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"Conservation of the Child Is Our First Duty": Clubwomen, Organized Labor, and the Politics of Child Labor Legislation in Florida

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

“CONSERVATION OF THE CHILD IS OUR FIRST DUTY”:
CLUBWOMEN, ORGANIZED LABOR, AND THE POLITICS OF CHILD LABOR
LEGISLATION IN FLORIDA

By

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For my mother, Ramona Burns, my grandparents, James and Elizabeth Cox, and for working children everywhere

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	vi
Abstract	vii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. AN UNLIKELY ALLIANCE: THE FLORIDA STATE FEDERATION OF LABOR, THE FLORIDA FEDERATION OF WOMEN’S CLUBS, AND CHILD LABOR REFORM, 1901- 1909.....	15
3. STRENGTHENING THE COALITION AND THE LAW: THE CHILD LABOR CAMPAIGNS OF 1911 AND 1913	34
4. POVERTY IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE: THE EFFECTS OF THE 1913 CHILD LABOR LAW	49
5. CONCLUSION.....	62
APPENDIX.....	65
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	69
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	76

LIST OF TABLES

4.1	Inspections Made in Florida Cities, 1914-1918.....	55
4.2	Removals and Violations in Florida Cities, 1914-1918.....	56

ABSTRACT

Florida's child welfare movement, a broad coalition of clubwomen, legislators, labor activists, and civic reformers, worked tirelessly to ensure that the right to a protected childhood was guaranteed to all of Florida's future citizens. These Progressive reformers, embracing new ideas about charity, the causes of poverty, and family life, turned to legislation to protect children when society could not, and their efforts culminated in the passage of Florida's comprehensive Child Labor Law in 1913. Florida's child labor campaign was part of both a regional and a national movement to eradicate the practice of manipulating children in industry and the street trades. Despite its inclusion in this broader movement, Florida's anti-child labor coalition was unique. Unlike their Southern neighbors, Floridians shied away from the rhetoric of "race suicide." Speaking on behalf of child labor legislation, they emphasized the social and moral disadvantages of child labor rather than its repercussions for race relations. This grew out of Florida's distinct pattern of economic development: Florida was among the last Southern states to industrialize, and that industrial sector did not include the textile mills notorious for child labor abuses across the South. Florida's child laborers primarily consisted of African Americans and Southern and Eastern European immigrants working in canneries along the Gulf Coast and Cuban and Italian immigrants laboring in the cigar industry of South Florida. Both of these industries employed a much smaller number of child workers than manufacturers in Florida's neighboring states. Florida's child labor legislation thus served two distinct purposes: it was both a preventative measure designed to protect Florida's children from the kinds of exploitation taking place in neighboring states and a means of pressuring those states to pass similar legislation. This thesis, an examination of the politics of Florida's child labor movement, highlights the ways in which the national child labor platform could be adapted to succeed in different states, while it reaffirms the diversity of both Progressive reform and Progressive reformers in the early twentieth-century South.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

When asked upon his retirement to list his personal accomplishments, Marcus C. Fagg, longtime secretary of the Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS), recalled his lifelong involvement with the Methodist church and the boards of various child welfare and community improvement associations, both local and national, upon which he served. He also mentioned his role as a Civil Works Administration director during the Depression, and of course, his work with the Children's Home Society. His most earnest wish, however, was that the CHS receive credit for the drafting and passage of much of Florida's Progressive-era child welfare legislation: its Juvenile Court Law, Compulsory Education Law, Wife Desertion Law, the creation of the Florida Crippled Children's Commission and the Florida Health and Tuberculosis Association, and the Child Labor Law. "The title and honor I appreciate most of all, he concluded," "is the one given to me by thousands of homeless orphans and needy children – 'Daddy Fagg.' This is my price [*sic*] possession of all the years."¹

The CHS and its dynamic, charismatic leader indeed played a significant role in Florida's child welfare movement, a broad coalition of clubwomen, legislators, labor activists, and civic reformers who worked tirelessly to ensure that the right to a protected childhood was guaranteed to all of Florida's future citizens. These Progressive reformers, embracing new ideas about charity, the causes of poverty, and family life, turned to legislation to protect children when society could not, and their efforts culminated in the passage of Florida's comprehensive Child Labor Law in 1913. Florida's child labor campaign was part of both a regional and a national movement to eradicate the practice of manipulating children in industry and the street trades. Despite its inclusion in this broader movement, Florida's anti-child labor coalition was unique. Unlike their Southern neighbors, Floridians shied away from the rhetoric of "race suicide." Speaking on behalf of child labor legislation, they emphasized the social and moral disadvantages of child labor rather than its repercussions for race relations. This grew out of Florida's distinct pattern of economic development: Florida was among the last Southern states

¹ Marcus C. Fagg, Biography, 1958, Box 1, Folder 5, The Children's Home Society of Florida Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

to industrialize, and that industrial sector did not include the textile mills notorious for child labor abuses across the South. Florida's child laborers primarily consisted of African Americans and Southern and Eastern European immigrants working in canneries along the Gulf Coast and Cuban and Italian immigrants laboring in the cigar industry of South Florida.² Both of these industries employed a much smaller number of child workers than manufacturers in Florida's neighboring states. Florida's child labor legislation thus served two distinct purposes: it was both a preventative measure designed to protect Florida's children from the kinds of exploitation taking place in neighboring states and a means of pressuring those states to pass similar legislation. This thesis, an examination of Florida's child labor movement, highlights the ways in which the national child labor platform could be adapted to succeed in different states, while it reaffirms the diversity of both Progressive reform and Progressive reformers in the early twentieth-century South.

Since the publication of Arthur S. Link's seminal article "The Progressive Movement in the South, 1870-1914," scholars have recognized the existence of a distinct and indigenous Southern reform movement whose leaders embraced the liberal platform of the agrarian movements of the late nineteenth century, calling for such political reforms as the regulation of railroads and the direct primary system.³ C. Vann Woodward, in *Origins of the New South*, further defined Southern Progressives as urban middle-class professionals or business leaders who, under growing economic pressures, "overcame their fear of reform and joined hands with the discontented farmers" in a fight against "the plutocracy of the Northeast, together with its agents, banks, insurance companies, public utilities, oil companies, pipelines, and railroads."⁴

More recent scholarship has expanded Woodward's ideas. William A. Link's examination of Southern middle-class social reform efforts, *The Paradox of Southern*

² For a complete listing of Florida workers organized by occupation, see United States Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, v. 4 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912-14), 448-449.

³ Arthur S. Link, "The Progressive Movement in the South, 1870-1914," *North Carolina Historical Review* 23 (1946): 172-195.

⁴ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 371.

Progressivism, highlighted a “clash between radically divergent views of the social contract.”⁵ According to Link, Southern Progressive reformers were met with fierce opposition from a conservative populace whose insular communities were very resistant to any form of outside control. This resistance to intrusion shaped the nature of Southern reform crusades, explained why Southern reformers clung to ideas of class and racial superiority, and often limited their success.

The story of the Southern child labor movement further illustrates Link’s arguments. The vision of childhood as a distinct phase of life during which the strength of mind and body needed to become good citizens must be protected was a direct product of the Progressive Era.⁶ During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a substantial decline in the nation’s birth rate diminished the number of children in America and made them more visible. Around the same time, psychologists, sociologists, and physicians began to place emphasis on childhood as a special phase of life, one which required nurture and the benefits of a sound education.⁷ Upper-middle-class female reformers, in particular, responded to these new ideas regarding children and child-rearing with a number of campaigns designed to improve child welfare. They created children’s aid societies, juvenile courts, reformatories, probation systems, parks and playgrounds, agitated for compulsory school attendance, and fought to end the practice of child labor.⁸

Middle-class reformers saw child labor as a particular evil because it forced children into the harsh world of adult reality far ahead of schedule – introducing them to vice, fostering illiteracy and ignorance, and perpetuating poverty by ensuring adult wages remained at low levels.⁹ The 1900 census listed 1,750,178 children between the ages of 10 and 15 in gainful

⁵ William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xi.

⁶ Walter I. Trattner, *Crusade for the Children: A History of the Child Labor Committee and Child Welfare in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 11.

⁷ Kriste Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood: The U.S. Children’s Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 12.

⁸ Trattner, 11-12.

⁹ Trattner, 12.

occupations.¹⁰ This number, of course, fails to reflect child workers under the age of 10; a conservative estimate would be over 2,000,000.¹¹ During this period of urbanization and industrialization, the working class often viewed child labor as an acceptable practice, as many families quite literally depended upon the financial contributions of all members to survive. As women and children could be paid much lower wages for a day's work, industrial entrepreneurs manipulated child labor to the extent that it actually placed working-class families within a perpetual cycle of wage dependency. Not coincidentally, the same economic processes that drove working-class children into factories simultaneously created an upper middle class affluent enough to isolate their children from the "adult" world of work.¹² These middle-class men and women, motivated by changes in the social landscape as well as in their own perceptions of the family, subscribed to the idea that, in the words of Florida reformer May Mann Jennings, "conservation of the child is our first duty."¹³

By the turn of the century, state legislation had curtailed the practice of child labor among native-born whites in Northern industries, but the problem continued unabated in the New South, where the proportion of child to adult laborers was four times that of the rest of the nation.¹⁴ Realizing their reform efforts struck at the heart of the South's efforts to industrialize, reformers faced real challenges in combating child labor in the South.¹⁵ Years of geographic and social isolation in rural communities had built a strong tradition of localism in much of the region, where, for many people, kin and church constituted social identity, and concentrated governmental power was despised.¹⁶ In this atmosphere of near absolute local control, *laissez faire* attitudes toward industry were slower to give way than in other sections of the country.¹⁷

¹⁰ United States Bureau of the Census, Special Report: Occupations at the Twelfth Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 166.

¹¹ United States Bureau of the Census (1900), 41.

¹² Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004), 152.

¹³ May Mann Jennings to Mrs. Chas A. Cay, 1911, Box 1, Folder 3, May Mann Jennings Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

¹⁴ Trattner, 40.

¹⁵ Link, 171.

¹⁶ Link, 9.

¹⁷ Trattner, 39.

Rural Southerners, especially, resented any type of “Northern interference” in their lives, and viewed child labor legislation efforts as agitation by Northern meddlers looking to stifle Southern competition.¹⁸ Dr. Felix Adler, chairman of the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), captured the frustration felt by child labor reformers at the Seventh Annual Conference in 1911. He lamented the “sectional patriotism” so abundant in “the wonderful Southern country” where resources had lain dormant for so many years. Cotton mill owners and oyster and shrimp packers were simply unwilling to submit to “undue” control by the state, and according to Adler, they kept on in their pursuit of industrial wealth at the expense of Southern citizens. Indeed, it was this particularly Southern brand of “marked individualism” that retarded progress by resisting the interference of the state. Despite the region’s challenges, Adler refused to abandon the idea of child labor reform in the Southern states. He and others like him advocated a move toward an “enlightened individualism,” urging that collective action must be undertaken to ensure the highest development and enrichment of individual life.¹⁹

Scholarly studies of the child labor movement in the South began in 1939 with Elizabeth Davidson’s *Child Labor in the Southern Textile States*.²⁰ Davidson’s work, however, was narrow in scope, focusing on child labor reform in the textile states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, though it also provided some basic information on reform efforts in Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Very few book-length monographs have addressed child labor reform in the years since, and none of these have successfully incorporated female reformers into their analyses. Hugh Hindman’s *Child Labor: An American History* provided a general overview of the industries that employed children in the early twentieth century and the fight to end child labor on the national level.²¹ Walter Trattner’s history of the NCLC and Kriste Lindemeyer’s work on the Children’s Bureau traced the history and development of those respective organizations, but again, at the national level. Only Shelley Sallee’s recent work on

¹⁸ Trattner, 40.

¹⁹Dr. Felix Adler, “Child Labor a Menace to Civilization,” in “Uniform Child Labor Laws: Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference of the National Child Labor Committee,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 38 (July-December, 1911), 3-4.

²⁰ Elizabeth Davidson, *Child Labor Legislation in the Southern Textile States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939).

²¹ Hugh Hindman, *Child Labor: An American History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

child labor reform in Alabama has made an attempt to address the politics of child labor reform at the state level, incorporating class, race, and gender analysis.²²

Sallee's monograph provides a model for this thesis, which attempts to perform the same kind of multi-layered analysis of Florida's child labor movement. Such a study is conspicuously absent from both the historiography of Florida and that of child labor reform at the national level. Emily Howard Atkins' 1957 article, "The 1913 Campaign for Child Labor in Florida," for example, essentially followed the proceedings of the legislature but afforded little in the way of historical analysis.²³ The passage of the 1913 child labor legislation is mentioned briefly in both Davidson's book and Trattner's history of the NCLC, but both report the bare facts of the campaign from the perspective of the national organization. Trattner's account, which relies heavily on the writings of NCLC secretary Alexander McKelway, leads readers to believe McKelway single-handedly persuaded Florida legislators to pass the law. In reality, however, the 1913 child labor legislation was the culmination of ten years' hard work on the part of Florida's labor leaders and clubwomen to build support for such reform.

This thesis thus enhances the historiography of both Southern women's organizations and Southern labor history as well as child labor reform and Southern Progressivism. Southern labor scholarship has grown exponentially in the last two decades, though the majority of monographs on early-twentieth-century labor have tended to focus on the workers of the textile industry, such as David L. Carlton's *Mill and Town in South Carolina*, I.A. Newby's *Plain Folk in the New South*, and Jaquelyn Dowd Hall's *Like A Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*.²⁴ In recent years, other works, such as Earl Lewis' *In Their Own Interests*, Henry McKiven, Jr.'s *Iron and Steel*, and Paul Ortiz's *Emancipation Betrayed*, have examined the interactions between white and black workers in individual Southern cities and states.²⁵ Even so, very little research

²² Shelley Sallee, *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

²³ Emily Howard Atkins, "The 1913 Campaign for Child Labor in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 35:3 (1957), 233-240.

²⁴ See David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); I.A. Newby, *Plain Folk in the New South: Social Change and Cultural Persistence, 1880-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Hall, Jaquelyn Dowd, et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

²⁵ See Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth Century Norfolk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Henry McKiven, Jr., *Iron and Steel: Class, Race, and Community in*

has been conducted on the relationship between organized labor and state politics in the South. This thesis addresses the kinds of political activities with which the union men and women of Florida concerned themselves and argues that the success of the reform initiatives they advocated was dependent upon the support of middle-class women.

Most historians have analyzed Southern, middle-class clubwomen in the context of the Progressive reforms they supported, emphasizing their similarities to Northern women. Only recently have scholars begun to examine Southern women's ability to fuse their Southern identities with social reform work and to reconcile tradition with progress. Mary Martha Thomas's pioneering work on Alabama's clubwomen has been supplemented by studies of North Carolina, Texas, South Carolina, and Georgia women.²⁶ To date, no historian has undertaken a similar study for Florida. Nancy Hewitt's *Southern Discomfort* examines the women's organizations of Tampa, Florida, yet, as she recognizes, "Tampa's disruption of fixed identities, biracial categories, regional boundaries, and gender ideals have converged to define the city and others like it – New Orleans, El Paso, Miami – as in, but not of, the South."²⁷ The interests, goals, and experience of Tampa's organized women thus cannot be assumed to accurately represent those of the women of the entire state of Florida. This study of Florida women and their involvement in the child labor campaign seeks to demonstrate the diversity among the state's organized women during a time of growth and change in the population, politics and economy of the Sunshine State.

Collective action to regulate the practice of child labor in Florida began at the turn of the century, as the state tasted its first fruits of industrialization. Thirty years earlier, at the end of Reconstruction, Florida had been essentially a "frontier state" whose economy was dominated by

Birmingham, 1875-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

²⁶ See Mary Martha Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama: Social Reforms and Suffrage, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992); Anastasia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880-1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997); Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Rebecca S. Montgomery, *The Politics of Education in the New South: Women and Reform in Georgia, 1890-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 15.

agriculture.²⁸ By the turn of the century, however, the influx of Northern railroads carried Florida produce to cities around the country and carried droves of tourists to Florida's budding resort towns. Florida's population in 1890 was comprised of 391,422 individuals; by 1910, it had nearly doubled to 752, 619.²⁹ Despite this fairly rapid growth, Florida's economy remained largely agrarian. The central Florida landscape was dominated by citrus groves and cattle ranches, while oyster and shrimp canneries operated on the western coast. Other major industries included shade tobacco, cigars, lumber, turpentine, and fertilizer and phosphate production.³⁰ Railroads connected rural production centers with cities like Tampa, Jacksonville, and the state capital at Tallahassee, allowing Florida's farmers to ship their products to the growing national market.

The growth of Florida railroads also allowed a small group of (primarily) Northern investors and land speculators to profit from the sale of public land to railroad corporations at the expense of individual farmers. These land sales, coupled with unfair freight rates and other practices, angered farmers, many of whom joined local rural reform movements and the nationwide Farmers' Alliance in the 1890s. Though agrarian unrest resulted in the creation of Populist parties in most Southern states, according to historian Wayne Flynt, the Populists never posed much of a political threat in Florida because Democratic politicians embraced their platform and responded to their demands.³¹ As historian Steven Kerber has written, "In one sense, the story of the Progressive Era in Florida is a tale of conflicting views about the proper cause of development for South Florida."³² Between 1879 and 1901, trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund deeded 9,000,000 acres of swamp and overflowed land in the Everglades region to the railroads. Progressive Democrats, like governors William Sherman Jennings, Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, and Park Trammell, wanted the southern part of the state to

²⁸ Samuel Proctor, "Prelude to the New Florida, 1877-1919," in *The New History of Florida*, ed. Michael Gannon, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 268.

²⁹ United States Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, v. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912-14), 298.

³⁰ Proctor, "Prelude," 277.

³¹ Wayne Flynt, *Duncan Upshaw Fletcher: Florida's Reluctant Progressive* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1971), 36.

³² Steven Kerber, "Park Trammell of Florida: A Political Biography" (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1979), 37.

belong to independent farmers, growers, and tradesmen. Governor Jennings (1901-1904) advocated drainage of the remaining 3,076,000 acres, and refused to hand over the lands to any claimant.

The Everglades drainage project, instituted during the Broward administration (1905-1908), was one of Florida's first major Progressive reforms. Indeed, during this period, Florida's state government began to directly affect the daily lives of most citizens for the first time. County governments, which retained a majority of political power under Florida's 1885 post-Reconstruction constitution, could not cope with the influx of large business, such as the railroads. The continued complaints of Florida farmers led to the establishment of the second railroad commission in 1897 and campaigns for "good roads" during the 1910s. The state demonstrated an increased willingness to venture into what had been the political realm of individual counties, a practice that did not always bear positive fruit for all Floridians. Various Jim Crow measures, such as the institution of segregation on street cars, were passed by the legislature during this period. The 1885 poll tax and the eight ballot box law of 1887 disfranchised most blacks by the turn of the century.³³

In 1910, only 29.1 percent of Florida's population lived in incorporated cities of 2,500 or more inhabitants.³⁴ The state's two largest cities, Jacksonville and Tampa, both grew substantially during the first decade of the century, as the growth of industry and trade transformed them into two of the major urban enclaves of the New South. Jacksonville had been Florida's main distribution center for consumer goods since the antebellum period, earning it the nickname "Gateway to Florida."³⁵ Most of downtown Jacksonville was destroyed in the devastating fire of May 3, 1901, but the rebuilding process, which included the deepening of the

³³ Kerber, 37-39. For more on black Floridians and Reconstruction politics, see Edward N. Akin, "When A Minority Becomes the Majority: Blacks in Jacksonville Politics, 1887-1907," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 53:2 (1974), 123-145.

³⁴ United States Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, v. 9 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912-14), 195.

³⁵ James B. Crooks, "Changing Face of Jacksonville, Florida: 1900-1910," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 62:4 (1984), 445. Crooks has also written a book-length history of Jacksonville, see James B. Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire, 1901-1919: A New South City* (Jacksonville: University of North Florida Press, 1991).

St. John's River channel and railroad expansion, nearly doubled the population from 28,429 to 57,599 and created an economic boom that would last for the rest of the decade.³⁶

Turn-of-the-century Jacksonville, as historian James B. Crooks has written, was a city with “power and wealth...centered in a relatively small white elite whose stewardship of that power during the reform-oriented Progressive Era was crucial to the changes taking place in the community” – and the state.³⁷ Nearly all of Florida's prominent politicians – United States Senator Duncan U. Fletcher, Governors William Sherman Jennings and Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, state legislators Telfair Stockton, St. Elmo Acosta, and Ion Farris – called Jacksonville home. The wives of these men were also active in the civic affairs of Jacksonville through voluntary associations and church groups, and their participation in reform efforts such as the child labor campaign would propel them into positions of statewide leadership later in the decade.

If the political power of the state was entrenched in Jacksonville, Tampa rivaled it as one of the South's leading manufacturing cities by 1900, the center of the hand-rolled cigar industry. Tampa was an isolated, provincial village in central Florida when Cuban cigar manufacturers Don Vincente Ybor and Ignacio Haya arrived from Key West in 1885. The inception of Ybor City, Tampa's Cuban enclave, in 1886 transformed the economy of the city, while the influx of Cuban immigrants led to a collision between its traditional white elites and new groups of organized laborers who threatened their established base of power.³⁸ As Nancy Hewitt wrote: “A new era had emerged in the city, an era in which Tampans increasingly defied regional conventions, embraced global connections, and replicated urban experiences of immigration, industrialization, racial and ethnic conflict, and women's emancipation.”³⁹

One of the regional conventions Progressive Tampans would increasingly defy (along with their Jacksonville counterparts) was the practice of child labor. The idea that the richest, most enjoyable life required the growth and education fostered by a protected childhood spread

³⁶ Crooks, 439; United States Bureau of the Census (1910) vol. 2, 298.

³⁷ Crooks, 441.

³⁸ Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzeta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 55.

³⁹ Hewitt, 34.

quickly among Southern middle-class reformers at the turn of the century, such as Cora Hawley Seaton. Seaton traveled with Dr. D.W. Comstock from Illinois to Jacksonville to found the Children's Home Society of Florida in 1898. Upon Comstock's death in 1902, she assumed the leadership of the infant CHS, but her interest in child welfare gradually permeated the boundaries of her own organization.⁴⁰ In a letter dated June 16, 1905, Fred Cubberly, secretary of the Cedar Keys Board of Trade, reported to Seaton that two oyster canneries in Cedar Keys employed children as young as seven, "poorly dressed and subjected to all kinds of temperatures, with the floor of the shed covered with the mud, slime and dampness incident to this kind of work."⁴¹ Though he estimated about twenty-five school age children worked through the school term in these conditions, Cubberly defended the moral character of one of the oyster packers, writing, "This man is in many ways a good citizen, and is opposed to certain forms of child labor, but of course does not want the law to interfere with his business to any great extent."⁴² Not coincidentally, Gulf Coast oyster packers remained the chief opponents of Florida's child labor crusaders through the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the plight of child workers in canneries became the central focus of their campaign.

The shrimp and oyster canneries were not the only places where Florida's children worked. The majority of children worked on family farms, but most Progressives viewed this type of outdoor labor as a positive experience that built character and improved health. They were also unwilling to challenge parental authority inside the home – just yet. Many children also worked in the street trades in the state's major cities and towns, selling newspapers in the early morning hours or in the evenings or delivering telegrams. Only 740 of Florida's 15,403 working children ages 10 to 15 held manufacturing jobs in 1900, and most of them worked in the cigar industry in Tampa.⁴³ The manufacture of hand-rolled cigars, however, was a highly-skilled occupation that took many years to master. Children who worked in cigar factories more than likely performed menial tasks such as sweeping floors or assisting with the preparation of

⁴⁰ Seaton to Chas. H. Smith, May 18, 1910, Box 1, Folder 20, The Children's Home Society of Florida Collection.

⁴¹ Cubberly to Seaton, June 16, 1905, Box 1, Folder 20, The Children's Home Society of Florida Collection.

⁴² Cubberly to Seaton.

⁴³ United States Bureau of the Census, Special Report: Occupations at the Twelfth Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 176.

tobacco leaves, for example. Other children in the cigar industry worked in homes under parental supervision. The United States Immigration Commission reported in 1910 that Italian children as young as six, seven, and eight were taught the trade in their homes, adding the product of their labor to the family income.⁴⁴ In any case, the combination of their ethnic identity, the nature of their work, and their residence in the enclave of Ybor City meant the working children of the cigar industry often escaped the scrutiny of Florida's child labor reformers.

The nature of children's work in the state's oyster and shrimp canneries, however, appalled Progressive reformers in Florida and eventually caught the attention of child labor activists across the nation. The canning boom in northwest Florida around 1905 coincided with the transfer of the center of the industry from Baltimore, Maryland, to the states of the Gulf Coast. Apalachicola's rich oyster beds supplied its maritime trade and seafood industry; shrimp were processed further east at Fernandina and Cedar Key.⁴⁵ Canning was a family affair; recruiters called row bosses advertised specifically for "family help" among Polish, Slavic, and Italian immigrants in Maryland. Oyster packers knew that men who traveled with their families would be less likely to leave once they arrived at the job site, no matter what the conditions were like. Those who ventured to Florida to work were offered free rent, free fuel, and a return trip at the end of the oyster season, which lasted from October 1 to May 1.⁴⁶ In 1919, the United States Children's Bureau estimated nearly 3,000 to 3,500 immigrant families made the trek to the Gulf Coast from Maryland every year.⁴⁷

Once they arrived, families were housed in camps composed of several long, low, barrack-style frame buildings with minimal privacy, poor sanitation, and very little protection from the weather.⁴⁸ Once families arrived in these camps, they were not free to come and go as they wished. Fathers worked on the shrimp or oyster boats, around the canneries, or at the

⁴⁴ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Immigrants in Industries*, vol. 15 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), 264.

⁴⁵ William Warren Rogers, *Outposts on the Gulf: Saint George Island and Apalachicola from Early Exploration to World War II* (Pensacola: University of West Florida Press, 1986), 92, 116.

⁴⁶ Viola I. Paradise, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in Oyster and Shrimp Canning Communities on the Gulf Coast* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1922), 7, 10.

⁴⁷ Paradise, 69.

⁴⁸ Paradise, 7.

wharves, while the mothers and children labored in the factories and were paid according to the number of pounds of oysters shucked or shrimp plucked.⁴⁹ Canneries were damp, dank, cold sheds build near the shore end of a long pier. Oyster boats docked at one end of the pier, and a series of conveyer belts carried their catch to large steamers. Women and children then removed the partly steamed shells and used a large, sharp knife to cut out the meat of the oyster, discarding the empty shell on the factory floor. There were no seats, and oyster workers stood on the piles of shells, stooping over the tables for as many as 14 hours at a time. Periodically, workers took their buckets of oyster meat to be weighed then transferred the meat to the packing table, where women and older girls sealed it into cans. Shrimp were processed in a similar way, though workers had to pick off the heads (a process referred to as plucking or peeling) and clean them before passing them to the women and older girls who packed them into cans.⁵⁰

The consistency of work in the oyster canneries was dependent upon the day's catch, and was therefore quite irregular. Some days, women and children might work only a few hours; other days they worked from between four and six in the morning until five in the afternoon. Workers interviewed by the Children's Bureau estimated they worked ten hour days on average. The long days were quite dangerous for children. They worked in wet, dirty, drafty sheds and often suffered from colds and respiratory ailments. The sharp oyster shells required the use of a large knife to open them, and infected cuts were frequent. Shrimp presented an even greater danger. An acidic liquid produced by the shrimp ate away the leather of shoes and the skin of the hands. Most workers could only peel shrimp for a few days before their hands became so bloody and sore they had to rest. The tail of the shrimp is equipped with a large thorn which could become stuck in a worker's hand and break off, leaving a puncture wound that often became seriously infected. Adult workers wore gloves, but the gloves did not come in sizes to fit small hands, so the youngest workers went unprotected.⁵¹

In addition to the physical hazards placed upon young workers, they did not attend school, and illiteracy rates were high. Many migrant children also spoke very little English. The state of Florida had no compulsory school attendance law during this time, and as Children's

⁴⁹ Paradise, 6.

⁵⁰ Paradise, 12-14.

⁵¹ Paradise, 5-6.

Bureau worker Viola Paradise pointed out, neither of the communities in which migrant laborers lived felt responsible for the education or general welfare of their children.⁵² However, as labor leaders, clubwomen, and civic reformers became increasingly aware of the plight of child workers in their state, they began to demand the government assume responsibility for the safety, well-being, and education of all of its children.

Awakening Florida to the plight of its child workers proved to be a daunting task. Chapter Two of this thesis examines the early efforts of the Florida State Federation of Labor (FSFL) to procure a child labor law and argues that the FSFL entered into a mutually beneficial alliance with the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (FFWC) in order to shift the focus of their platform from labor issues to child protection and therefore gain popular support. Despite building a strong partnership, the FSFL and FFWC met with defeat at the 1905, 1907, and 1909 sessions of the legislature, facing strong opposition from rural legislators unfamiliar with child labor conditions and Gulf Coast oyster packers who employed child workers. Chapter Three follows the two organizations as they worked to strengthen their coalition of child labor crusaders, incorporating the talents of child welfare activist Marcus Fagg, and eventually calling upon the National Child Labor Committee to assist them. The NCLC's 1913 annual conference, held in Jacksonville, introduced many politically powerful Floridians to the evils of child labor in their state for the first time and drew national attention to Florida; the first comprehensive child labor law was passed later that year. Chapter Four examines the reports of the state's first labor inspector, J.C. Privett, to determine the level of success of the 1913 legislation in curbing child labor, and concludes that, despite nominal legislative gains, the poverty that sent children to work and the racial discrimination that kept them out of school combined to ensure that the practice of employing children in Florida would continue for years to come.

⁵² Paradise, 84.

CHAPTER TWO

AN UNLIKELY ALLIANCE: THE FLORIDA STATE FEDERATION OF LABOR, THE FLORIDA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS, AND CHILD LABOR LEGISLATION, 1901-1909

From its inception in 1901, the Florida State Federation of Labor, in accordance with the anti-child labor platform touted by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), advocated the passage of legislation to curb the employment of children in Florida's budding industries. Though the labor organization made its presence felt in the state legislature, the absence of cotton mills so notorious for child labor abuses coupled with a lack of public awareness led to defeat of proposed bills in 1903 and 1905. Labor leaders recognized the need for a popular base of support and found unlikely allies among the state's clubwomen, who were already quite active in petitioning the legislature to enact progressive measures. The support of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs lent middle-class credibility to the demands of organized labor, while the crutch of male labor leaders' support allowed clubwomen to increasingly step outside the sphere of their homes and communities into a more active role in state politics.

By the turn of the century, the deplorable working conditions of child laborers in the South were well-known to Progressive reform leaders, many of whom had already worked to procure legislation to protect child workers in Northern states. In a 1902 article in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Hayes Robbins of the Institute of Social Economics called attention to "The Necessity for Factory Legislation in the South." Robbins rejected what he saw as antiquated economic theories that placed "cheapness" as the goal of economic progress; lower prices for consumer goods, he wrote, often came without increasing wages or diminished hours and relied too heavily on the labor of working women and children. He argued for the development of a Progressive economic theory that addressed workers' needs as producers as well as consumers. According to Robbins, satisfactory working conditions were as vital to a laborer's happiness as his ability to purchase meat or potatoes. Lower-priced

consumer goods must be obtained through the natural forces of invention and machinery, not through the overwork or social degradation of the working class.¹

In the South, Robbins wrote, this social degradation was particularly heinous, especially in the cotton and iron manufacturing industries, where children were employed in vast numbers. He accurately chastised the South as the only region in the nation, and in most of Western Europe, where child protection had made little or no impression in statute law. Robbins conservatively estimated more than 22,000 children under the age of 14 worked in the cotton mills of the Southern states, and the absence of child protection laws in those states meant that fully one-third of cotton mill operatives were “younger than the age standard established by the forces of humanitarian opinion and wise statesmanship throughout the larger part of Christendom.”² Robbins was particularly concerned about the continued mental and moral hindrance of an already backward region, and he argued that the production of an entire generation of factory workers, stunted in body and mind, was a matter of grave concern for the entire nation. Robbins did not consider it meddlesome, therefore, for all Americans to concern themselves with the working conditions of child laborers in the South from a standpoint of national welfare. “The real test-point of permanent progress and prosperity, affecting the nation as well as the South, is not the size of the profits in Southern mills in the next five years, large as we hope they may be through all proper means; but it is the quality of Southern citizenship in the next five generations.”³ The nation’s future was in the making in the cotton mills and factories of the South, and it was time to safeguard its development.

Like Robbins and other economists, the leaders of the AFL also considered child labor in the Southern states a problem of national significance. Unionists recognized that the family labor system depressed wages and resented the impact of the South’s cheap child labor on the working conditions of New England’s textile workers.⁴ According to historian Shelley Sallee, the AFL perceived a distinct hostility toward organized labor emanating from the South’s dominant,

¹ Hayes Robbins, “The Necessity for Factory Legislation in the South,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 20 (1902), 181.

² Robbins, 182-184.

³ Robbins, 187.

⁴ Sallee, 45.

aristocratic class. AFL president Samuel Gompers recognized a successful Southern strategy for the eradication of child labor would need to isolate the issue from the greater, more radical labor agenda.⁵ With the goal of emphasizing “sentimentalism over socialism,” he sent British labor organizer Irene M. Ashby to Alabama in early December 1900 with the express purpose of “bringing about a better feeling and better judgment and better conception among the people generally in order that a child labor law might be enacted.”⁶

When Ashby arrived in Alabama, she discovered a child labor measure recently introduced into the legislature had been killed in committee, as had five other bills at previous legislative sessions without public outcry. Determining that Alabama’s lack of public interest was due to a lack of awareness, Ashby embarked upon a fact-gathering mission, visiting sixteen cities and villages and twenty-three mills between December 12, 1900, and January 15, 1901. She counted 6,725 mill workers, including about 400 children under the age of twelve. Many children claimed to be twelve but appeared much younger. She estimated the number of child workers was actually much closer to 900, 1,200 if one counted the youngest children unofficially employed.

Ashby was shocked by the poverty of the people with whom she came into contact. “The human material for the industry,” she wrote, “is as raw as the cotton.” After observing the living and working conditions at Alabama’s mills, Ashby concluded that Northern capitalists who invested in these manufacturing ventures were destroying Southern children.⁷ Appealing to the racial sentiments of her audience, Ashby stressed the implications of the continued employment of poor white children, employment that deprived them of the public education of which black children were already taking advantage. “The only way to secure the absolutely essential leadership of the black by the white race,” she wrote, “is to guarantee the education of the whites.”⁸ In order to ensure white supremacy, then, child labor had to be abolished, and mandatory school attendance had to be instituted.

⁵ Sallee, 56, 46.

⁶ Samuel Gompers, “Labor’s Attitude Toward Child Labor,” in “The Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the National Child Labor Committee,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 27 (1906), 82; Irene M. Ashby, “The Fight Against Child Labor in Alabama,” *American Federationist* (May 1901), 150.

⁷ Ashby, 150-153.

⁸ Ashby, 154.

In the conclusion of her report to the AFL, Ashby, like Gompers, recognized that child labor legislation could only be won “by keeping the opposition to child labor a public and not a labor question.”⁹ In Alabama, she succeeded in garnering support for legislation among the state’s clubwomen, ministers, and businessmen, many of whom joined Edgar Gardner Murphy in forming the Alabama Child Labor Committee (ACLC). The ACLC’s work led to the passage of Alabama’s first comprehensive child labor law in 1903 and the formation of the National Child Labor Committee in 1905. At the NCLC’s first annual conference, Rev. Neal L. Anderson of Montgomery referred to Alabama’s child labor legislation as the earliest expression of the awakening of the South’s civic consciousness to a new industrial era.¹⁰ Much work remained to be done, however; all the Southern states lacked effective child labor laws. None of the state laws, for example, provided officers for their inspection and enforcement. With the exception of Louisiana and Arkansas, state laws only required parental affidavits to affirm the ages of working children.¹¹

The fight for effective child labor legislation would not be an easy one. Anderson recognized several Southern peculiarities that stood in the way of would-be child labor reformers. As Gompers recognized earlier, Southerners harbored a strong distrust of organized labor. Mill owners feared child labor laws would encourage the development of labor unions in the textile industry.¹² In addition to antipathy toward labor unions, Anderson noted a general apathy toward social reform among rural Southerners who were unfamiliar with industrial conditions.¹³ As Florida’s child labor advocates soon discovered, preventative legislation was always harder to procure than measures taken against a recognized evil. In addition, mill and factory managers were often pillars of the community, seen as men “of humane and just spirit,

⁹ Ashby, 156.

¹⁰ Rev. Neal L. Anderson, “Child Labor Legislation in the South,” in “The Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the National Child Labor Committee,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 25 (1905), 77.

¹¹ Anderson, 84.

¹² Anderson, 88-89.

¹³ Anderson, 86.

and actuated by high convictions of duty.”¹⁴ Such men were difficult to vilify in the eyes of a middle-class public benefitting from the prosperity brought by industrial growth. Besides, conservative Southerners considered the rights of the individual more important than any sort of collective rights and thus opposed child labor legislation because it usurped control over the child from parents. The South was also unable to provide adequate, compulsory education, a fact frequently cited by opponents of child labor legislation. Finally, Anderson concluded, the commercial rivalry between states and sections of the country in the manufacture of cotton goods led Southerners to charge the North with attempts to hinder their industrial progress and interfere with their way of life.¹⁵

Despite the many challenges to procuring child labor legislation, the AFL and its member unions continued to besiege individual state legislatures, attempting to garner support throughout the South. In a 1902 issue of the *American Federationist*, Ashby advocated the consolidation of legislative efforts in the South. Bills had to be presented before each legislature, so that one state would not retard the progress of the entire movement.¹⁶ Thus, though Florida admittedly employed far fewer children in its canneries, cigar factories, and turpentine camps than Georgia or Alabama used in their cotton mills, the state’s enlightened labor leaders sought to protect the working children of their state in the greater interest of labor. In December 1902, the AFL instituted a policy of organizing and assisting state federations to foster legislative gains.¹⁷ The Florida State Federation of Labor (FSFL) subsequently elected its first legislative committee to lobby for child labor legislation at its 1902 convention.¹⁸

The FSFL was founded in March 1901 in Tampa through the joint effort of the Tampa Trades and Labor Assembly and the Central Labor Union of Jacksonville. These individual organizations met with the object of forming a federation of trade unions “to aid and assist each other, to aid and encourage the sale of union label goods and to secure state and national

¹⁴ Anderson, 87.

¹⁵ Anderson, 89-91.

¹⁶ Ashby, 157.

¹⁷ Irene M. Ashby-MacFayden, “Abolish Child Labor,” *American Federationist* (January 1902), 19.

¹⁸ Florida State Federation of Labor, *Fourteenth Annual Convention, Miami, Florida, January 6-8, 1914* (Jacksonville, FL: Pritchard Printing and Publishing Company, 1914), 18.

legislation in the interest of working people and influence public opinion by peaceful and legal methods in favor of organized labor.”¹⁹ The second annual convention in 1902 passed resolutions in favor of the creation of a State Bureau of Labor Statistics and the office of State Factory Inspector, compulsory education, uniform textbooks, and the adoption of laws prohibiting the employment of children younger than 15 years of age.²⁰ The FSFL’s legislative committee presented the first anti-child labor bill to the Florida legislature during the session of 1903.

On Tuesday, April 28, 1903, Senator Telfair Stockton of Duval County introduced Senate Bill 195, “an act to prevent the employment of and detention of children, under certain ages and under certain conditions, in manufacturing establishments, packing houses, commercial industries, laundries and renovating establishments, and prescribing penalty for a violation thereof.”²¹ The measure, modeled after South Carolina’s recently enacted child labor law, would ensure that no child younger than 12 years of age could be employed in any factory unless its parents made a sworn affidavit that they were dependent upon the child’s labor for support.²² The bill’s companion measure, House Bill 328, was simultaneously introduced by Representative Robert McNamee of Hillsborough County. Both bills were read and referred to the respective Committees on Organized Labor.²³

Florida’s political environment posed significant problems for labor-backed child labor legislation. In his classic 1949 study of Southern politics, V.O. Key characterized Florida as a Southern political curiosity; Florida, he wrote, “is different.”²⁴ Though Florida as a former member of the Confederacy shared the postwar legacy of the rest of the South, which included the presence of federal troops and the rise of a one-party state, it retained fundamental

¹⁹ FSFL, *Fourteenth Annual Convention*, 18; Florida State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the State Federation of Labor* (Jacksonville, FL: Hollingsworth and Pomar, 1902), 34.

²⁰ FSFL, *Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention*, 28.

²¹ State Senate of Florida, *Journal of the Senate* (n.p., 1903), 373.

²² “Color Line Bill Fails of Passage,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 29, 1903, 1.

²³ Florida House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives* (n.p., 1903), 542; *Journal of the Senate* (1903), 373.

²⁴ V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949; Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 83. Citations are to the University of Tennessee Press edition.

differences in history, policy, and economics that made its twentieth-century political experience unique among the Southern states.²⁵

Florida's large geographic area resulted in great distances between its major cities: Pensacola in the northwest panhandle, for example, is 357 miles from Jacksonville in the northeast. Jacksonville is 200 miles from Tampa in the middle of the west coast, and Key West lies another 400 miles south of Tampa. The uneven distribution of its people across the peninsula thus made political collaboration difficult. Florida's urban centers also grew substantially in the early twentieth century at a much faster rate than those in other Southern states. This rapid growth in the first ten years of the century – Florida's population increased nearly 42% from 1900 to 1910 – meant many Floridians had been born in other states, and had weaker political loyalties.²⁶ Flux and fluidity became the rule in Florida politics, and the resulting multiplicity of political factions gave greater weight to existent individualism. Political success depended upon personality and skill on the stump rather than the maintenance of strong party ties.²⁷

Florida Republicans declined in number and strength after 1876, and white Democratic county leaders dominated the Constitutional Convention of 1885, where capitalists and railroad investors like William D. Chipley, representative of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, made their presence felt in state government. A small minority of progressives led by Wilkinson Call began a long fight against the policies of these politicians which favored newly-arrived businessmen over yeoman farmers.²⁸ Rural discontent led to the formation of an Independent party during the gubernatorial election of 1884.²⁹ Though the Independents failed to gain significant numbers of supporters, many of the progressive measures they endorsed became planks in the reform platforms of later governors like William Sherman Jennings and Napoleon Bonaparte Broward. The former Independents joined the Farmers' Alliance when it came to

²⁵ David R. Colburn and Richard K. Scher, *Florida's Gubernatorial Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1980), 12.

²⁶ Key, 83-85.

²⁷ Key, 97.

²⁸ Key, 194.

²⁹ Samuel Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward: Florida's Fighting Democrat* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1950), 58.

Florida in 1887.³⁰ Too radical even for most of Florida's less conservative Democrats, the Farmer's Alliance eventually withdrew from the Democratic party in 1892 to form the Populist party, which also attracted a small number of black and white Republicans.³¹ According to historian Wayne Flynt, these Populists never posed much of a political threat in Florida because Democratic politicians eventually embraced much of their platform and responded to their demands.³²

Thus by the late 1890s, the Democratic party in Florida was divided into a liberal, lower-middle-class labor faction and a conservative Bourbon faction, though the state's desire for economic development and its relative prosperity gave the conservatives strong influence among most political figures. This began to change at the turn of the century with the election of William Sherman Jennings (1901-1904), a middle-of-the-road Democrat that historian Samuel Proctor praised as "Florida's most progressive governor since the Reconstruction period."³³ Jennings accelerated reforms by recouping land granted to the railroads and strengthening the state railroad commission.³⁴

The FSFL enjoyed the support of progressive Attorney General James B. Whitfield, whose address to the 1903 legislature urged prohibition of child labor. For many years, he said, the question of child labor had been prominent in other countries and states. Florida had been fortunate to have watched these developments from a distance, but now, he said, the evil of child labor was nearer and in some cases, already with us. Studies had found child labor injurious to the mental and moral uplift of children and consequently, the general population.³⁵ Despite Whitfield's warning, the Senate Committee on Organized Labor declined to give the child labor bill a favorable recommendation.³⁶ Upon its second reading, the words "packing houses and

³⁰ Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward*, 59.

³¹ Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward*, 194.

³² Flynt, 36.

³³ Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward*, 159.

³⁴ Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward*, 159; Proctor, "Prelude," 278.

³⁵ "Report of Attorney General," Florida Times-Union, April 8, 1903, 10.

³⁶ Journal of the Senate (1903), 1223.

commercial industries” were stricken from the title by motion of Senator Thomas Palmer.³⁷ This amended bill was placed on the calendar for third reading, where it died.³⁸ House Bill 328 did not fare much better; though it received a favorable recommendation from the Committee on Organized Labor, it was tabled on second reading.³⁹

The FSFL later attributed the child labor legislation’s defeat at the 1903 legislature to the combined efforts of representatives of the Western Union Telegraph Company, the oyster packers of Apalachicola, and the daily newspapers. Documentation of this opposition does not survive elsewhere in the historic record, though these three groups would prove the most vocal opponents of child labor legislation in subsequent contests. In any case, the union men vowed at their fifth annual convention in Key West to redouble their efforts at the 1905 session of the legislature.⁴⁰

Telfair Stockton of Jacksonville again consented to introduce the FSFL’s child labor bill in the Senate.⁴¹ Senate Bill 153 proposed an act to prevent children under the age of fourteen years from working in any factory, workshop, or mine in the state of Florida and established penalties for offenders.⁴² The bill received a favorable recommendation from the Committee on Organized Labor.⁴³ Upon its third reading, on May 12, 1905, Senator George P. Raney of Leon County proposed that the bill be amended, adding a provision that would exclude factories or workshops in which agricultural products were cured, canned, or boxed from the jurisdiction of the law. This motion failed to carry. Senator N. R. Carter of Levy County then proposed that the act not apply to the opening and canning of oysters. Carter’s motion also failed to carry, as did

³⁷ Journal of the Senate (1903), 1411.

³⁸ Journal of the Senate (1903), 1412.

³⁹ Journal of the House of Representatives (1903), 670, 1193.

⁴⁰ FSFL, *Fourteenth Annual Convention*, 18.

⁴¹ Florida State Federation of Labor, *Sixth Annual Convention* (Tampa: Press of Bulloch and Moritz, The Printers, 1906), 46.

⁴² State Senate of Florida, *Journal of the Senate* (n.p., 1905), 217.

⁴³ State Senate of Florida (1905), 342.

Senator T. M. Scott of Gadsden County's motion to exclude labor employed in the tobacco barns or warehouses of the state.⁴⁴ In this form, it passed the Senate unanimously by a vote of 28-0.⁴⁵

In the House of Representatives, a bill to prevent minor children under the age of fifteen years from working in any factory, workshop, or mine in the state was introduced by Representative E. P. Roberts of Monroe County on April 21, 1905.⁴⁶ The House Committee on Organized Labor recommended that it not pass, an action W.F. Edgerton and L.W. Tucker of the FSFL later attributed to the Committee's members from interior counties "which had not been cursed with this evil of child labor."⁴⁷ Upon its second reading on May 8, Roberts moved that the bill be made a special order to be discussed on May 15 at 11:00 am and ordered 200 copies printed.⁴⁸ On May 16, Roberts moved to withdraw House Bill 214 and substitute Senate Bill 153 in its place. Representative C.L. Leggett of Madison County moved to indefinitely postpone Senate Bill 153; his motion was defeated by a vote of 38 to 14.⁴⁹ The bill was referred to the Committee on Engrossed Bills, then disappeared from the legislative record.⁵⁰

In their final report, Edgerton and Tucker expressed regret that the child labor measure was defeated. They had remained confident until the last minute, but Florida's child labor problem had not been sufficiently publicized to push the conservative legislature of a largely agrarian state to pass this type of labor legislation.⁵¹ The FSFL, however, was determined not to give up. At their sixth annual convention in Tampa in 1906, the 38 member unions unanimously passed the following resolution, proposed by Delegate S. J. Kendrick of Tampa:

Whereas the use of child labor in the mills and factories of the South has grown to be one of the most humiliating blots upon our civilization, creating, as it does, panicky conditions in the labor markets, preventing the father from being able to provide the means of keeping his family from want, and crippling the youthful members of society

⁴⁴ State Senate of Florida (1905), 780.

⁴⁵ State Senate of Florida (1905), 781.

⁴⁶ Florida House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives* (n.p., 1905), 270.

⁴⁷ FSFL, *Sixth Annual Convention*, 45.

⁴⁸ Florida House of Representatives (1905), 773.

⁴⁹ Florida House of Representatives (1905), 1122.

⁵⁰ Florida House of Representatives (1905), 1124.

⁵¹ FSFL, *Sixth Annual Convention*, 47.

*mentally, morally, and physically, be it: Resolved: That this Convention direct its Legislative Committee to have framed and introduced in the next legislature a bill prohibiting the employment of children under fifteen years of age in stores, mills, factories, and workshops. Resolved further: That said bill provide for suitable factory inspections and penalties for the violation thereof.*⁵²

At the next session of the legislature, the FSFL would succeed in securing a child labor law, largely because of their partnership with the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs. The FFWC was organized at Green Cove Springs on February 21, 1895, and joined the Greater Federation of Women's Clubs in 1898.⁵³ By 1909, past president Clara W. Raynor could boast of an aggregate membership of 1,200 Florida women. The member clubs of the FFWC maintained programs in literature, art, music, philanthropy, and social work, but their agenda also contained a legislative component. At their first meeting in 1895, the FFWC drafted a petition to the state legislature to change the law which allowed cattle to roam free in towns of less than 1,200 inhabitants. In 1897, through a resolution passed by the Palmetto Club of Daytona, the FFWC circulated a petition to raise the age of consent from 10 to 21 years of age. In 1907, through cooperation with the FSFL, the women of the FFWC brought the subject of child labor and the necessity for a law to protect child workers to the attention of the men and women of the state.⁵⁴

The Woman's Club of Jacksonville, the largest member club in the FFWC, had 215 members at the close of 1907.⁵⁵ The Woman's Club was organized in January 1897, when forty women met in the parlor of the Windsor Hotel to form a club for "the improvement, benefit, and advancement of womankind in all directions named, and generally to give aid to all worthy objects."⁵⁶ From the club's inception, these worthy objects often encompassed legislative measures, including the aforementioned age of consent bill, a 1905 bill to establish a State

⁵² FSFL, *Sixth Annual Convention*, 16, 63.

⁵³ Clara W. Raynor, "Federation of Women's Clubs in Florida," in *Florida Edition, Makers of America: A Historical and Biographical Work by an Able Corps of Writers*, vol. II, ed. The Florida Historical Society (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell, 1909), 45.

⁵⁴ Raynor, 47-50.

⁵⁵ Woman's Club of Jacksonville, *Manual of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, Florida, 1907-1908* (Jacksonville, FL: The Drew Press, 1908), 41.

⁵⁶ Woman's Club of Jacksonville (1908), 46; Woman's Club of Jacksonville, Memorial to the Legislature of the State of Florida, March 20, 1909, Box 1, Folder 2, May Mann Jennings Papers.

Reform School for boys at Marianna, and the 1907 child labor legislation.⁵⁷ As early as 1903, the club's Philanthropic Committee participated in a discussion on child labor led by Mrs. I.E. Baird and Dr. Melvina Reichard. By 1907, a standing child labor committee had been formed to correspond with the child labor committee in the FFWC, composed of Mrs. O.L. Keene, Mrs. William James Bryan, and Mrs. Cora Hawley Seaton, then Superintendent of the Children's Home Society of Florida.⁵⁸

In these early years, women's civic involvement consisted primarily of writing and circulating petitions or memorials to legislators and the governor. Clubwomen rarely ventured to the capital unescorted and often depended upon males to do their lobbying for them. FFWC historian Lucy Worthington Blackman wrote in 1939 that in the early years of club activity, many men bitterly denounced clubwomen's civic participation. Mrs. Ninah May Holden Cummer told Blackman that "she was many times reviled to her face for having anything to do with such an iniquitous movement." "Thanks be," Blackman mused, "there were enough women with spinal cords starched stiff, who raised their undaunted eyebrows and said, 'Ah, indeed!' to this masculine mandate – and then went forth and did as they saw fit."⁵⁹

Clara Raynor, FFWC president from 1907 to 1908, saw fit to draft a child labor bill with the cooperation of the legislative committee of the FSFL. The alliance of Florida's club women with its labor leaders was praised by child labor activists at the national level. In a speech at the NCLC conference in January 1907, Alexander McKelway, corresponding secretary for the Southern states, mentioned Florida's efforts to secure legislation during his speech on the South's new crusade to ameliorate its social problems. Though child labor laws had been passed in key states such as Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, McKelway recognized the long, toilsome road child labor activists would have to travel to improve them. Cotton mills certainly employed the greatest number of children and thus posed the greatest hazard to the growth and development of future generations, but for the first time in this speech,

⁵⁷ Woman's Club of Jacksonville (1908), 47.

⁵⁸ Woman's Club of Jacksonville, Florida, Program, 1903-1904, Woman's Club of Jacksonville Yearbooks, Florida Collection, Jacksonville Public Library, Jacksonville, FL; Woman's Club of Jacksonville (1908), 11. William James Bryan was a state senator from Duval County who also served as the United States Senator from Florida from 1907-1908. His relation to William Jennings Bryan is unknown.

⁵⁹ Lucy Worthington Blackman, *The Florida Federation of Women's Clubs 1895-1939* (Jacksonville, FL: Southern Historical Publishing, 1939), 16.

McKelway called attention to the employment of children in the mines of Kentucky and Virginia as well as the cigar factories and canneries of Florida.⁶⁰ As a result of the collaboration of the FFWC and the FSFL, the plight of Florida's child laborers had reached a national audience.

The two organizations also found an ally in Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward (1905-1908), who had followed his predecessor's lead, running on a progressive, anti-railroad, anti-corporation ticket overwhelmingly supported by the rural population. According to Broward's biographer, his term as governor – known in Florida as the “Broward Era” - was a period characterized by the development of a more centralized state government and the growing idea of governmental responsibility for the welfare of citizens.⁶¹

Broward's social welfare philosophy was reflected in his stance on child labor laws. In his message at the opening session of the state legislature in the spring of 1907, Broward urged lawmakers to pass preventative legislation regulating child labor. According to the 1900 census, 15,403 children ages 10 to 15 were employed in Florida; of that total number, only 740 held manufacturing jobs compared to Alabama's 5,174 child factory workers and Georgia's 6,532.⁶² Though he acknowledged “this evil is less prevalent in our state than in some others,” Broward advised the legislature to “enact a child labor law at this session which will prevent the growth of this evil and effectually check and crush out such as does exist in this state.”⁶³

The child labor law proposed at the 1907 legislature, Senate Bill 83, was introduced by Senator W. Hunt Harris of Key West. It effectively banned children under the age of fourteen from factory work, prohibited work while schools were in session, and established a nine-hour day and six-day week for young laborers.⁶⁴ The text of the bill was printed in Florida's largest newspaper, the *Times-Union* of Jacksonville, whose editor praised it as the kind of progressive

⁶⁰ Alexander McKelway, “The Awakening of the South Against Child Labor,” in “Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the National Child Labor Committee,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 29 (1907), 12.

⁶¹ Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward*, 261.

⁶² United States Bureau of the Census, Special Report: Occupations at the Twelfth Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 176.

⁶³“Governor Broward's Message to Florida Solons,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 3, 1907, 8.

⁶⁴ State Senate of Florida, *Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1907* (Tallahassee, FL: Capital Publishing Company, 1907), 309; “Senator W. Hunt Harris' Bill Relative to Child Labor,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 15, 1907, 7; “County Division Has Become State Question,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 9, 1907.

legislation his paper had always advocated. Expressing what would turn out to be a degree of naïve optimism, he wrote, “we are inclined to believe that, on the whole, the sober second thought of the community at large will eventually lead to a general endorsement of the proposed law.”⁶⁵

As the legislative session progressed, however, it became clear that the community at large was wholly undecided as to what form, if any, child labor regulation should take in the state of Florida. One of many bills demanding the attention of the state’s busy lawmakers, the child labor bill passed its second reading in the senate on April 19, 1907, only after it had been amended to exclude agricultural and domestic work by children and the provision for its enforcement by the commissioner of labor statistics had been axed.⁶⁶ On April 25, the bill was read a third time and put to vote; it passed the Senate by the narrow margin of 12 to 10, the dissenting votes cast by senators from the interior, rural counties of Jefferson, Leon, Alachua, and Duval as well as Franklin County, whose county seat, Apalachicola, was home to many of the state’s oyster and shrimp canning facilities. The bill was sent to the House, on April 26, where it was introduced by Representative Ion Farris of Duval County. Farris read several favorable recommendations from the FSFL, women’s clubs, United States Congressman Stephen Sparkman of Tampa, and several of Tampa’s prominent citizens.⁶⁷ The measure was then referred to the Committee on Organized Labor.⁶⁸

Though the governor and reform-minded citizens supported the legislation, an individual whose business and profits were threatened by the bill came forward to oppose the measure. John G. Ruge, the proprietor of Ruge Brothers Canning Company, was born in Apalachicola in 1854, the son of German immigrants. Ruge and his brother George took over their father’s dry goods business and, after the Civil War, turned it into the first successful oyster packing operation along Florida’s Gulf Coast.⁶⁹ Ruge was a well-respected member of the community and a

⁶⁵ Editorial, *Florida Times-Union*, April 8, 1907, 4.

⁶⁶ State Senate of Florida (1907), 450, 452; “Another Weekend Recess Taken by the Florida Legislature,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 20, 1907, 1.

⁶⁷ “Good Roads Are Not For Florida at this Session,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 25, 1907, 1.

⁶⁸ State Senate of Florida (1907), 567; Florida House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Session of 1907* (Tallahassee, FL: Capital Publishing Company, 1907), 628.

⁶⁹ Rogers, 121.

regional leader in the Episcopal Church, serving as a trustee of the University of the South at Sewanee.⁷⁰ In a speech before the House Committee on Organized Labor, Ruge read a resolution by the Apalachicola Board of Trade denouncing the child labor measure, which he declared “would paralyze the oyster industry of the state.” He insisted the bill, which followed the form of those written to regulate child labor in states whose main industry was cotton manufacture, was largely the work of eastern mill owners who sought to stifle Southern competition. These Eastern mill owners, allied with organized labor, according to Ruge, used women’s clubs and the clergy to effect unnecessary legislative changes under the guise of benevolent reform. Ruge made no attempt to hide his contempt for organized labor, which he called “the refuge of the lazy and incompetent for all those who desire a full day’s wages for the scant days’ work.” Though Ruge admitted to employing children, he claimed the work performed by children in the packing houses and canneries actually benefited them. They earned money for their families much more quickly and in much better conditions than in agricultural work, for example. More importantly, said Ruge, the children wanted to work, and in the absence of compulsory school attendance laws, their employment kept them from becoming idlers and vagabonds.⁷¹

Ruge went on to explain that the children working in the canning industry were rarely white, as white children did not wish to perform the type of work involved nor work in close proximity to the black children canners employed. However, Ruge reasoned that because blacks could not be trusted to do the work properly, packers needed to import “Bohemian immigrant families” from the mid-atlantic states to work in the packing houses. These men and women could only be persuaded to migrate if their entire families would be provided for, and both in the absence of childcare and the interest of economic security, immigrant children worked alongside their parents at a leisurely pace under their complete supervision. Ruge reminded legislators that these children, who were not U.S. citizens, could not attend the state-funded public schools of Florida, even if they so wished. Work, then, was the only way to keep them out of mischief, while teaching them valuable skills and allowing them to help their families. Child labor, to Ruge, helped the poor child earn his keep, taught him a trade, and kept the dangerous “Negro and Bohemian races” from having too much free time on their hands. The evil on trial, he concluded,

⁷⁰ Town Topics, *Apalachicola Times*, May 27, 1911, 5.

⁷¹ “Child Labor Legislation,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 28, 1907, 10.

was not child labor, but “the great trouble that arises from the agitators of child labor...a vicious sentiment being created against all kinds of work in the minds of the young.”⁷²

Ruge’s fervent arguments, many of which attempted to manipulate Southern attitudes toward localism and race, struck a chord with the House Committee, which recommended that the bill not pass.⁷³ On the bill’s second reading, Representative Griggs of Ruge’s own Franklin County moved to amend the age limit from 14 to 12, which passed by a vote of 40 to 21.⁷⁴ Florida’s labor leaders hoped AFL President Samuel Gompers’ speech in Jacksonville would rally support. Before a packed house at the Duval Theater, Gompers acknowledged “that in your state legislature there is now pending a bill, if not for the abolition of child labor, for its restriction or limitation. I can only express the hope that Florida – proud Florida – will soon be counted among the states that will no longer allow the slaughter of her innocent children.”⁷⁵ On May 25, the final vote was counted – Senate Bill 83 passed the House by a vote of 44 to 7, the dissenting votes being cast by the Representatives from the rural, northern counties of Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Gadsden, and Leon.⁷⁶ The amended child labor bill returned to the Senate, where it was concurred to the House’s amendments, and subsequently signed into law by Governor Broward on May 29, 1907.⁷⁷

Florida’s first comprehensive child labor law established a twelve year age requirement for young workers in factories, workshops, bowling alleys, barrooms, beer gardens, mines, quarries, and places of amusement where liquor was sold. The law also prohibited child labor during the months in which schools were in session and gave the power of enforcement to local authorities, which essentially rendered it ineffective.⁷⁸ In addition, Florida still lacked a compulsory education law. Florida’s working children were technically free to go to school,

⁷² “Child Labor Legislation.”

⁷³ Florida House of Representatives (1907), 741.

⁷⁴ Florida House of Representatives (1907), 1505.

⁷⁵ “Union Labor Has a Big Day,” *Jacksonville Metropolis*, May 25, 1907, 9.

⁷⁶ Florida House of Representatives (1907), 1523.

⁷⁷ State Senate of Florida (1907), 1609, 1770; “Child Labor Bill Passed the House this Morning,” *Jacksonville Metropolis*, May 25, 1907, 7; “Representative Dudley Unconscious for a Time; Relatives Summoned,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, May 26, 1907, 1.

⁷⁸ Davidson, 246.

though whether their parents or guardians would force them to do so remained to be seen.⁷⁹ Though the end result was very different from what the bill's supporters had initially proposed, they rejoiced at the law's passage, and Governor Broward presented Clara Raynor with the pen he used to sign the bill into law.⁸⁰

The experience of agitating for a child labor law awakened the FFWC to an entirely new set of civic problems. Though Florida's clubwomen had always taken an interest in legislative matters, they now found themselves fervently working for many types of social legislation, which included improvement and enforcement of the 1907 law. The FFWC's child labor committee wrote to the sheriffs of the counties where child labor was most rampant, asking what county officials intended to do to enforce the law. When their responses were unsatisfactory, the clubwomen circulated petitions to ensure these sheriffs would obey the provisions of the law.⁸¹ In the annual report of 1909-1910, Lena W. Shackleford, president of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville reported "various petitions, bills, and memorials were read through the club year, all of which were acted upon by the club, and in view of the increasing interest which women are evincing in legislative matters it was thought wise to create a new committee, whose duty it shall be to handle and further such business in the future."⁸² This legislative committee was ably chaired by May Mann Jennings, wife of the former governor and daughter of former legislator August Mann.⁸³ The clubwomen's civic consciousness was developed further by their schedule of meetings, which included a talk on "Women's Work and Child Labor," during which club members read and discussed Florence Kelley's book *Some Ethical Gains Through Legislation*.⁸⁴ Kelley came to Jacksonville and spoke before the club on the work of the National Consumer League, and member Cora Hawley Seaton gave an address on the work of the Children's Home

⁷⁹ Raynor, 50.

⁸⁰ Blackman, 25.

⁸¹ Jessie Hamm Meyer, *Leading the Way: A Century of Service, The Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, 1895-1995* (Lakeland: The Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, 1994), 64.

⁸² Woman's Club of Jacksonville, *Manual of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, Florida, 1909-1910* (Jacksonville, FL: Kennedy-Brown Advertising Co., 1910), 48.

⁸³ Woman's Club of Jacksonville (1910), 11.

⁸⁴ Woman's Club of Jacksonville (1910), 41.

Society. On Civics Day, Judge W.B. Young lectured on “What the Laws of Florida Do For Women and Children of the State.”⁸⁵

As the next session of the legislature drew near, the legislative committee of the Woman’s Club of Jacksonville drafted a memorial to the legislature asking for the passage of a more stringent child labor law.⁸⁶ For its part, the FSFL sent legislative committee members Louis P. Head of Pensacola and Charles Leidy of Tallahassee to the capital on April 9, 1909, to influence the legislature to enact laws favorable to organized labor and to improve the existing child labor law. Senator Lewis W. Zim, the President of the FSFL and legislator from St. John’s County, pledged to assist them.⁸⁷ On April 16, Representative E. S. Grace of Citrus County introduced House Bill No. 245, which sought to amend the 1907 law to prohibit the employment of minors younger than fourteen years of age in manufacturing or establishments where liquor was sold, and Senator F.M. Hudson of Miami introduced a similar bill in the Senate.⁸⁸ These measures, however, went largely unnoted by the state’s major newspapers, and though both were favorably recommended by their respective Committees on Organized Labor, they died on the table in the legislature.⁸⁹

Despite the continued efforts of the FFWC and the FSFL, the majority of Floridians seemed content with the regulations on child labor established by the 1907 legislation. Most state leaders were still unfamiliar with the working conditions of the relatively small numbers of Florida children employed in the cigar and canning industries, and the powerful rhetoric of oyster packer John G. Ruge appealed to the nativist, racial sentiments shared by the majority of Florida’s conservative legislators. They were content to forget about the issue of child labor until the state’s clubwomen and labor leaders decided to expand their coalition. A new, powerful

⁸⁵ Woman’s Club of Jacksonville (1910), 50.

⁸⁶ Woman’s Club of Jacksonville, Memorial to the Legislature of the State of Florida, 1909, Box 1, Folder 2, May Mann Jennings Papers.

⁸⁷ “Some Measures That Will Be Urged Upon the Present Legislature,” *Tallahassee True Democrat*, April 9, 1909, 9.

⁸⁸ Florida House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Session of 1909* (Tallahassee, FL: Capital Publishing Company, 1909), 264; State Senate of Florida, *Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909* (Tallahassee, FL: Capital Publishing Company, 1909), 604; “Many Bills Now Before House,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 20, 1909, 4.

⁸⁹ State Senate of Florida (1909), 1476-1477; Florida House of Representatives (1909), 615.

crusade led by a charismatic young gentleman from Wisconsin would soon redirect the attention of state leaders to the plight of Florida's children.

CHAPTER THREE

STRENGTHENING THE COALITION AND THE LAW: THE CHILD LABOR CAMPAIGNS OF 1911 AND 1913

Soon after the passage of the 1907 child labor legislation, labor leaders and clubwomen realized that without provision for a state labor inspector, the law would not be effectively enforced. After proposed measures to establish the office of state labor inspector and increase the age limit to 14 years were tabled during the legislative session of 1909, the state's child labor activists grew frustrated, yet vowed to continue their petitions, letter-writing campaigns, and lobbying at the next session of the legislature. They gained a powerful new ally in Marcus Fagg, who moved to Jacksonville in 1910 to assume the leadership of the Children's Home Society of Florida and took immediate interest in the welfare of the state's children. After another humbling defeat at the 1911 legislature, Fagg and the Woman's Club of Jacksonville called on the resources and leadership of the National Child Labor Committee, who agreed to hold their 1913 annual conference in the city of Jacksonville. That conference, which exposed many Floridians to the evils of child labor already in their midst and alerted national reformers to the plight of Florida's working children, served as the catalyst for a public reaction that resulted in the passage of Florida's most comprehensive child labor law.

By early 1911, Florida's labor leaders agreed that the 1907 child labor legislation was "flagrantly violated on all sides and of no use whatsoever to the State."¹ The FSFL thus resolved to endorse the following measures: a compulsory education bill, a bill for the creation of a state bureau of labor statistics, and the appointment of a state factory inspector or official to enforce the existing child labor law.² The editor of *The Florida State Federation Magazine* lamented that Florida lagged behind as the only Southern state, save Louisiana, without a compulsory education law or a state labor commissioner. "It seems almost inconceivable," he wrote, "that any fair-minded and intelligent person whose heart is not made of flint should use his influence and prestige to fight the Florida State Federation of Labor on the question of child labor and

¹Florida State Federation of Labor, Issue in Commemoration of the Eleventh Annual Convention, *The State Federation Magazine*, January 1911, 14.

² *State Federation Magazine*, 8.

compulsory education.”³ Most employers would have gladly followed the law but for their “greedy and heartless competitors” whose employment of children at low wages ensures every business-minded employer had to do so. Organized laborers and clubwomen had worked so hard to educate the public, he continued, that it seemed superfluous to further argue the need for better legislation, but, of course, some employers would continue to hold out rather than give up their source of cheap revenue, even if such action were in the best interest of the future of the state. These employers, he added, often well-known pillars of the community, were also law-breakers, no better than common burglars. A means must be provided for enforcing this law at the next legislature, because “if the law was worth passing, it is worth enforcing.” He concluded with an eloquent plea for justice:

*The soft velvety hands of God’s little children are at this moment outstretched in a supplication that comes straight from the heart, praying for relief from their present bondage. Will the people of Florida hear their prayer? Will they suffer this intolerable condition of affairs to remain longer as a blot upon the fair name of the Peninsula State, a State that stands alone, with the exception of Louisiana in the South, as a reflection upon civilization.*⁴

Marcus Charles Fagg heard the prayer of Florida’s children. He arrived in Jacksonville in 1910 to assume the leadership of the Children’s Home Society of Florida (CHS) upon the resignation of clubwoman and child labor reformer Cora Hawley Seaton, who had remarried and subsequently chose to vacate her position.⁵ Born in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1879, Fagg graduated from Northwestern University in Chicago before working at the Union Bethel Settlement in Cincinnati and serving four years as the General Secretary of the Associated Charities of Evansville, Indiana. Immediately preceding his years in Jacksonville, Fagg served as the Chief Probation Officer of the Juvenile Court in Pittsburgh, a position that undoubtedly reaffirmed his calling as a man committed to the uplift of the nation’s children.⁶

³ *State Federation Magazine*, 14.

⁴ *State Federation Magazine*, 15.

⁵ Children’s Home Society of Florida, “William H. Baker’s Presidential Address,” in *Fourteenth Annual Report* (Jacksonville, FL: Children’s Home Society of Florida, 1916), 3.

⁶ Marcus C. Fagg, *Biography*, 1958.

In his first year as secretary of the CHS, Fagg increased the number of children assisted from 87 during the fiscal year of 1909-1910 to 344 by the end of 1910-1911. By ingeniously incorporating a fundraising method of direct letter appeals, he increased the society's number of contributors from 155 in 1909 to over 2,000 by the end of 1911, raising nearly \$20,000 to assist the orphaned, neglected, and poor children of the state.⁷ Fagg's interest in child welfare, however, like Seaton's before him, extended beyond the reach of the work of the CHS. During a publicity tour for the CHS in April 1911, he made pleas for public support of a juvenile court law and a more comprehensive child labor law in fourteen public addresses across the state, urging support of measures "which will mean much to the children of the state and to the citizenship of the future."⁸

Fagg found a group of kindred spirits in the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, which in 1911 was busy making preparations for another year's work at the legislature. On January 12, the club's social science class held a panel discussion on child labor and compulsory education led by Minerva Jennings, wife of Frank Jennings, a prominent Jacksonville attorney.⁹ Indeed, the clubwomen of the entire state were eagerly working toward the passage of a revised child labor law. In a letter dated April 5, 1911, Susie B. Wight, chair of the legislative committee of the FFWC, wrote to the corresponding legislative chairs of each member club, urging them to pass resolutions in favor of a child labor bill at the upcoming legislature and asking individual clubwomen to make use of their personal influence with lawmakers.¹⁰ May Mann Jennings, chair of the legislative committee of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, subsequently drafted a memorial to the legislature on behalf of the club advocating, among other measures, a revised child labor law, and presented it to Governor Albert W. Gilchrist herself.¹¹ Jacksonville's

⁷ Children's Home Society of Florida, *A Brief Summary of Events, Services, Bequests, Deaths, Accomplishments, Funds Raised, and Other Matters of Interest Concerning the Children's Home Society of Florida* (Jacksonville, FL: Children's Home Society of Florida, 1935), 1. For more on the work of the Children's Home Society, see Lawrence Mahoney, *Children and Hope: A History of the Children's Home Society of Florida* (Miami: Pickering Press, 1987).

⁸"Children's Home Society's Work is Care of Homeless Little Ones," *Jacksonville Metropolis*, April 7, 1911, 4.

⁹ Woman's Club of Jacksonville, *Manual of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, 1910-1911* (Jacksonville, FL: Kennedy Brown Co., 1911).

¹⁰ Wight to Jennings, 5 April 1911, Box 1, Folder 3, May Mann Jennings Papers.

¹¹ Woman's Club of Jacksonville, Memorial to the Legislature of the State of Florida, 1911, Box 1, Folder 3, May Mann Jennings Papers.

clubwomen heeded Wight's advice and, following Jennings' example, wrote to lawmakers and eagerly anticipated success at the legislature that year.

Governor Gilchrist, more of a conservative political figure than his predecessor, declined to support revised child labor legislation in his address at the opening session of the 1911 legislature on April 5, but Attorney General Park Trammell pleased the state's clubwomen and labor leaders when he recommended the passage of "a law looking to the better enforcement of the child labor law by providing for an inspector."¹² Senate Bill 68, introduced by Senator Hudson on April 10, called for the establishment of a fourteen year age minimum in factory work, enforcement of the existing law's educational requirement, the creation of the office of state labor inspector, and the definition of the inspector's duties and his/her compensation.¹³ The bill, and its companion measure, House Bill 153, garnered the powerful support of clubwomen, Marcus Fagg, and the State Federation of Labor, which praised the importance of the bill in its weekly column in the *Jacksonville Metropolis*.¹⁴ The NCLC also pledged its support. Owen R. Lovejoy, field secretary of that organization, remained optimistic when interviewed by a *Metropolis* reporter on April 20. Lovejoy admitted that the proposed legislation was less restrictive than other states, but attuned to Florida's present situation. "Florida," he commented, "is particularly fortunate in having so few industries that utilize child labor. For this reason, it is important that the state safeguard the welfare of its working children before such industries become strongly entrenched."¹⁵

Lovejoy would soon learn child labor had already become entrenched in at least one industry in Florida. On the same day that he and Marcus Fagg arrived in Tallahassee to lobby on behalf of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, Associated Charities, and other reform-minded organizations, John G. Ruge spoke before the legislature, voicing his opposition to the new

¹² "Att'y General Park Trammell Suggests Laws," *Jacksonville Metropolis*, April 5, 1911, 8. Gilchrist's biographer has presented him as a progressive, but his stance on child labor and, as historian Steven Kerber argues, his veto of the initiative, referendum and recall "cast considerable doubt on his credentials as a progressive Democrat." See Ric A. Kabat, "Albert W. Gilchrist: Florida's Progressive Governor" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 1987), and "Everybody Votes for Gilchrist": The Gubernatorial Campaign of 1908," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 67:2 (1988), 184-203, and Steven Kerber, "The Initiative and Referendum in Florida, 1911-1912," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 72:3 (1994), 302-315.

¹³ State Senate of Florida, *Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1911* (Tallahassee, FL: T.J. Appleyard, 1911), 187; "Important Bills Pending in the Legislature," *Florida Times-Union*, April 12, 1911, 8.

¹⁴ J.C. Privett, Labor News Department, *Jacksonville Metropolis*, sec. 2, April 15, 1911, 18.

¹⁵ "Child Labor Bill Gaining Solon's Favor," *Jacksonville Metropolis*, April 20, 1911, 9.

measure. Ruge lamented that although a child labor bill had been presented to several terms of the legislature, it had never seemed to serve the interests of philanthropy or the education and comfort of Florida's children, but rather the interests of Eastern mill owners and national labor leaders attempting to stifle the competition of Southern manufacturers. He continued to manipulate anti-Northern sentiment by charging that Senate Bill 68 and its companion measure, House Bill 153, were copied from a publication entitled the "Hand Book of 1908" from New York. The proposed measure in that publication, he reasoned, was designed for a district with a dense population of white workers, compulsory school attendance laws, and school districts without a race question and was thus wholly unsuited to Florida's industrial environment.¹⁶

Ruge's racial argument retained the flavor of his speech before the 1907 legislature. Only black children worked in the canneries, he noted, as white children refused to work alongside them. With no compulsory school attendance laws, these children could not be forced to attend school, and therefore, his factory provided a means of preventing child vagrancy, particularly among blacks. However, in the absence of white workers and unable to depend totally upon the "idle and dissolute Negroes," canners found it necessary to hire the children of "Bohemian" immigrant families, who Ruge claimed worked alongside their parents under their complete supervision.¹⁷

Ruge attempted to appeal to Progressive ideology at the conclusion of his speech, pointing out that "child labor is sometimes but not always rendered necessary by poverty, through inheritance or misfortune, or the result of a cause." Many children, he argued, worked to support widowed mothers, or entire families. A child labor law, then, struck at the effect of the problem, but not the cause, which was poverty. "We do not need any law to prevent anyone from working, who will work, but on the contrary, the greatest necessity is for more stringent effort to enforce the vagrant laws, so that hundreds of white and especially black drones, now infesting every town of the state, should go to work."¹⁸ Ruge also made it clear that he supported compulsory education laws – the best child labor law, in his opinion, was a compulsory education law with a fourteen year age limit. Such a law, of course, kept native-born, white

¹⁶ "Hon. John G. Ruge Scores Child Labor Legislation," *Florida Times-Union*, April 22, 1911, 8.

¹⁷ "Hon. John G. Ruge Scores Child Labor Legislation."

¹⁸ "Hon. John G. Ruge Scores Child Labor Legislation."

children in school but still allowed migrant “Bohemian children” whose citizenship status left them outside the jurisdiction of the state education system to work under the auspices of canning managers.

At home in Jacksonville, May Mann Jennings probably read Ruge’s speech in the *Times-Union* as she received word from Marcus Fagg that he had reached Tallahassee “just in time to be of real help to the child labor bill – and with some concessions we will get it through.”¹⁹ Prior to Fagg’s arrival, Senate Bill 68 had passed to the second reading in the Senate with no objections, but House Bill 153 had stalled. Objections arose to the bill’s educational requirement, its regulation of hours, and its sections regulating newsboys and children in agriculture. The House Committee on Organized Labor called Fagg and Lovejoy to a special meeting on the evening of April 22, 1911, to address these objections. In an interview with a *Times-Union* correspondent, Lovejoy saw no problem making adjustments to the bill. He admitted that a few of its features were perhaps not applicable to Florida’s present industrial conditions. Lovejoy informed readers that Representative Glen Terrell would offer a substitute bill in place of House Bill 153 that would retain the fourteen year age requirement for industry but lower it to twelve for stores, businesses, and telegraph offices, while raising the proposed eight hour day to ten hours. Agricultural and domestic work would remain unregulated, and the substitute bill would also reduce the proposed age minimum for the night messenger service from twenty-one to eighteen. Lewis Hine, the NCLC’s staff photographer, had also joined Fagg and Lovejoy, and the *Metropolis* remained optimistic that with the support of these great individuals, the amended legislation would pass.²⁰

John G. Ruge, however, remained vehemently opposed to the child labor bill, whose proposed changes he contended still created a mass of idle, uncontrollable children – particularly Negroes. In an interview in the *Times-Union*, on April 28, 1911, he was perplexed that, under the amended bill, children could toil all day in the sun working in agricultural jobs, but were forbidden from shucking oysters inside a building, a job which he argued paid better wages and thus allowed the children’s parents to purchase better clothing and better food. Again preying upon the racial sentiments of his audience, he pleaded, “Do not make vagrants of these children,

¹⁹ Fagg to Jennings, 21 April 1911, Box 1, Folder 3, May Mann Jennings Papers.

²⁰ “Owen R. Lovejoy Favors Child Labor Law Changes,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 23, 1911, 4.

white or black, and especially the latter, who are willing to work.”²¹ Marcus Fagg responded to Ruge’s comments and attempted to clarify the bill’s provisions in a subsequent *Times-Union* interview. Like many Progressives, Fagg tried to ignore the racial issues and instead focused on the personal motives of his opponent, pointing out that his organization, the CHS, would receive no gain whether the measure passed or failed. Fagg was “really interested in the little ones of Florida” – though he doubted those opposing the measure were interested in anything but making money. Fagg assured *Times-Union* readers the bill would not hurt industry, except those industries “which prey upon our little children and turn them into little machines for private gain.” He hoped the legislature would have “vision enough to see that the child that is given a chance for mental, physical, and moral development in its tender years will be a much better citizen.”²²

Despite Fagg’s vibrant rhetoric and the lobbying efforts of the state’s clubwomen, the Federation of Labor, and the NCLC’s field secretary, Ruge succeeded in preventing the passage of the amended child labor measures. Senate Bill 68 was tabled on May 3, 1911, and House Bill 153 was withdrawn on May 30.²³ It became clear to Florida’s reformers that if child labor legislation were ever to pass, public attitudes toward state regulation of family and child affairs would have to be radically altered. Public awareness of Florida’s child labor problem was the key to success at the next session of the legislature, and in a brilliant stroke, Jennings, Fagg, and the Woman’s Club of Jacksonville called upon the NCLC to assist them. At the invitation of the Jacksonville Board of Trade, the Woman’s Club, the CHS, Associated Charities, and other civic organizations, the NCLC made plans to hold its annual conference in Jacksonville from March 13 – 19, 1913.²⁴ Hoping that the conference would generate support for child labor legislation at the upcoming legislature, the members of the Woman’s Club publicized the conference to the state and city women’s organizations, while state secretary Solenstein did the same for men’s

²¹ W. T. Bauskett, “John G. Ruge Denounces New Child Labor Measure,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 28, 1911, 9.

²² W. T. Bauskett, “Marcus Fagg Explains New Child Labor Measure,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 29, 1911, 9.

²³ Florida State Senate (1911), 727; Florida House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Florida of the Session of 1911* (Tallahassee, FL: T.J.Appleyard, 1911), 2058.

²⁴ National Child Labor Committee, *Child Labor and Poverty: Ninth Annual Conference on Child Labor* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1913).

groups.²⁵ The editor of the *Metropolis* called the conference “of momentous importance” to the state, and to the South.²⁶ He keenly observed that men and women with experience in dealing with various social problems would certainly attend, and from them, Florida could learn how best to deal with what had become, for reformers, a rather frustrating situation. “Every session of the conference,” he urged, “should be crowded with men, and women, the official and the private citizens of Jacksonville.”²⁷

As the conference drew near, child labor reformers from across the country, including Owen Lovejoy and Alexander McKelway, field secretaries of the NCLC, Samuel Lindsay, Rabbi David Marx of Atlanta, and Julia Lathrop of the Children’s Bureau in Washington, descended upon the city.²⁸ The citizens of Jacksonville flocked in large numbers to the NCLC’s photographic exhibit, which opened three days before the conference, and remained open to the public from 9:00 in the morning through 10:00 in the evening each day of the event. The exhibit, which featured the photography of Lewis Hine, included many images of children working in desolate conditions in the oyster and shrimp packing facilities along the Gulf Coast. The *Metropolis* publicized the emotional power of the exhibit and urged the entire city to visit the conference to witness the working conditions of children within their state.²⁹

The NCLC conference opened the evening of March 13, 1913, with a public reception in the banquet room of the Jacksonville Board of Trade, where Judge William Baker welcomed the guests on the governor’s behalf and urged the time for legislation had arrived.³⁰ The *Times-Union* (which, along with the *Metropolis*, covered each day of the conference proceedings) called the program of the second evening “the most interesting of the conference from the

²⁵“Child Labor Evils Shown by Exhibit,” *Florida Times-Union*, March 10, 1913, 12; “Woman’s Club Active in Preparation for Welfare Conference,” *Jacksonville Metropolis*, March 1, 1913, 3.

²⁶ Editorial, “Child Welfare Week,” *Jacksonville Metropolis*, March 3, 1913, 4.

²⁷ “Child Welfare Week.”

²⁸ “True Meaning of Child Labor Meeting Soon To Be Held in Jacksonville,” *Jacksonville Metropolis*, March 4, 1913, 9.

²⁹ “Appeal of the Child Forced into Labor At Last is Heard,” *Jacksonville Metropolis*, March 10, 1913, 16. For examples of Lewis Hine’s Florida photography, see Hine Collection, Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery, University of Maryland Baltimore County, <http://aok.lib.umbc.edu/specoll/digitcoll.php>.

³⁰ “Ninth Annual Conference of National Child Labor Committee Begins Today,” *Florida Times-Union*, March 13, 1913, 13.

Florida point of view.”³¹ Accompanied by stereopticon slides of his photographs, Lewis Hine reported the results of his 1911 investigation of child labor in the oyster and shrimp canning industries.³² Edward F. Brown of the NCLC also delivered an address entitled, “The Neglected Human Resources of the Gulf Coast States.” Except in Mississippi, Brown said, he and Hine witnessed unrestricted employment of children as young as five working nearly twelve hour days, from 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning until late in the afternoon. In the conclusion of his address, Brown reminded listeners of the recent legislative campaign for the protection of marine life, which proposed making trapping of oysters and shrimp out of season a high crime. “There is no closed season for children,” he lamented. “They are being sacrificed on the altar of industrial greed.”³³

Speeches like those delivered by Brown and Hine and the conference exhibits exposed the people of Jacksonville, and many other Floridians, to the actual practice of child labor in the state’s canning industries for the first time. During the conference’s closing session, the state’s fledgling Florida Child Labor Committee (FCLC) boasted of a significant increase in membership from 78 to 100 individuals.³⁴ At this same session, Alexander McKelway, the NCLC’s secretary for the Southern states, and attorney Frank Jennings of Jacksonville unveiled a plan to draft a new child labor bill to be presented at the upcoming legislature. Based on the NCLC’s Uniform Child Labor law, the new bill also largely took the form of the defeated measure of 1911. It would seek to raise Florida’s twelve year minimum for certain occupations to fourteen, with a sixteen year minimum for dangerous occupations. Employment certificates would be required to be obtained by employers, and the employment of boys under sixteen and girls under eighteen would be restricted to a nine hour day. The night messenger service would require children be eighteen years of age, and a Bureau of Labor would be created, along with the office of commissioner of labor, to enforce the provisions of the law.³⁵

³¹ “Sociologists Will Survey Conditions in Southland,” *Florida Times Union*, March 14, 1913, 13.

³² National Child Labor Committee, “Proceedings Ninth Annual Conference,” *Child Labor and Poverty: Ninth Annual Conference on Child Labor* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1913), 163.

³³ Edward F. Brown, “The Neglected Human Resources of the Gulf Coast States,” *Child Labor and Poverty: Ninth Annual Conference on Child Labor* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1913), 112.

³⁴ “State Legislature Will Be Asked to Pass Bill Outlawing Child Labor,” *Florida Times-Union*, March 18, 1913, 13.

³⁵ NCLC, “Proceedings Ninth Annual Conference,” 168-169.

Following McKelway's revelation, Jessie McGriff, secretary of the FCLC, moved to discuss the implications of the new legislation for charitable organizations. Even when the most comprehensive child labor laws were passed and enforced, she recognized that "the condition which forced the child to work (whether it be ignorance, necessity, or indolence on the part of the natural guardian) remains unchanged."³⁶ McGriff wondered who would assume financial responsibility for the families the law deprived of support and questioned whether mothers' pensions should be included in Florida's child labor campaign. Jean Gordon, former State Factory Inspector of New Orleans, and McKelway replied that most families they had encountered were not solely dependent upon child labor for sustenance, and those few who were could be aided by the formation of a general scholarship fund maintained by local churches and groups such as the Associated Charities.³⁷ Marcus Fagg, for his part, felt Florida's education situation was of a more serious nature than the question of poverty in the state. If all the students in Jacksonville attended school, for example, there would not be enough space in which to put them. J.H. Kaplan, of Selma, Alabama, assured Fagg that "there is no problem here in Jacksonville any greater than in any other city. No city of this country is yet alive to the value of education... Only when our people know the real value of education will these questions be settled, and in the meantime we must keep working on the child labor problem."³⁸

Owen Lovejoy likewise encouraged child labor activists to concentrate on the task at hand. "The educators are going to handle the educational problem. It is not ours, it is theirs. We can help stimulate these other organizations to work out their part of these problems. But there is just one thing on which we must keep pounding away; we have our one specific job, and that is the elimination of the child from the wage-earning industry."³⁹ Lewis Hine optimistically reminded the audience that "the situation in Florida is not bad and you should be encouraged that you can put your energies into preventative measures and do not have to cure a disease deeply

³⁶ NCLC, "Proceedings Ninth Annual Conference," 169.

³⁷ NCLC, "Proceedings Ninth Annual Conference," 170. Jean Gordon was also an instrumental figure in Louisiana's suffrage movement; for more information, see Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

³⁸ NCLC, "Proceedings Ninth Annual Conference," 171.

³⁹ NCLC, "Proceedings Ninth Annual Conference," 172-173.

rooted in your system.” Lovejoy suggested that if the new legislative campaign were to be truly effective, the newly-created FCLC must work rapidly to garner the support of a large number of leading citizens from varying sections of the state who can influence legislators. “In this way,” he advised, “you can build up a State Child Labor Committee so strong that you will surely win in the legislature, for if the legislature finds that a majority of people of the state want child labor laws, the legislature will want it, too.”⁴⁰

The members of the young FCLC were counting on the national conference to positively influence public opinion. They hoped all their work had awakened Florida to its existing child labor problem and what could happen in the future. On April 17 and 18, 1913, respectively, Speaker of the House Ion Farris and President Herbert Drane of the Senate introduced the new child labor measure, which had been written by the FCLC and endorsed by the FSFL and Governor Park Trammell, to both branches of the legislature.⁴¹ For her part, May Mann Jennings again wrote a memorial to the legislature on behalf of the Woman’s Club of Jacksonville endorsing fifteen worthy objects for legislation, and, once it was adopted, she sent copies to five prominent newspapers and each member of the legislature.⁴² The memorial was read into the record of the House of Representatives on April 17, 1913.⁴³ Memorials, however, were no longer enough. Convinced by the bill’s 1911 defeat that successful lobbying had to be done personally, May Mann Jennings and Minerva Jennings joined Fagg at the capital themselves to represent Jacksonville women’s interests.⁴⁴ They were joined by Jessie McGriff of Jacksonville, the secretary of the FCLC, and Mrs. J.C. Byars and Mrs. Lena Shackelford of Tallahassee, who represented the women of the entire state under the banner of the Florida Federation of Women’s

⁴⁰ NCLC, “Proceedings Ninth Annual Conference,” 169-170.

⁴¹ Trammell voiced his support of the child labor legislation in his message to the legislature. See Park Trammell, *Message of Park Trammell, Governor of Florida, To The Legislature, Regular Session 1913* (Tallahassee, FL: T.J. Appleyard, 1913), 61. Florida House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Session of 1913* (Tallahassee, FL: T.J. Appleyard, 1913), 421; State Senate of Florida, *Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1913* (Tallahassee, FL: T. J. Appleyard, 1913), 343; J.C. Privett, Labor Department, *Jacksonville Metropolis*, April 5, 1913, 10.

⁴² May Mann Jennings, Report of Legislative Committee to Woman’s Club For the Year 1912-1913, Box 2, Folder 1, May Mann Jennings Papers.

⁴³ Florida House of Representatives (1913), 415.

⁴⁴ Linda D. Vance, *May Mann Jennings: Florida’s Genteel Activist* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1985), 66.

Clubs.⁴⁵ Labor interests were well-represented by W. E. Terry, D. F. Featherston, and J.C. Privett, members of the legislative committee of the FSFL.⁴⁶ Owen Lovejoy spoke at the auditorium of the Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee on the afternoon of Sunday, April 20, on behalf of the NCLC and extended an invitation to members of the legislature who stayed in the city over the weekend. The *Times-Union* reported Lovejoy was “attentively listened to and made a favorable impression.”⁴⁷

Despite the strength of the coalition supporting the bills, some Floridians still harbored anti-legislative convictions. The *Tallahassee Weekly Democrat* and the *Tampa Morning Tribune* lamented the potential loss of young newspaper employees and telegraph messengers.⁴⁸ The *Times-Union*, which, like the *Weekly Democrat* and *Morning Tribune*, would be required to dismiss its newsboys who were younger than ten and girls who were younger than sixteen under the provisions of the new bill, printed a letter written by John C. Trice, a private citizen from Wakulla County opposing the legislation, on April 27, 1913.⁴⁹ Trice denounced the child labor measure, contending “the most diabolical piece of legislation now pending before the two houses of the Florida Legislature is concealed within the sugar-coated exteriors of senate bill no. 160 and house bill no. 296.” Trice referred to child labor legislation as “hard on poor persons” – such a protected childhood was possible for the idle rich, but “like the devil” for young workers supporting widowed mothers or entire families. He wondered how young men could learn a trade while kept in idleness until the age of fourteen. Perhaps the bill’s intent was good, he argued, but “it was drawn in Massachusetts by people wholly unfamiliar with conditions in the South.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Woman’s Club Notes, *Florida Times-Union*, April 17, 1913, 17.

⁴⁶ “Labor Interests on the Job at Capitol,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 13, 1913, 3.

⁴⁷ “Address by Owen R. Lovejoy in Behalf of Child Labor Had Many Sunday Hearers,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 21, 1913, 3.; “Solons Hear Talk on Child Labor Measure,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 21, 1913, 3.

⁴⁸ “Great Interest Shown In The Child Labor Bills,” *Tallahassee Weekly Democrat*, May 2, 1913, 2; “Child Labor Bill Talked of Again,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 23, 1913, 3.

⁴⁹ “Proposed Child Labor Bill and the Labor Measures,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 22, 1913, 15; “Proposed Child Labor Bill is Too Drastic for Florida,” *Florida Times-Union*, April 27, 1913, 3.

⁵⁰ “Proposed Child Labor Bill is Too Drastic for Florida.”

Trice and the state's newspapers voiced the only opposition to child labor laws during the 1913 legislative session.⁵¹ His letter and its publication by the state's largest newspaper angered supporters of child labor legislation, who bombarded the paper with letters defending the bills. In a letter to the editor on April 29, the officers of the FCLC responded to Trice's claim that the legislation was constructed by the NCLC. They contended the bills were written by the FCLC with due consideration of the needs of Florida. The FCLC thus graded the age requirements as low as ten years for the street trades and lowered the night messenger service age requirement to eighteen, a move which they said the manager of the Tallahassee Western Union office wholly supported.⁵² Fagg, for his part, responded by writing his own letter to the editor of the *Times-Union* and granting an interview with the *Metropolis* in which he repeated the position of the FCLC, but also added that the bill had the support of the FFWC, Senator F.M. Hudson, Speaker Farris, President Drane, and the labor committees of both branches of the legislature.⁵³ The FCLC, he assured readers, "was very careful to make the law apply to Florida conditions and children and exempts children on the farms and in domestic service altogether." The bill prohibited labor under ten years of age, and regulated it in older ages, so that "every poor mother who needs the support of her children can have it, without placing the health or morals of the children in danger." Fagg reminded readers that Florida was one of five states without suitable child labor laws, and he hoped that Florida's children would soon have the same chance to grow and prosper as children across the country. "Our only motive," he concluded, "has been to protect the children of Florida – and future citizens – we want them to be strong physically, intelligent mentally, and right morally."⁵⁴

To ensure clubwomen's continued support at the capital, Jessie McGriff, Marcus Fagg, and Alexander McKelway presided over a special meeting of the legislative committee of the Tallahassee Woman's Club on April 25. The Club praised "the splendid work being done by Mr.

⁵¹ John G. Ruge was conspicuously absent; he and his wife were in Europe touring Italian factories. See "Mr. and Mrs. Ruge in Rome," *Apalachicola Times*, May 31, 1913, 1.

⁵² "Proposed Child Labor Bill Defended by Committee," *Florida Times-Union*, April 29, 1913, 3.

⁵³ "Marcus C. Fagg Defends Pending Child Labor Bill," *Florida Times-Union*, April 30, 1913, 3; "Real Facts in Child Labor Bill Told by Fagg," *Jacksonville Metropolis*, May 2, 1913, 7.

⁵⁴ "Real Facts in Child Labor Bill Told by Fagg."

Fagg in leading dependent and delinquent children into channels of useful lives” and called McKelway “a man of splendid personality whose heart seems to be devoted to the excellent work of his Association.” The club unanimously agreed to cooperate with McGriff, Fagg, and McKelway on the issues of child labor and compulsory education.⁵⁵ Minerva Jennings spoke before the regular meeting of the Baptist Women’s Missionary Union of Jacksonville on May 1. She presented a circular letter and asked for signatures, thus securing the endorsement of all members of the BWMU.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Drane and Farris consolidated their efforts, agreeing to simultaneously support Senate Bill 160. Upon the bill’s second reading on May 27, the senate approved Senator John P. Stokes of Pensacola’s amendment that “nothing in this act shall apply to male children employed in the delivery of newspapers to regular subscribers outside of school hours.”⁵⁷ Senator Hudson tried unsuccessfully to recall the vote on Stokes’ amendment, but to no avail.⁵⁸ The amended child labor measure passed the Senate by a vote of 27 to 2, the dissenting votes cast by Senator Charles E. Davis of Madison and John B. Johnson of Live Oak.⁵⁹ Following passage in the Senate, the bill was placed on the privileged calendar of the House of Representatives near the end of the session by newly-elected Representative Harry Floyd of Apalachicola, who took pride in representing the home town of John G. Ruge, who had been the chief opponent of child labor legislation at many previous sessions of the legislature. Floyd’s action was largely responsible for the bill quick passage in the House by a vote of 56 to 0 on June 3, 1913.⁶⁰ Governor Park Trammell signed the bill into law June 9, 1913.⁶¹

In the July 12, 1913, issue of *The Survey*, Alexander McKelway related the news of the FCLC’s legislative success to the nation in an article simply titled, “Florida Child Labor

⁵⁵ “Woman’s Club is After General Legislation,” *Tallahassee Weekly Democrat*, April 25, 1913, 12.

⁵⁶ Women’s Baptist Missionary Union Department, *Florida Baptist Witness*, May 1, 1913, 7.

⁵⁷ State Senate of Florida (1913), 1780.

⁵⁸ State Senate of Florida (1913), 1897, 1975.

⁵⁹ Florida House of Representatives (1913), 1863.

⁶⁰ Florida House of Representatives (1913), 2334; Alexander McKelway, “Florida Child Labor Campaign,” *The Survey*, July 1913, 497-498.

⁶¹ “Acts Signed by the Governor,” *Florida Times-Union*, June 9, 1913, 14.

Campaign.” McKelway happily reported that, with the passage of legislation establishing a fourteen year age limit for labor in factories, “Florida had thus taken her place among the progressive states of the nation,” thanks to the efforts of clubwomen, organized labor, the coalition of social workers, reformers, and activists comprising the FCLC, and Fagg’s competent leadership.⁶²

In their final assessment of the legislative session of 1913, the legislative committee of the FSFL concluded that although Florida had long been slow to enact legislation to protect the interests of the workingman, the child labor bill and the employer’s liability bill passed that year were worthwhile gains.⁶³ They also rejoiced at the appointment of their own secretary-treasurer, J.C. Privett of Jacksonville, as the first State Labor Inspector, an obvious recognition of his long fight on behalf of child labor.⁶⁴ State Senator Lewis Zim of St. Augustine, the FSFL president, praised Privett as “a priceless jewel – a man whose whole heart, soul, and body is wrapped up in the labor movement, and who has been of incalculable benefit to your President in furthering the cause of organized labor in this state.”⁶⁵ Privett faced the monumental task of regulating child labor across the vast territory of Florida and battling hostile manufacturers like Apalachicola’s John G. Ruge. Though child labor reformers celebrated the 1913 legislation as a decisive victory, whether or not Florida’s new child labor law would effectively curtail the practice of employing children remained to be seen.

⁶² McKelway, 498.

⁶³ Florida State Federation of Labor, *Fourteenth Annual Convention, Miami, Florida, January 6-8, 1914* (Jacksonville, FL: Pritchard Printing and Publishing Company, 1914), 18.

⁶⁴ Florida State Federation of Labor, *Fourteenth Annual Convention*, 22.

⁶⁵ Florida State Federation of Labor, *Thirteenth Annual Convention, Lakeland, Florida, January 14-16, 1913* (Jacksonville, FL: The Harris Press, 1913), 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

POVERTY IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE: THE EFFECTS OF THE 1913 CHILD LABOR LAW

Prior to the establishment of the office of State Labor Inspector, Florida's child labor statutes were little regarded, but following the passage of the 1913 legislation and the installation of J.C. Privett as State Labor Inspector, child labor reformers hoped regulations would be enforced and employers would live up to the law.¹ The results of Privett's inspections highlight the complex nature of social change in the Progressive era. Child labor in Florida appeared to decline, but by Privett's own admission the work of the State Labor Inspector was severely hindered by lack of funding and personnel. During America's involvement in the First World War, for example, Privett noted an increase in the employment of children in flagrant violation of the law, but his inspections were restricted by a tight wartime budget, and he was thus unable to adequately enforce the law in every city and town. Though child labor concerns gradually disappeared from the agendas of civic organizations and the pages of newspapers, the actual practice of hiring child workers and the poverty that propelled it lingered for years to come.

In his first report of the year 1914-1915, State Labor Inspector J.C. Privett praised employers' general compliance with the child labor law. In fact, he wrote, most employers wanted to obey the law, and he was able to call attention to violations without having to resort to the courts or other measures of force.² The county Superintendents of Public Instruction (and Privett himself, in the case of Duval County) issued 356 employment certificates to children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen during that first year.³ Officials found many cases where children's employment was unnecessary to family survival; thus employment certificates were not issued to families who could not demonstrate financial need. Privett noted he still had

¹ J.C. Privett, *First Annual Report of the State Labor Inspector* (Tallahassee, FL: T. J. Appleyard, 1915), 5.

² Privett (1915), 7.

³ Privett (1915), 8, 11.

trouble convincing parents to send their children to school, and without a statewide compulsory education law, he could not force them.⁴

During 1914 and 1915, Privett inspected nearly 1,000 factories, stores, theatres, laundries, bakeries, and telegraph offices across the state and removed 1,350 children from workplaces who operated in violation of the child labor law.⁵ Jacksonville, the state's largest city, also had the greatest number of child workers whose employment violated the law, particularly in the street trades.⁶ Privett concluded the law's ten year age standard for newsboys was too hard to enforce and recommended it be raised to twelve. He also advocated the institution of a system in which the working child on the street would be forced to wear a badge issued by the state inspector certifying the child's age.⁷ Privett also noted, in a more positive tone, that as a result of the law, school attendance had reached the highest level in Duval county history. He also praised the city of Jacksonville's new free employment bureau which allowed needy fourteen and fifteen-year-olds who had been displaced from jobs that required them to be sixteen to find work in a store or office where the age limit for work was twelve.⁸

The second largest number of child labor violations predictably occurred in Tampa, the state's second largest city. Tampa's violations totaled 420, and most child workers were found in the cigar factories, from which 246 children were removed and 142 were granted employment certificates.⁹ Managers of many cigar factories told Privett they were glad to see the children leave so their jobs could be taken by able-bodied men, yet Privett wondered why so many had been employed in the industry if employers truly embraced this philosophy.¹⁰ Quincy, the site of a number of tobacco warehouses that employed children, had the third-highest number of violations at 136. Apalachicola, the home of the oyster industry and John G. Ruge, the notorious opponent of child labor reform, only had 15 violations, but, as Privett noted, his inspections were

⁴ Privett (1915), 8.

⁵ Privett (1915), 16.

⁶ Privett (1915), 20.

⁷ Privett (1915), 12.

⁸ Privett (1915), 20.

⁹ Privett (1915), 21, 23.

¹⁰ Privett (1915), 11.

conducted outside the oyster season and therefore constituted a false representation of the number of children actually employed there.¹¹

Privett concluded his report with a series of recommendations for improvement of the child labor law. First, he asked for a greater appropriation for the salary of the State Labor Inspector. His allotted \$1,200 per annum and traveling expenses failed to provide enough funds for stationary, office supplies, and telegrams, and Privett was forced to pay \$62.33 out of his own pocket for these items.¹² In addition to the salary increase, he suggested that the legislature print in pamphlet form all the laws related to labor for easy employer reference. He also recommended the law be amended to forbid employment in and loitering around bowling alleys and pool and billiard rooms, which he observed posed a significant moral threat to the youth of the cities. Privett also suggested that the legislature limit the hours women and children were permitted to work to eight per day and forty-eight per week and prohibit children less than sixteen years of age from working before six in the morning and after eight in the evening any day, at any occupation. The state also needed a Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Privett wrote, to help answer the many requests for information he received from manufacturing associations, other Bureaus of Labor, and universities outside the state of Florida. Such a measure, he concluded, would prove wise by attracting a greater number of manufacturing establishments to the state.¹³

Of all Privett's recommendations, the 1915 legislature acted only to increase the State Labor Inspector's annual provision and to include "bowling alleys" in the phrasing of the existing legislation. In his message to the legislature, Governor Park Trammell recommended Privett's appropriation be raised to \$1,500.00; the lawmakers actually increased it to \$1,800.00 plus travel expenses, not to exceed \$800.00.¹⁴ They also amended sections 10 and 20 of the 1913 law to include prohibition of the employment of minors in pool rooms, billiard rooms, and breweries and to ensure the posting of the law in the workrooms of such establishments.¹⁵ These

¹¹ Privett (1915), 21.

¹² Privett (1915), 6.

¹³ Privett (1915), 37-39.

¹⁴ State Senate of Florida, *Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1915* (Tallahassee, FL: T.J. Appleyard, 1915), 55; *Laws of Florida*, Chapter 6918, No. 112 (1915).

¹⁵ *Laws of Florida* (1915).

measures passed quickly through the legislature, and the newspapers and women's clubs paid them little attention.

In fact, child labor concerns disappeared altogether from the Florida clubwomen's agenda following the passage of the 1913 law, though they continued to support other child welfare measures, such as compulsory education, the establishment of an industrial school for girls to compliment the boys' school at Marianna, and a school for feeble-minded and epileptic children.¹⁶ Since the child labor legislation had been touted as a "preventative measure," many women were undoubtedly satisfied with the new law and the positive results reported by the new State Labor Inspector. The FFWC elected child labor reformer and Jacksonville clubwoman May Mann Jennings president of the federation in 1914, and the clubwomen's reform program soon reflected the goals of their new leader, who through her legislative work with the Woman's Club of Jacksonville had become the most politically powerful woman in the state.¹⁷ Though Jennings had been a fierce fighter for child labor reform, after the passage of what she and many Floridians saw as sufficient legislation, she turned her attention to the issues of conservation and woman suffrage. During Jennings' three year term, the FFWC secured the establishment of Royal Palm State Park on Paradise Key in the Everglades and assumed full financial responsibility for its maintenance and operation.¹⁸ In 1915, the FFWC endorsed equal franchise for men and women and announced their support for a constitutional amendment.¹⁹ In the postwar period, and indeed, for the rest of her life, Jennings, the undisputed leader of Florida clubwomen, focused her reform efforts on conservation and equal suffrage, and the majority of her constituents followed suit.

Since child labor concerns effectively disappeared from the reforms publicly advocated by clubwomen, whether or not they supported the federal child labor legislation passed by Congress in 1916 remains a mystery. The Keating-Owen Act attempted to regulate child labor

¹⁶ Legislative Department, Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, *Some Laws of Interest to Florida Women* (Jacksonville, FL: Hall Bros. Printing Co., 1914), 5. Marcus Fagg also supported these measures; for more information on Fagg's role in the national eugenics movement, see Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Vance, 79.

¹⁸ Vance, 80-86, 88.

¹⁹ "Florida State News," *The General Federation of Women's Clubs Magazine, Florida State Edition* (December 1915), 1. For more on Florida women and suffrage, see Kenneth R. Johnson, "Florida Women Get the Vote," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 48:3 (1970), 299-312.

practices by invoking the interstate commerce clause. The law made it a federal crime to ship products across state lines which had been manufactured in establishments that employed children.²⁰ Administration of the law fell under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Labor, who created a Child Labor Division within the Children's Bureau to enforce the new act.²¹ The *Tampa Morning Tribune* praised the law and advocated it "should be observed to the letter." After all, the new legislation differed only slightly from the existing Florida law in that children could only work one less hour per day and had to undergo a physical examination. Florida was one of the states whose existing employment certificates would be accepted by the federal government, a compliment to the state and the discretion of the State Labor Inspector.²² The Children's Bureau also sent a field representative, Miss Lillie Barbour, to assist Privett with his inspection work. She provided a valuable service, allowing the office of State Labor Inspector to maintain family visits where violations were found. Recognizing the importance of this home work, Privett urged the legislature to appoint a woman inspector to assist him, though it never responded to his request.²³

In addition to the request for a woman inspector, Privett's wartime annual report also alerted Floridians to an actual increase in child labor in their state, which was a problem of national scope. Julia Lathrop, chief of the Children's Bureau, recognized that, in the country as a whole, "a mistaken patriotism and the many opportunities for employment at an abnormally high wage combined to draw permanently into industry large numbers of boys and girls, many of whom under normal conditions would have continued in school for several years."²⁴ The Children's Bureau and the National Child Labor Committee issued statements to the press which urged citizens to resist attempts to break down the labor laws of the states, either by granting

²⁰ Lindenmeyer, 118. The Keating-Owen Act was declared unconstitutional on June, 3, 1918. The Supreme Court ruled that Congress could not invoke the interstate commerce clause against child labor, which was purely a local matter.

²¹ William B. Wilson, "Annual Report Secretary of Labor," *Reports of the Department of Labor 1917* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 137.

²² Editorial, "Protecting Our Children," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 31, 1917, 6.

²³ J.C. Privett, *Fourth and Fifth Annual Reports of the State Labor Inspector* (Tallahassee, FL: T.J. Appleyard, 1919), 13-14.

²⁴ Julia C. Lathrop, "Report of the Chief, Children's Bureau," in *Reports of the Department of Labor 1919* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 725.

children permission to work or by exempting them from established laws.²⁵ Though Florida did not experience the increase in other states, Privett noted an upward turn in the number of violations he found, even though war time shortages forced him to perform fewer inspections.²⁶ For example, Privett inspected 1,063 places of employment in 1916, and found 530 total violations. In 1917, however, he made only 963 inspections – but found 796 total violations. The total number of violations rose to 862 for the year 1918, with 862 inspections.²⁷

This increase in child exploitation was a call to action for the Children’s Bureau, who recognized the “safeguarding of our children is an essential part of winning the war.”²⁸ Child welfare thus became the focus of the Children’s Year Campaign, a joint effort between the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense and the Children’s Bureau. The goals of the Children’s Year included public protection of maternity and infancy, mothers’ care for older children, enforcement of child labor laws and free education for all school-age children, and creating recreation opportunities for urban youth. Children’s Year programs included birth registration, infant weighing and measuring, food drives, playground construction, and back-to-school and stay-in-school drives conducted in order to keep teenage children in school and out of the workforce.²⁹

²⁵ See “Children in War Time,” *Monthly Review of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, vol. IV (May 1917), 658-659.

²⁶ Privett (1919), 13.

²⁷ Privett (1919), 40-41. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

²⁸ Lathrop, 181. 560.

²⁹ Lathrop, 724.

Table 4.1: Inspections Made In Florida Cities, 1914-1918							
Cities			1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
Jacksonville			263	297	204	179	190
Tampa			161	230	188	192	153
Ocala			25	41	26	29	22
Palatka			15	23	21	24	20
Sanford			12	16	17	17	17
Orlando			30	31	33	35	31
Kissimmee			9		8	7	5
Lakeland			17	19	22	24	21
Plant City			15	20	12	12	11
Lake City			6	8	7	9	7
Live Oak			11	15	23	11	12
Key West			40	58	53	34	29
St. Petersburg			16	23	28	21	16
Bartow			9	8	10	10	11
Arcadia			7		9	13	14
Punta Gorda			8		5	6	3
Fort Myers			9		17	16	14
Pensacola			29	36	58	41	33
DeLand			21	20	22	20	18
Daytona			20	22	25	21	20
Marianna			11	13	14	11	10
Quincy			18	22	37	23	22
West Palm Beach			20	26	37	23	22
Miami			48	53	58	43	34
Apalachicola			22	26	13	19	14
St. Augustine			21	22	28	15	13
Gainesville			17	19	20	14	13
Fernandina			10	14	12	12	16
Madison				13	10	7	10
Tallahassee				11	14	13	7
Tarpon Springs				14	12	8	
Bradentown				12	7	7	
Palmetto				6	4	6	
Cedar Key				3	3	5	
Crystal River				3	6	4	
Leesburg							7
Perry							11
Total Number of Inspections			870	1122	1063	933	862
Total Number of Inspections for Five Years							4850
J.C. Privett, <i>Fourth and Fifth Annual Reports of the State Labor Inspector</i> (Tallahassee, FL: T.J. Appleyard, 1919), 41.							

Table 4.2: Removals and Violations In Florida Cities, 1914-1918

Cities	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
Jacksonville	429	230	137	235	243
Tampa	420	215	146	191	213
Ocala	16	7	13	18	12
Palatka	21	9	5	19	14
Sanford	3	2	2	5	10
Orlando	17	8	9	12	29
Kissimmee	2		2	3	3
Lakeland	6	6	4	6	7
Plant City	5	6	2	2	9
Lake City	5		2	9	2
Live Oak	5	3	2	5	7
Key West	101	23	29	29	40
St. Petersburg	9	4	4	11	8
Bartow	3		3	3	4
Arcadia	3		3	8	10
Punta Gorda	10		3	3	5
Fort Myers	2		4	8	5
Pensacola	41	17	33	37	12
DeLand	4	3	3	10	6
Daytona	4	7	8	9	10
Marianna	8	7	7	9	8
Quincy	136	13	22	21	22
West Palm Beach	7	9	3	14	12
Miami	25	25	26	23	24
Apalachicola	15	16	13	22	22
St. Augustine	3	6	2	7	13
Gainesville	7	4	5	5	6
Fernandina	45	10	8	15	10
Madison		17	4	5	2
Tallahassee		5	6	8	9
Tarpon Springs		4	4	3	
Bradentown		4	3	2	
Palmetto		2	1	1	
Cedar Key		2	3	4	
Crystal River		8	8	8	
Leesburg				5	4
Perry				27	25
Total Number of Inspections	1350	671	530	796	862
Total Number of Inspections for Five Years					4209
J.C. Privett, <i>Fourth and Fifth Annual Reports of the State Labor Inspector</i> (Tallahassee, FL: T. J. Appleyard, 1919), 40.					

Florida women also participated in the activities of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, an organization formed so "that women of national prominence might be brought together to consider and advise how the assistance of the women of America might be made available in the prosecution of the war."³⁰ Though the overall performance of most Southern state committees was unorganized and weak, Florida's state committee was organized in August 1917 at the Chamber of Commerce Auditorium in Jacksonville.³¹ May Mann Jennings, now president of the FFWC, ably served as the committee's president and its chair of food conservation and home economy. The committee formed seven other divisions: food production, registration, moral and spiritual forces, protection of women workers, home and allied relief, education, and publicity, each chaired by a representative of the state's major women's organizations.³²

Though the purpose of the state divisions was "to see that all necessary forms of patriotic service or of defense programs, as outlined by the national women's committee, are actively carried forward by organizations or individuals," the Children's Year programs, particularly those related to child labor, were conspicuously absent from the Florida committee's program.³³ Though state committees were only loosely organized and free to endorse whichever programs they wished, it remains significant that no back-to-school or stay-in-school drives were held in Florida's major cities during the fall of 1918. The Women's Committee columns in the *Tampa Morning Tribune* and the *Florida Times-Union* never mentioned child welfare programs; the state's women focused instead on activities such as food drives, food preparation and conservation and sending books to soldiers. Perhaps they felt the laws of Florida had sufficiently curbed the evils of child labor in their state, and the State Labor Inspector was ably handling the job of enforcing the law.

³⁰ "Women's Committee of Council of National Defense At Work," *Florida Times-Union*, September 2, 1917, 18.

³¹ "Women's Committee of Council of National Defense At Work," 18. See also William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federation, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984).

³² "Florida Division Woman's Committee Council of National Defense at Work," *Florida Times-Union*, September 2, 1917, 11.

³³ "Women's Committee of Council of National Defense At Work," 18.

Following the war, the Florida legislature finally passed a statewide compulsory education law, an action supported by the legislative committee of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville and praised by J.C. Privett as "the best complimentary measure to the child labor law."³⁴ Though a 1915 measure had established a county-option process for compulsory school attendance, as of 1919, only Duval County (Jacksonville) had enacted a provision.³⁵ As of July 1, 1919, all of Florida's children between the ages of seven and sixteen, inclusive, were required to attend a public or private school for a term of days "not substantially less" than the school's regular term.³⁶ The law provided exceptions for children whose work provided the primary means of support for widows and those families who were unable to provide the necessary books and clothing.³⁷ This legislation was undoubtedly responsible for the profound decrease in child labor violations reported by the State Labor Inspector from 618 in 1919 to 335 in 1920. Tampa's number of violations, for example, decreased from 247 to 27, while Quincy's dropped from 14 to zero. The work of Florida's child labor crusaders finally seemed to be finished.³⁸

However, the numbers on the State Labor Inspector's reports only revealed part of the truth. Admittedly underfunded and understaffed, Privett could not hope to visit each and every manufacturing establishment in the state of Florida. Many employers undoubtedly changed to work within the law, but the law only dealt with the symptoms of poverty, not its cause. Children of poor black, white, and immigrant families continued to work long after Progressive legislation outlawed their work, even in Florida.

From August 1, 1918, to May 1, 1919, Viola I. Paradise of the Children's Bureau conducted a survey of the employment of children and working mothers in the oyster and shrimp canning industries of the Gulf Coast. She visited eight communities in Louisiana and Mississippi and Apalachicola, Florida, interviewing employers, workers, federal, state, and local officials, and physicians to determine the extent of child labor practices within those communities. In all

³⁴ Woman's Club of Jacksonville, *Manual of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, Florida, 1917-1918* (Jacksonville, FL: Kennedy Brown Co., 1919), 51; J.C. Privett, *Sixth and Seventh Annual Reports of the State Labor Inspector* (Tallahassee, FL: T. J. Appleyard, 1921), 27.

³⁵ *Laws of Florida*, Ch. 6831, No. 25 (1915).

³⁶ *Laws of Florida*, Ch. 7808, No. 26 (1919).

³⁷ *Laws of Florida*, (1919).

³⁸ Privett (1921), 46.

of the towns she studied, Paradise found a total of 544 working children under the age of 16 – two under the age of 6, 332 between the ages of 6 and 14, and 210 who were 14 or 15 years old.³⁹ Some children worked occasionally, before or after school or on Saturdays, but nearly 64% of them worked regular hours when the canneries were open. Thus, despite the passage of child labor legislation in all three of the states studied, the illiteracy rate of cannery children ages 10 to 15 was 25%, compared to 4% for that age group in the nation as a whole. Of 649 children ages 7 to 13, 266 did not attend school regularly, and 106 children between the ages of 6 and 15 had never been to school.⁴⁰

Parents blamed poverty for keeping children out of school. One-quarter of the families studied were headed by widows or women who had been deserted by their husbands. In those families who still had fathers, 20% of them earned less than \$12 a week on average, 33% earned less than \$15 a week, and 65% earned less than \$20.⁴¹ Families needed the meager wages of both wives and children to assist with daily living, or older children needed to watch younger children while their parents worked. Some parents argued that children did not need schooling to work in the jobs they would have in the future.⁴² In the words of one of the employers: “A child of 12 or 13 can do more in a day than a grown person. They work faster because they are interested in getting the nickels. It was a great thing for the families and for the factories that the Federal law was declared unconstitutional. The Federal law might have been good if it had provided for compulsory education, but the class of people we have here do not want their children to go to school.”⁴³

Apalachicola presented an interesting case for the Children’s Bureau. The majority of children working in those canneries were “colored,” though the report does not specify whether that term refers only to African-Americans or immigrants as well. Apalachicola was also the only town in the study in which unions were organized: the white Oysterman’s Protective Organization and the African-American Oyster-Catchers Union, the Shuckers Union, and the

³⁹ Paradise, 7-10.

⁴⁰ Paradise, 5.

⁴¹ Paradise, 6.

⁴² Paradise, 41.

⁴³ Paradise, 19.

Ladies' American Union. Paradise recognized that black oyster workers faced special problems in procuring educational opportunities for their children. Black schools were inferior and their terms shorter than those provided for white children. Despite these setbacks, Paradise noted that the African-American community remained tirelessly committed to schooling its children, and as a result, in Apalachicola, 65% of them attended school. The community also attempted to raise funds to extend the school term longer than the six months provided by the state. When this effort failed, parents sent their children to a "pay school" taught by an elderly oysterman.⁴⁴ This commitment to education was obviously shared by the black communities in other Gulf Coast towns – in Paradise's study as a whole, 72% of black children attended school, compared to 63% of native white children and 16% of foreign-born white children.⁴⁵

Apalachicola was also unique in that most of its oyster packers made efforts to obey state law. One employer, who sounded vaguely like John G. Ruge, reported he had fought the passage of federal legislation and made speeches against labor regulation, but now obeyed the law. "The head of the Child Labor Committee will remember me as a strong opponent," he said, "However, before the law was passed, I became converted not for sentimental reasons, but because it was better policy for the business. Since being converted and coming out strongly for the child labor law, I have adhered strictly to the policy of employing no children under age. Also, I will permit no very small children to help their mothers, as they often try to." Still, other employers continued to preach the virtues of hard labor and conspired with parents to keep children working in the canneries. "I believe in everybody's working. I have been working since I was 10 years old, and I believe in everybody else doing the same thing."⁴⁶

The Children's Bureau's survey was conducted before the implementation of the compulsory school attendance law in Florida, but it draws attention to the perils of social legislation written by upper- and middle-class individuals that attempted to ameliorate the problems of the poor without attacking poverty itself. Though the legislature of 1913 outlawed child labor in Florida, it did not empower the State Labor Inspector to battle against the evil of poverty which plagued the families who believed in child work as a legitimate alternative to starvation. It was not until the establishment of the factory codes of the National Recovery

⁴⁴ Paradise, 42.

⁴⁵ Paradise, 39.

⁴⁶ Paradise, 19.

Administration that child labor in industry greatly improved and the children of poor families were offered relief under the auspices of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration.⁴⁷

The results of the 1913 child labor legislation draw attention to the complex nature and ambiguous success of Progressive era social legislation. Child labor reformers, who had always been simultaneously engrossed in several legislative efforts, seemed satisfied with the passage of the law and the establishment of the office of State Labor Inspector. J.C. Privett was indeed able to report an initial decrease in the actual numbers of child labor violations, but his work suffered from a severe lack of funding and personnel, and after 1915, the legislature effectively ignored his recommendations for greater financial appropriations and tighter employment restrictions.⁴⁸ Florida's legislation, as Viola Paradise's report demonstrates, failed to address completely either the dire situation of impoverished families or the state's discriminatory racial policies, both of which kept children out of school and allowed, and in some cases, forced them to work. Though a great number of Florida citizens supported the law, neither the child labor crusade nor the legislation itself was able to succeed in changing every citizen's attitude toward child labor. Many parents and employers still touted the virtues of child labor, and as a result, the employment of children would remain an illegal but accepted practice for years to come.

⁴⁷ Lindenmeyer, 138; Davidson, 271.

⁴⁸ Privett actually died in his office in Jacksonville on August 12, 1921, of an apparent heart failure. See John H. Mackey, *Biennial Report of the State Labor Inspector of the State of Florida 1927-1928* (Marianna, FL: Printing Department, Florida Industrial School for Boys, 1929), and "J.C. Privett, State Labor Inspector, Is Claimed By Death," *Florida Times-Union*, August 13, 1921, 8.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This examination of Florida's child labor campaign highlights the diversity of Progressive reform movements in the South. Though Florida's campaign reflects broader reform trends, it remains unique among child labor reform efforts in the Southern states. Florida's child labor movement was initially spearheaded by its labor leaders, who, like those in Alabama and other Southern states, decided to emphasize "sentimentalism over socialism" by enlisting the aid of organized women and shifting the focus of their campaign from issues of fair labor practices to those of a more humanitarian nature.¹ After initially following the path of organization pioneered by Alabama's child labor reformers and the National Child Labor Committee, Floridians soon necessarily adapted their platform to the particular needs of their state. Unlike Alabama's activists, Florida child labor reformers shied away from white supremacist rhetoric, precisely because the very laborers they were trying to protect were, in many cases, not white. Men like John G. Ruge, who were opposed to child labor legislation, could employ racial rhetoric to garner support for their position, but reformers were forced by the racial diversity of child workers to focus their efforts on the social and moral degeneration of Florida's child laborers rather than any type of "race suicide."

Shelley Sallee's argument that Southern Progressive reformers put "a premium on whiteness as a criterion for citizenship rights and government protection" thus cannot apply to all of the states of the former Confederacy.² Floridians certainly embraced the same racial views as the rest of the South, just as they embraced Southern traditions of localism and exhibited a general disdain for Northern economic and social influence. In Florida, as in much of the South, Progressive reform found ways to accommodate white supremacy. Despite this widespread paternalistic sentiment, Florida's peculiar industrial situation prevented child labor reformers, regardless of their own views, from utilizing the racial rhetoric used to acquire support for child labor legislation in other Southern states. Unable to rally behind the same kind of "race-saving" platform advocated by reformers elsewhere, Florida's child labor reformers instead focused upon

¹ Sallee, 3.

² Sallee, 10.

the emotional and moral implications of child labor in their campaign.

This strong focus on the humanitarian aspects of child labor reform allowed Florida's clubwomen to publicly embrace the cause of child labor and incorporate it into their budding program of social reform. Indeed, the child labor movement fully integrated Florida's organized women into the realm of state politics long before they achieved equal suffrage. Though women took an active role in legislative affairs long before the child labor movement, it was this particular campaign that allied the state's prominent female leaders with politically powerful males. Though Florida's clubwomen initially attempted to win the support of state legislators through memorials and petitions and were dependent upon men to represent their interests, after a series of defeats, they took charge of their own agenda and sent delegates to the legislature.

Florida's clubwomen, however, were not a homogenous group. Though the Woman's Club of Jacksonville figured prominently in the child labor movement, it should not be viewed as representative of all Florida's women's clubs. The members of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville's particular brand of activism and advocacy stemmed from their prominent position in the city and the state; as wives of attorneys, judges, and politicians, they were granted access to social networks that introduced them to the inner workings of state politics and allowed them to build strong support for their political causes. As Nancy Hewitt's work demonstrates, Tampa's white clubwomen, in contrast, entered the public arena just as Jim Crow laws revitalized racial barriers and the cigar industry attracted Spanish and Cuban immigrants to their city. Faced with a threat to the traditional white power structure, Tampa's white women concerned themselves primarily with cultural appreciation and community improvement, while black and Latin female activists joined forces with men to provide mutual aid to their communities and ameliorate the effects of Jim Crow. Unaffected by this amalgamation of cultures, Jacksonville's women focused their energies on broader social concerns that affected the state as whole, including child labor reform.

Though child labor reformers certainly achieved legislative success in Florida in 1907 and again in 1913, the actual outcome of that legislation is less easy to determine. As Kriste Lindenmeyer has written, child labor reformers' efforts were hindered by their middle-class conceptions of family structure and child life. The minimum-age child labor laws and compulsory education statutes they advocated failed to directly address the poverty at the root of

the child labor problem.³ In Florida, though the office of State Labor Inspector was ably filled by one of the state's leading labor activists, it remained understaffed and underfunded. Thus, the state labor inspections, which seem to indicate a marked decrease in the employment of child workers, do not constitute an accurate representation of the amount of child laborers in the state in the years following the passage of the legislation. Continuing poverty among Florida's working families and Jim Crow education policies ensured the perpetuation of child labor for years to come.

Though the degree of success of Florida's child labor campaign is still unclear, state child labor reformers were able to adapt the national child labor platform to fit the specific needs of Florida's industrial economy and the attitudes of its voting population. Florida's Progressive reformers – its labor leaders, clubwomen, civic activists, and legislators – tirelessly fought against dominant conservative attitudes, the opposition of businessmen, and the racial sentiments of most Floridians. Their success in procuring legislation that protected native-born white, immigrant, and non-white children stands as a testament to the hard work of the child labor coalition and the unique economic and political climate of turn-of-the-century Florida.

³ Lindenmeyer, 108.

APPENDIX

MEMBERS OF THE WOMAN'S CLUB OF JACKSONVILLE, APRIL 1913

Mrs. G.D. Ackerly	Mrs. Maud Chappell
Mrs. Wm. H. Adams	Mrs. Flavius T. Christie
Mrs. John T. Alsop	Mrs. John G. Christopher
Miss Frances Anderson	Mrs. Wm. H. Christopher
Mrs. J.W. Archibald	Mrs. Charles A. Clark
Mrs. R.B. Archibald	Mrs. George W. Clark
Mrs. J.M. Armstrong	Miss Louise Clark
Mrs. P.P. Arnold	Mrs. Frank Clarkson
Mrs. J.E. Arnout	Mrs. W.B. Clarkson
Mrs. Ezra P. Axtell	Mrs. Wm. G. Coleman
Mrs. Wm. E. Baldwin	Mrs. F.P. Conroy
Miss Lillie E. Ball	Mrs. R.C. Cooley
Mrs. Philip M. Ball	Mrs. Walter P. Corbett
Mrs. Claudius H. Barnes	Mrs. P.J. Croghan
Mrs. Bion H. Barnett	Mrs. Arthur G. Cummer
Mrs. Burton K. Barrs	Mrs. W.W. Cummer
Mrs. Carrington E. Barrs	Mrs. J.N. Carnes
Mrs. Charles W. Bartleson	Mrs. S.D. Cheatham
Mrs. Charles Benedict	Mrs. A. Hueling Davis
Mrs. C.R. Bisbee	Mrs. Paul R. Davis
Miss Virginia Bisbee	Mrs. P.A. Dignan
Mrs. J.H. Bland	Mrs. John H. Douglas
Mrs. B.W. Blount	Mrs. C.L. Durkee
Mrs. J.E.T. Bowden	Mrs. J.C. Durrance
Miss Unetta B. Boyer	Mrs. Katherine L. Eagan
Mrs. Frederick Bowen	Mrs. Robert N. Ellis
Mrs. Lewis J. Brush	Miss Martha C. English
Mrs. C.G. Bugel	Mrs. J.J. Emery
Mrs. Courtland Buckman	Miss Margaret Fairlie
Mrs. J.M. Burrell	Mrs. C.D. Fish
Mrs. R.A. Baker	Mrs. J.B. French
Mrs. Frank Brown	Miss Bertha M. Foster
Mrs. George Buckland	Mrs. Leopold Furchgott
Miss Eliza Buttell	Mrs. John E. Gardner
Mrs. H.W. Butler	Mrs. D.T. Gerow
Miss Alice Byrne	Miss Mollie Bishop Gibson
Mrs. George W. Bynes	Mrs. Jean B. Graves
Mrs. Charles H. Camp	Mrs. J. Walton Graybill
Mrs. S.G. Capen	Mrs. Annie M. Grether
Mrs. T.A. Carroll	Miss Gertrude Hammatt
Mrs. T.V. Cashen, Jr.	Mrs. Wm. H. Harwick
Mrs. F.A. Chapman	Mrs. J.H.W. Hawkins

Mrs. Edgar O. Hays
Mrs. George Henry
Mrs. J.W. Hodges
Mrs. E. H. Hopkins
Mrs. Friend E. Hoyt
Miss Florence Hughes
Mrs. John W. Hyde
Mrs. J. George Ingram
Miss Gertrude Jacobi
Mrs. Wm. S. Jennings
Mrs. Charles W. Johnson
Mrs. Claude Joyner
Mrs. S. H. Kooker
Mrs. Clifford F. Lovell
Mrs. James F. Lane
Mrs. Porcher L'Engle
Mrs. Theodore B. Livingston
Miss Annie M. Locke
Mrs. B.F. Miller
Miss Florence M. Maloney
Mrs. Richard P. Marks
Mrs. Robert Mattox
Miss M. McCallum
Mrs. E. L. McClung
Mrs. J.W. McGriff
Mrs. Merritt McNeill
Miss Gerda E. Meigs
Mrs. J.A. Melson
Mrs. Henry Clark
Mrs. Edward H. Clarkson
Mrs. Gerardus Clarkson
Mrs. W.W. Cleveland
Mrs. C.C. Collins
Miss Moselle Cook
Mrs. Frank Cooper
Mrs. J.A. Cranford
Mrs. J.H. Crosby
Mrs. Waldo E. Cummer
Mrs. J.L. Chandler
Mrs. R.G. Cook
Mrs. John L. Doggett
Mrs. A.O. Dawson
Mrs. C.T. Doty
Mrs. T.W. Dunk
Mrs. Jay H. Durkee
Mrs. A.M. Evans

Mrs. Caroline F. Elkins
Mrs. Eliza D. English
Mrs. W. A. Evans
Mrs. Marcus C. Fagg
Mrs. J.W. Faulkner
Mrs. Duncan U. Fletcher
Mrs. W.B. Ford
Mrs. John S. Franz
Mrs. C. Seton Fleming
Mrs. Florence A. Garrett
Mrs. George Cooper Gibbs
Mrs. Fred E. Gilbert
Mrs. Fred S. Gray
Mrs. Loren H. Green
Mrs. Annie B. Hollingsworth
Mrs. Hobart C. Hare
Mrs. F.A. Hathaway
Mrs. Lawrence Haynes
Mrs. J.J. Hennessy
Mrs. Freeman Hodges
Mrs. George O. Holmes
Mrs. R.A. Houston
Mrs. Harry B. Hoyt
Mrs. Forrest J. Hyde
Mrs. Claude C. Jones
Mrs. Frank E. Jennings
Mrs. H. Sherman Jenison
Mrs. Lee B. Jones
Mrs. Leslie C. Jones
Mrs. J.E. Kuchler
Mrs. Malcolm M. Lander
Mrs. William LeFils
Dr. M.A. Light
Miss Alison Locke
Miss Carrie Locke
Mrs. J.M. Mahony
Mrs. E.E. Marshall
Mrs. John Marx
Mrs. R.L. May
Mrs. Wilbur McCoy
Mrs. Frederick O. McCuen
Mrs. David R. McNeil
Miss Delia G. Meigs
Miss Louise C. Meigs
Mrs. A.R. Merrill
Mrs. J.C. Merrill

Mrs. James P. Middlemas
Miss Hattie Moody
Mrs. Lester M. Mitchell
Mrs. C.B. Munson
Mrs. John P. Murphy
Mrs. Jas. N. Newsome
Mrs. L.B. Newman
Mrs. Frank T. Nooney
Mrs. John H. Norton
Mrs. Richard S. Paine
Miss Okle Painter
Miss Annette Parrish
Mrs. John T. Parry
Mrs. C.O. Patterson
Mrs. Clifford A. Payne
Mrs. Arthur F. Perry
Mrs. G.A. Phillips
Mrs. H.E. Ploof
Mrs. R. M. Pollard
Miss Carlie A. Powers
Mrs. Herbert B. Race
Mrs. Jas. Henry Randolph
Miss Eleanor M. Rawson
Mrs. Bainbridge Richardson
Mrs. Robert J. Riles
Mrs. R.J. Rivenbark
Mrs. J.T. Robinson
Mrs. E.M. Rorabeck
Mrs. Franklin G. Russell
Mrs. C.M. Sandusky
Mrs. Fulton Saussy
Mrs. E.H. Seabrook
Mrs. C.B. Smith
Mrs. Jere S. Smith
Mrs. Windle W. Smith
Miss Margaret K. Somerville
Mrs. W. L. Sperring
Mrs. Ida K. Stansell
Mrs. Harry E. Stewart
Mrs. W.M. Stinson
Mrs. Frank N. Stormont
Mrs. Byrd G. Tarver
Mrs. W. R. Thompson
Mrs. Raymond Trueman
Mrs. Wm. M. Tupper
Mrs. J.W. Thomas

Mrs. Arthur B. Vance
Mrs. Frederick J. Waas
Mrs. N.C. Wamboldt
Mrs. C. F. Warriner
Mrs. Stephen H. Watson
Mrs. Lyman E. Wells
Miss Margaret I. Wheeler
Mrs. W.P. Wilkinson
Miss Essie Williams
Mrs. John Calvin Wells
Mrs. John J. Whitaker
Mrs. James Y. Wilson
Mrs. Wm. C. Yeiser
Miss Sallie L. Yewell
Mrs. William B. Young
Mrs. Melvina Reichard
Mrs. J. Eugene Merrill
Mrs. H.B. Minium
Mrs. Robert G. Moore
Mrs. Gustav Muller
Mrs. Gerard E. Muriel
Mrs. Gerard E. Muriel
Mrs. Ion Beverly Nalle
Mrs. Fred B. Noble
Mrs. Fred T. Nooney
Mrs. Edward O'Donald
Mrs. E.O. Painter
Mrs. R.B. Parramore
Miss Josie Parrish
Mrs. George F. Parsons
Mrs. Charles T. Paxon
Mrs. Claude W. Perkins
Mrs. Paul C. Perry
Miss Mary C. Phillips
Mrs. Wm. Power
Mrs. Julian Prewitte
Mrs. J.H. Rafferty
Mrs. Wm. R. Rannie
Mrs. W.A. Redding
Mrs. H.H. Richardson
Mrs. C.D. Rinehart
Mrs. Frederick C. Roach
Mrs. Frank A. Ross
Mrs. Harwood Rosser
Mrs. R.B. Rutherford
Mrs. H.N. Sasnett

Miss Mary Sawyer
Mrs. W. L. Smart
Mrs. C.H. Smith
Mrs. Ralph E. Smith
Miss Jean Somerville
Mrs. Edward S. Spencer
Mrs. James W. Spratt
Dr. Ellen Lowell Stevens
Mrs. Marshall Stewart
Mrs. E.H. Stirk
Mrs. Franklin T. Sutherland
Mrs. A.G. Thompson
Mrs. Eduardo J. Triay
Mrs. Joseph M. Tull
Mrs. J.R. Tysen
Mrs. S.C. Vance
Miss Ruth Walker
Mrs. George C. Warner
Miss Laura E. Warriner
Mrs. W.P. Webster
Mrs. Harold Weston
Mrs. Frank L. White
Miss Bessie Williams
Mrs. A.T. Williams
Mrs. John H. Wykoff
Mrs. Hugh E. Williams
Mrs. Wm. A. Witt
Mrs. Judson B. Yerkes
Mrs. C.S. Young
Mrs. I.A. Zacharias
Miss Elizabeth Long

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