

Child Labor in the Early 1900s

A Necessary Evil or an Inexcusable Abomination?

Name _____ My Persona is—a child; a factory owner; a reformer; a labor-class parent (Circle one)

Primary Source	Response by Your “Persona”	Evidence	Public Debate
Evidence from that era	How might this citizen have reacted to this piece of information?	What details in the primary source are especially meaningful for your persona? Are there certain words (in the documents) or details (in a photo) that evoke a strong emotion?	How would your reaction affect different types of people in the early 1900s? (a child, factory owner, reformer, or labor-class parent)
1. Photo of girls in a factory			
2. Photo of boys breaking coal			
3. Letter to a senator			
4. Flier: Declaration of Dependence			
5. News report of death and injury			
6. Political cartoon			





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BUCK CREEK COTTON MILLS

MANUFACTURERS OF



SILURIA, ALA.,

March 20, 1916.

SELLING AGENTS
CANNON MILLS
NEW YORK.

Hon. Joseph T. Robinson,

U. S. Senate,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I notice that the Keating-Owen Child Labor Bill now pending before the U. S. Senate has been referred to a sub-committee of which you are ~~chairman~~ ^{member}. I desire to enter a protest against the passing of this bill because I think it will be an injury instead of a benefit to the people in the Southern states who will be affected by it. The cotton mills of the South will be able to overcome the affect it may have on them, but the real sufferers will be the people who depend upon the cotton mills and other industries for a livelihood. My opinion is based on experience of 23 years in the cotton mills of the Carolinas and other southern states and I feel that I am in position and have studied the question sufficiently to know something of the condition of the people in the South and the affect this bill will have on them.

My father put me to work in a cotton mill when I was 11 years of age because he found that to be the easiest way we could make a living for a large family, and the older I get the higher regard I have for his judgement in doing so. I feel that the laws we have in the different states are sufficient to protect the citizens of those states and think these matters should be left entirely with the states to handle themselves.

Hoping you will be able to prevent the passage of this bill, I am

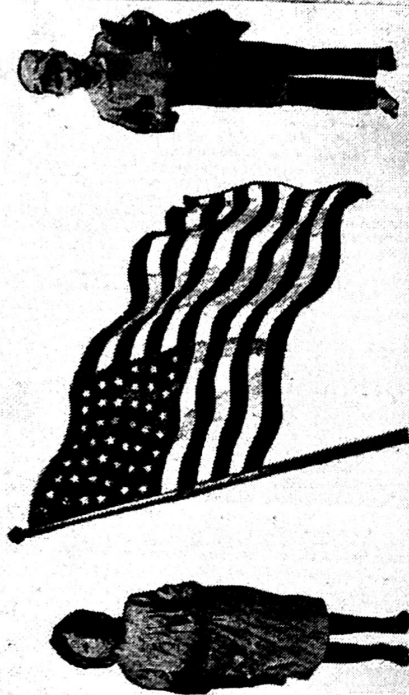
Very truly yours,

MD/N

Marshall Dilling

DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

by the Children of America
in Mines and Factories and Workshops Assembled



WHEREAS, We, Children of America, are declared to have been born free and equal, and

Whereas, We are yet in bondage in this land of the free; and are forced to toil the long day of the long night, with no control over the conditions of labor, as to health or safety or hours or wages, and with no right to the rewards of our service, therefore be it

Resolved, I - That childhood is endowed with certain inherent and inalienable rights, among which are freedom from toil for daily bread; the right to play and dream, the right to the normal sleep of the night season; the right to an education, that we may have equality of opportunity for developing all that there is in us of mind and heart.

Resolved, II - That we declare ourselves to be helpless and dependent; that we are and of right ought to be dependent, and that we hereby present the appeal of our helplessness that we may be protected in the enjoyment of the rights of childhood.

Resolved, III - That we demand the restoration of our rights by the abolition of child labor in America.

A. J. McKelway

January
1911

LAD FELL TO DEATH IN BIG COAL CHUTE

**Dennis McKee Dead and Arthur All-
becker Had Leg Burned In
the Lee Mines.**

Falling into a chute at the Chauncery colliery of the George S. Lee Coal Company at Avondale this afternoon, Dennis McKee, aged 13 of West Nanticoke, was smothered to death and Arthur Allbecker, aged 15, had both of his legs burned and injured. Dr. Biel, of Plymouth, was summoned and dressed the burns of the injured boy.

He was removed to his home at Avondale.

Both boys were employed as breaker boys, and going too close to the chute fell in. Fellow workmen rushed to their assistance and soon had them out of the chutes. When taken out McKee was found to be dead. His remains were removed to his home in West Nanticoke. Allbecker will recover.

CAPTIONS FOR PRIMARY SOURCES

HANDOUT A: Girl making baskets, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004000234/PP

Girls stand up while making melon baskets in a factory in Evansville, Indiana, in October 1908. (Lewis J. Hines/Library of Congress)

HANDOUT B: Boys in breaker boxes www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004002610/PP

Lewis Hine wrote: "View of the Ewen Breaker of the Pa. Coal Co. The dust was so dense at times as to obscure the view. This dust penetrated the utmost recesses of the boy's lungs. A kind of slave-driver sometimes stands over the boys, prodding or kicking them into obedience. S. Pittston, Pa., 01/10/1911." (National Child Labor Committee/Library of Congress)

HANDOUT C: Letter by Marshall Dilling, research.archives.gov/description/5685999

This letter by Marshall Dilling, opposing the Keating-Owen Child Labor Bill, bears the date March 20, 1916. It is written on Buck Creek Cotton Mills stationery. (National Archives)

HANDOUT D: Flier by A. J. McKelway, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004003538/PP

This flier is titled, "Declaration of Dependence by the Children of American in Mines and Factories and Workshops Assembled," ca. 1913. The page was photographed by Lewis J. Hines. (Library of Congress)

HANDOUT E: News article, www.geh.org/ar/letchild/m197701850007_ful.html

This short newspaper article of 1911 can be seen when you scroll down at the URL above. The image is a bit faded, so we created a facsimile for this handout. Lewis J. Hines took a photo of the news article. (George Eastman House, Rochester, New York)