

Child Malnutrition "Appalling", Perkins Admits

By I AMTER.

Frances Perkins, secretary of labor, held a conference in Washington on Oct. 6 on child health. Miss Perkins said that in 1930 there were 6,000,000 children in the country suffering from undernourishment. She declared that "conditions are appalling."

Miss Perkins was industrial commissioner of New York—now she is the United States Secretary of Labor. How does it happen that it has taken Miss Perkins from 1930 to 1933 to learn about the condition, not of the 6,000,000 but of the **tens of millions** of the children of the working class of this country, who are starving? Why this solicitude for the working class child? **It is all part of the N.R.A. ballyhoo**, which is not helping the employed workers and does not provide one penny for the unemployed.

Wherever there is unemployment there is child undernourishment. This is the A B C of the situation. With 17,000,000 unemployed and millions working part time in the country, the U. S. government knew that the situation of the children was menacing. What did the government do—either in N. Y. State, when Miss Perkins was there, or since she became secretary of labor?

Relief in every state of the country has been shamefully low. The starvation standard has been still further reduced. **In Mississippi the family has to live on \$3.96 a month, in South Carolina on \$5.61, in Texas on \$6.93. Does this mean living? It means slow death.**

In the north, with relief around \$18 a month—including everything—how can a family live? It cannot. Therefore we find starvation on all hands. Children faint from hunger in schools; children pick leavings out of the garbage cans; hordes of children and adults pick rotten vegetables from the city dumps. This is known to Miss Perkins—even from government documents—but the government did nothing.

Last year a delegation of children

Conference Has Not Done Anything; Working Class Mothers and Fathers Must Mobilize for Struggle for Immediate Needs

went from various parts of the country to see Mr. Roosevelt in order to present the situation of the working class children. The answer of the government was **slugging** by the Washington police. On March 6, a delegation of the Unemployed Councils presented the situation of the unemployed and their children to Mr. Louis Howe, secretary of the president. What did the president do? Nothing. In May, a delegation of the Trade Union Unity League and of the Unemployed Councils presented the situation to Miss Perkins herself. What did she do? Nothing. Harrowing details of the situation of the children of the working class were presented by experts before Senate and House commissions during the early part of the year—with Miss Perkins testifying before them. What did these commissions do? Nothing.

The government knows of growing juvenile delinquency, of very young girls driven to vice. The government knows of the pitifully low relief that families are receiving.

Stephen Raushenbush, director of industrial relations of Pennsylvania, on Feb. 2 stated before the sub-committee of the U. S. Senate that "in Pennsylvania alone, about 400,000 families are getting habituated to a livelihood on a \$4 level. This is about **one-sixth of the normal income necessary** for the ordinary decencies of life." Mr. Raushenbush added: "In short, there are a great many forces operating to force the country down to a **peasant standard of living.**"

Dr Wynne, of New York, declared that **one out of every four children** in New York is suffering from malnutrition. Workers' children in Pittsburgh are losing their finger nails from hunger. Governor Pinchot de-

clared that more than **one-quarter of the children** of Pennsylvania are suffering from undernourishment. Even in the days of "prosperity," the children and adults of Tennessee and Kentucky were suffering from pellagra and flux. Today we must add rickets and tuberculosis. In the destitute sections of the mining areas of Kentucky and West Virginia **91 per cent of the children are hungry.**

Add to this the crowding into homes—two, three or four families in a like number of rooms without gas, electricity and water. Look at the shacks in the mining and textile towns. Look at the Hoovervilles, Rooseveltburgs, jungles—with men, women and children living like nomads, living on scraps of food while the government destroys 5,000,000 hogs, **tens of wheat and millions of bales of cotton, in order to keep up prices.**

And above all—something known to the government—the fearful situation of the Negroes both in the North and the South. The Negroes have suffered from unemployment more than the white workers. Their wages have always been lower. The government added to their plight by discriminating against tens of thousands of them, giving them no relief, or less relief, denying them hospital service—treating them like dogs.

The Unemployed Councils have raised the demands for:

1. Immediate enactment of the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill providing insurance to the full amount of the workers' wages for the full period of disability, whether for unemployment, part-time, sickness, accident, old age or maternity—funds to be provided by the government and the employers—

so that the children may have the "lamb chop and glass of milk" Miss Perkins is so worried about.

2. Pending such enactment, **adequate** unemployment relief to meet the needs of the family, and to be increased as the cost of living rises. Rent, gas, water and electricity free for the unemployed. Food, clothing, shoes and fares for the children of the unemployed. Proper school facilities. Immediate transfer of the families in the jungles to decent apartments at government expense.

3. Full government maintenance of the children removed from gainful occupation and provision of extension education for school graduates.

4. Abolition of the reforestation camps, which are for the purpose of making soldiers of the boys of the working class.

5. Utilization of all war and reforestation camp funds (the latter \$250,000,000) for the unemployed.

6. Immediate distribution of food-stuff to the jobless and not its destruction.

7. Free medical, dental and hospital service for the families of the unemployed.

This is the minimum to safeguard the welfare of the working class family, and through it of the working class child. Without this security, all talk about "child health" is purest hypocrisy aimed at keeping the workers from struggling for the life of the working class children.

We call upon the working class mothers and fathers to mobilize immediately for a bitter struggle for our children. In every neighborhood, the Unemployed Councils must rally the workers for a struggle to provide for the children. Struggles at the relief bureaus, local marches, enlisting the support of all working class organizations. This soon enough will not only get relief for the unemployed, but show up the hypocrisy of Perkins and the Roosevelt government.