

## STATE'S RIGHTS THE LASH TO HOLD CHILD LABOR IN ITS BONDAGE

(By Jerome Jones, in The Journal of Labor.)

Former Governor John M. Slaton, in an address to the Atlanta Lawyers' Club, at the Kimball House Friday night, July 11, asserted, according to press reports of the meeting "that the State of Georgia is amply able to deal with the problem of child labor for itself, without delegating this power to the Federal government."

"When you vest such power as that of regulating questions like child labor with Congress," said the former governor, "you give the Federal government the power to dominate your legislation. When you take away the power of self-control, as enjoyed by each of the counties of this state, you have sacrificed your liberties."

We cannot, nor will the people of this country, agree with the distinguished gentleman that the protection of our liberties is in any sense dependent on the industrial enslavement of children, and we are no little surprised that the measure was incorporated in his address, particularly when he must have known—since the act was not approved by the present General Assembly—the question is a dead issue, so far as Georgia is concerned.

In some states the question is very much alive, and the influence of states' rights statesmen of Georgia can in no manner affect the favorable consideration of the act with the respective legislatures.

And in this connection we desire to say if the question of states' rights stands in the way of the freedom and liberties of little boys and girls of Georgia, we here and now pronounce such doctrine unwholesome to the best interest of the state, church, and nation.

How about the prohibition amendment? Where were our state's rights defenders and protectors of our liberties when the Georgia Legislature went on record in favor of the eighteenth amendment?

Johnny Spencer, in his column in the Macon Telegraph of Tuesday's issue, said among the reasons the Georgia Legislature gave for rejecting the proposed child labor amendment to the constitution, was "Georgia has neither the right nor power to give Congress the power to limit, regulate, or prohibit. . . . The Georgia Legislature, which ratified the eighteenth amendment probably hadn't heard of that."

Ex-Governor Slaton was in public life about that time, and so far as we can remember no cry came from his lips—nor any other public man—that all our liberties were threatened in case the measure was favorably considered.

A political grave was yawning awaiting the courageous—but who one—who dared oppose it. Is it possible Governor Slaton does not know that the amendment is purely an enabling act, providing for legislation in conjunction with the state legislatures?

But that does not matter. Georgia ratified the eighteenth amendment, clearly prohibiting the making or buying or selling of spirituous or malt liquors; or making for one's own use, a privilege and right enjoyed in all countries by all peoples for centuries.

Not one word of worrying from our watchmen on the political towers that our civil, religious, industrial and political liberties were about to be wrested from us. Where were those watchmen who are supposed to keep an ever-vigilant eye on the holy principle of "States' Rights" and protect its holy robes from being besmirched by vandals of centralized government when this rape was committed?

And, then, how about the United States Supreme Court; did that august body outrage the principle of states' rights when it declared the eighteenth amendment constitutional?

Governor Slaton said: "Georgia

is amply able to deal with the problem of child labor for itself, without delegating this power to the Federal government."

"It has 'dealt with the problem;' that much we submit, but the dealing has not been in the interest of the children and to the advantage of the state.

Georgia had laws prohibiting the sale and distilling of liquor; it worked fairly well, but other states were manufacturing liquor and selling it in Georgia and Georgia voted for national prohibition, denying other states the right to regulate its own social affairs. And why? In order that America might be entirely free of the traffic, an evil hideous as it was painted, was no worse in its effects than the grinding of the flesh and blood of the children of the nation into profits, and further denying them the opportunity of securing such knowledge as befits American citizens.

Those who advocate child labor—those opposed to the amendment as passed by Congress—consciously, or unconsciously, are opposed to mass education.

It is the old Bourbon idea that some are born to rule, others to obey; some are born to control, others to be controlled.

But thank God and the American labor movement and the churches of this country that those who entertain this idea are few in numbers, their influence confined within the boundaries of their state, and most likely within their own small community.

How is it the speaker at the Lawyers' Club hit upon the child labor amendment in order to point out the dangers that threaten our liberty from centralized government? It cannot be denied laws have been passed by Congress of a similar character, which would have strengthened his argument.

The Federal Council of Churches, embracing all the Protestant churches of America, in large part was responsible for the drafting and passage of the child labor enabling act by Congress, and surely among those constituting its membership there must have been no few men and women who carefully thought out obstacles that would arise calculated to adversely affect its adoption by the various states, and so framed the measure as to meet all points of law.

And further, the magnificent majority the act received in the house and in the senate sets at rest the question of states' rights.

Of the churchman we ask, Is the interest of the children of Georgia to be impaled upon the point of the principle of states' rights—a principle "more honored in the breach than the observance?"

Is there no virtue in Christian principles that would step in and say as the Master said:

"Verily, even as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

We have faith in God, we have confidence in the wisdom of the American people, and, on this faith and confidence we rest the belief the day is now here when America will proclaim the emancipation of the children of tender years from servitude unfitted for their frail bodies; a day when the path to mill and factory will be obliterated; and the way to the public school—the greatest of all institutions—will be made clear and distinct by the footprints of little boys and girls—America's greatest asset.

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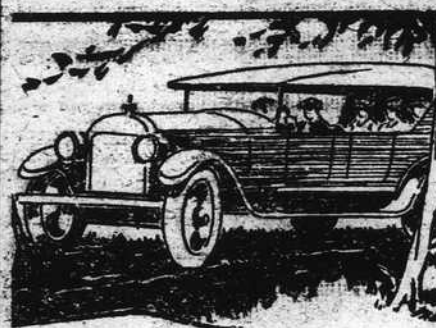
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