

The People.

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FIRST EDITORIAL

Open Letter to “National Congress of Mothers.”

National Congress of Mothers,¹
Washington Loan and Trust Building.

Board of Managers—Mrs. Theodore W. Birney, Mrs. John R. Lewis, Mrs. Mary E. Mumford, Mrs. H.W. Fuller, Mrs. Adlai Stevenson, Mrs. A.A. Birney, Mrs. Louise H. Earll {Earle?}, Mrs. James H. McGill.

Washington, D.C., Jan., 1898.

Mr. Editor: Dear Sir—Will you kindly examine the enclosed circular and aid us by giving in your columns such mention of our report as may be inspired by your interest in the efforts being made by the National Congress of Mothers on behalf of Parenthood, Childhood and the Home.

The press is a mighty power, and a cordial paragraph from you will doubtless bring many inquiries.

Very sincerely yours,
NAT. CONGRESS OF MOTHERS.

MESDAMES:—

Such is the weightiness of the subject-matter of your letter—“Mothers, Parenthood, Childhood and the Home”—, that, unpleasant though the task is, we shall answer you without reserve.

Your “National Congress of Mothers,” together with your “Report” and all that thereby hangs, is a misnomer; it is misleading in its pretences; it is harmful in its effects.

Looking over the list of your Board of Managers, we see, without exception, the names of women whose very existence, prominence and activity rest and can rest only upon crushed mothers, crushed parenthood, crushed childhood, and crushed homes.

¹ [Original name of what later became the Parent Teachers Association (PTA).—R.B.]

The most conspicuous of all your Board of Managers, Mrs. Adlai Stevenson, the wife of ex-Vice-President Stevenson, typifies the rest. In taking her as an illustration, we only take her as a type of the class you are all of, of the class you all represent, and of the class that you all would uphold.

Turn to the broad plague spot of Mrs. Stevenson's husband's mines in the State of Illinois—not to mention the many other plague spots, elsewhere in the land, in which he holds stock—that, in idle luxury, he derives his revenues from. You will there see the working class—male, female and infant—held down in unrequited toil; parenthood is there mentally and physically crippled; the mother, physically and mentally stunted; the child, proceeding from such sources, dwarfed before even it first sees the light of day; the home a mockery. The silks and satins in which Mrs. Stevenson rustles, the capacious domiciles in which she resides, the ample and dainty food on which she feeds, the excessive leisure she enjoys, the sparkle in her eyes, the laughter in her throat, the flush on her cheeks—whence do all these come, what are they but transmuted husbands', mothers', children's tissues, extorted from them, the toilers, and appropriated by the idler capitalist?

With whom, of you all, is the comfort, luxury, life you enjoy traceable to any other source but that?

Motherhood can not be noble, parenthood can not be healthy, childhood can not be joyous, the home can not flourish with the slave. The private ownership of the land and the tool with which to work reduces the masses of the people to the condition of slaves to the few who have appropriated these essentials to existence. The capitalist social system on which you thrive stands in direct hostility to the home of the large majority of the people, who constitute the working class, and its miasmas rise so high that it pollutes even the gilded homes of your own class—as you may judge from the numerous suicides in Washington among the belles of your own "élite."

Your "Congress of Mothers" is held upon lines that ignore these facts, and seek to hide them; it seeks to turn the eyes from the real cause that saps the "Mother and the Home." Its pretty phrases, its jingle of words, its superb pretences can, at best, serve no purpose other than that of a narcotic. It is, hence, worse than useless, it is harmful.

The class-conscious proletariat of the land, organized under the banner of the Socialist Labor party, accordingly, condemns your efforts. In its keeping alone is the future of motherhood, parenthood, childhood and home in our country. Its program alone, whose victory is certain, will, by overthrowing your class and giving you all the opportunity to lead useful, instead of as now, useless, lives, redeem motherhood,

parenthood and childhood from their present degradation, and rear the Home upon the only foundation on which it can stand with dignity—ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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