

of the social workers was expected to be decisive, Mr. Wilson changed his position and approved of a Federal anti-child labor law which, poor as it is, conceded the principle of Federal legislation against child labor—the very thing that Mr. Wilson had previously announced he was opposed to “on principle.” That this change of mind has helped Mr. Wilson to his second helping of the Presidency is beyond dispute. But this does not seem to weigh heavily on his conscience. No more than the fact that a vast number of people have voted for him because he was going to keep us out of war. Our President is an exceedingly high-minded person, and he does not permit such minor and purely “personal” considerations as the reasons why people voted for him for the Presidency swerve him from the path of duty when his “duty” seems to him clear.

And his duty with respect to child labor seems to him now clear. After all, his original position, favoring child labor, seems to him clearly to have been the right one, and his approval of the Federal anti-child labor law a mistake. So he hastens to make amends. In prescribing the rules for exemptions under the draft law he set down the age limit of children who are to be considered dependents as twelve. Children twelve years of age and over are not to be considered “dependents,” and their father will not be entitled to any exemption on their score. *Children of twelve, says Mr. Wilson, should be self-supporting. Their place is in the shop, mill or factory, and not at school where they must be supported by their parents.*

B.

The War and American Unionism

It cannot be too much emphasized that the attitude of American unionism toward the war, and of laborism generally in all the belligerent nations, is a direct consequence of their general program during the days of peace.

The policy of “harmony between labor and capital,” the animating principle of the American Federation of Labor and trades unionism generally, results from the belief that the interests of labor depend upon the interests of capital.

Where these two clash, it is assumed as being purely accidental and incidental; their identity of interests is still the dominant factor. As the struggles between groups in the capitalist class, often severe and bitter, do not destroy their fundamental identity of interests, so the struggle between labor and capital, according to the union theory, does not altar their identity of interests.

Accordingly, the unions are careful that their struggles should in no way menace capitalism itself, or cripple the competitive power of their employers. Often has a union been cajoled into submission by the employer's plea that its actions were endangering his power to compete successfully with a rival, and that the union was driving him out of business. The employer must be fought, but his power must not be menaced.

On the field of international action, this principle expresses itself in backing up the capitalist class in its projects of expansion and in its wars. If our capitalism is weakened by a defeat, reason the unions, we shall suffer through unemployment, higher hours and lower wages; and, therefore, they fight for the interests of their exploiters in the mistaken belief that they are thereby promoting their own interests. This narrow nationalism is manifest during the days of peace in the A. F. of L.'s stand against immigration, and also in the virtual exclusion of foreign, unskilled workers from membership in the unions.

It was therefore inevitable that American unionism should back up the government in the war. The A. F. of L. officially, and various of its affiliated unions, are active in the work of mobilizing our military and industrial forces. Samuel Gompers is an active member of the Council of National Defense; the unions are facilitating the work of recruiting, etc., and many members of the unions are pestiferous members of the Home Guard.

The “civil peace” concluded by the A. F. of L. with the ruling class is a corollary of the “civil peace” that prevailed before the war. Because of this fact, the government and the union officials expect no strikes and no troubles to impede industrial