workers used to receive for 9 and 10 hours of grinding labor, yes, and more than they used to receive, is now received for a 4-hour work day! And it is to be remembered that labor today is organized on an entirely different basis from what it used to be. It is also very important to note that all young workers get a yearly vacation for one month on full pay, that they get continual medical care, that they have the advantage of extensive social legislation. On the basis of this we can say without the least exaggeration that the condition of the working youth has improved tremendously not only in the cultural but also in a purely economic sense.

We do not overlook the greater and lesser shortcomings and deficiencies. Yet the last decade has shown us that the Soviet Power is gradually overcoming these deficiencies and is succeeding in raising the standard of the entire working class and especially of the working youth.

In order not to overlook the sorest spot in the conditions of the youth we must examine the problem of unemploy-

ment. Owing to the great influx of young people from the farms, an influx that cannot by far be absorbed in our industry, considerable numbers of young workers are registered at our Labor Bureau. "The ranks of the unemployed youth are recruited mainly from such elements as enter the labor market for the first time," declared the resolution of the Seventh Congress of the Communist Youth League.

The government has already initiated a number of measures in order to lessen and remove unemployment among the youth. It has placed a premium on native industry, the development of which—the development of State industry—is the foundation on which unemployment as a whole and particularly unemployment of the youth will be overcome.

VI

YOUNG WORKERS AND THE TRADE UNIONS

As we have shown above, the economic conditions of the working youth are in all respects superior to those existing in capitalist countries: nevertheless, the young workers, just as the adult workers, are organized in the trade unions which, of course, have entirely different functions in the Workers' Republic. The trade unions, besides seeing to the welfare of the working class, devote special attention to the education of the workers, especially the youth, in the class spirit preparing them for the great tasks which face the toilers in Soviet Russia.

The young workers in the Soviet Union are admitted in trade unions as soon as they are permitted to work, for the principle in the Workers' Republic is that if a person is old enough to work he is old enough to participate in the work of his economic organizations—the trade unions. However, the trade unions realize that the young workers have their

special problems and therefore have special youth representatives on all the committees, starting with representatives of the young workers in the shop committee up to youth representatives in Central Committees of the Trade Unions. These representatives are elected by the young workers in shops, mills, mines and every existing enterprise where the young workers are engaged. These representatives take up all the matters pertaining to the conditions of the young workers and on all the work which is conducted by them they must report to the young workers. The trade unions create special youth sections in every workers' club, where the youth can gather, spend an enjoyable evening, study, etc. These youth sections in workers' clubs are managed exclusively by the young workers through special management committees which they elect. The trade unions cater also to the apprentices and have special youth inspectors whose duties are to investigate the factory schools and see that the apprentices should enjoy all the privileges offered to them by the Soviet Labor Code.

In spite of the fact that the Workers' State is still poor, yet everything possible is being undertaken to assist the workers and especially the youth during the time of unemployment. Since the bulk of the unemployed today in Soviet Russia are either peasants who migrate to the cities or the peasants who come during the winter months, when they are released from their toil on fields, the problem of unemployment is of a special nature in the Soviet Union. Therefore, all measures are undertaken to give these young peasants who come from the villages an opportunity of learning a trade with which they could enter industry. This is being done through special workshop schools attached to the Labor Exchanges. Young handicraft workers are being organized into groups and given work, with pay at trade union rates, by the government. The young unemployed are being utilized by the local governmental bodies for public works, for instance, road repair, clearing lots and other unskilled labor.

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All young trade unionists are also insured and during a period of unemployment receive benefit from their respective trade unions along with the relief rendered by the government to the unemployed.

VII

SUMMARY AND FUTURE

In this pamphlet we have attempted to sketch briefly the conditions of our working youth, the tremendous gains that the great Soviet Revolution has won for us. We believe that every reader will see clearly how great these achievements are, especially when he considers under what difficulties the Soviet Power began and is continuing its gigantic work. If it was possible for us to accomplish so much for the exploited and oppressed youth at the time when the first Workers' Republic of the world was surrounded on all sides by enemies, when the young workers and the young Communists struggled and fell on the many fronts of the civil war, then we can look confidently into the future. Our heroic fighters for Socialism, examining the past with proper pride that they have not spent in vain, our youth also can declare that not for nothing did they hunger and suffer in the hard years of war and intervention. Those among us whose fathers and older brothers fell in the struggle for our future are now ready to fight with the same enthusiasm for our Socialist fatherland, for our Socialist achievements. In the war that is threatening us now, the working youth will follow the example of the revolutionists of 1917 and will know how to meet the imperialists and the counter-revolutionists of every kind and from wherever they may come.