

CHILD-LABOR AND THE ILLINOIS LAW

from Residents of Hull House. *Hull-House Maps and Papers*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1895.

The Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, established in 1879, which has issued seven biennial reports, has never furnished any information relative to the employment of children in the State. The Workshop and Factories Act was enacted by the Thirty-Eighth General Assembly, and received the signature of Governor Altgeld on July 1, 1893. It provided for the appointment of an inspector, assistant inspector, and ten deputy inspectors, five of whom should be women; and it requires an annual report of their work, to be submitted to the governor of the State on December 15. From the first official report, which covers the five months between July 15 and December 15, 1893, the statistics used in this paper concerning working children in this State are taken.

The census of 1890 reports 20,482 manufacturing establishments in the State, and gives the total number of children employed in them as 5,426. In five months' work in 1894 we found 6,576 children in 2,452 establishments employing 68,081 persons, or about 1 in 10 1/2 so employed, a reason for once more challenging census figures; although in our work girls under sixteen, as well as boys, are counted children. It will be remembered that the census returns place girls over fifteen years among adults, but reckon boys as children until sixteen years.

The sections of the Illinois law regulating the employment of children are the following:

§ 4. No child under fourteen years of age shall be employed in any manufacturing establishment, factory, or workshop within this State. It shall be the duty of every person, firm, corporation, agent, or manager of any corporation employing children, to keep a register in which shall be recorded the name, birthplace, age, and place of residence of every person employed by him, them, or it, under the age of sixteen years; and it shall be unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation, or any agent or manager of any corporation, to hire or employ in any manufacturing establishment, factory, or workshop, any child over the age of fourteen years and under the age of sixteen years, unless there is first provided and placed on file an affidavit made by the parent or guardian, stating the age, date, and place of birth of said child; if said child have no parent or guardian, then such affidavit shall be made by the child, which affidavit shall be kept on file by the employer, and which said register and affidavit shall be produced for inspection on demand by the inspector, assistant inspector, or any of the deputies appointed under this act. The factory inspector, assistant inspector, and deputy inspectors shall have power to demand a certificate of physical fitness from some regular physician of good standing in case of children who may appear to him or her physically unable to perform the labor at which they may be engaged, and shall have power to prohibit the employment of any minor that cannot obtain such a certificate.

§ 5. No female shall be employed in any factory or workshop more than eight hours in any one day, or forty-eight hours in any one week.

§ 6. Every person, firm, or corporation, agent or manager of a corporation, employing any female in any manufacturing establishment, factory, or workshop, shall post and

keep posted in a conspicuous place in every room where such help is employed, a printed notice stating the hours for each day of the week between which work is required of such persons ; and in every room where children under sixteen years of age are employed a list of their names, ages, and places of residence.

An immediate good result from the enforcement of § 4 was that several hundred children under fourteen years of age were taken from the factories after the opening of the school year, September 1. In Chicago, a daily report of these children, giving their names, ages, and places of residence, was forwarded to the compulsory department of the Board of Education, that truant officers might see that the children did not go from the factory to the street, but to school. In "hardship" cases, where there was extreme poverty in the child's family, appeal was made for the child by the inspector to the School-Children's Aid Society, or some kindred organization.¹ Before the law of 1893 took effect, children seeking work in Chicago secured from the city Board of Education permits, the purport of which was that, for reasons deemed sufficient, the child was granted permission to work under fourteen years of age. As these permits were secured on the mere statement of child or parent, false statements were common; and we therefore found hundreds of children in factories who ought to have been in school. The law of 1893 applying only to workshops and factories, the Board of Education still issues permits for children under fourteen years of age to work in other than manufacturing occupations.

A second good result from our system of handling affidavits, and the requirements of the law regarding office registers and wall records, is that the number of children employed between the ages of fourteen and sixteen years is somewhat reduced. Many children to whom age affidavits were issued in the first months of our work, were found to have been employed two, three, and four years, although not yet sixteen. To-day no employer in workshop or factory in Chicago wittingly puts to work a child under fourteen years of age, and some employers are refusing to hire any boy or girl who has not passed the age of sixteen. They "will not be bothered," they say, with employees who come under §§ 4 and 6 of the law.

1. No good result having followed these appeals, they are no longer made [1894].