

"Child Labor" Amendment.

WITHOUT DOUBT the Forty-fifth Legislature, now in session, will be subjected to pressure for ratification of the so-called child labor amendment.

The term "so-called" is used advisedly, because this amendment goes a great deal further than might be suggested by the words "child labor" in its title. It proposes to turn over to the Federal Congress, and whatever bureaus and agents it may put in charge, the full and unlimited control over all persons until they reach the age of 18, to the exclusion of parental or any other control now exercised.

The proposed amendment reads: "The Congress shall have power to LIMIT, REGULATE and PROHIBIT the labor of persons under 18 years of age."

That is as sweeping a grant of power as words might convey. Under it, Congress could impose federal surveillance over every home in the land. Under it, Congress could take away from parents all supervision of their children; could even take all children out of their homes and keep them in a federal institution

Those in Texas who want this State added to the number which have consented to this surrender to Congress of the power to assume control over their young people will advance no new reason for doing so. Nothing has changed now to alter the grounds upon which Texas has consistently refused, ever since the amendment was submitted 12 years ago, to ratify. The same reasons which existed before in Texas for this refusal still exist. With all due respect to those who want Texas to do this thing, there is no reason why Texas should do it. There is no harmful or hurtful exploitation of the labor of little children in Texas. Children are not being kept out of school, denied an opportunity for healthful and wholesome development, merely to satisfy the predatory greed of some heartless ogre of industry. So far as Texas, at least, is concerned, there is no such thing as a "child labor problem." Surrendering to Congress entire control over our young people is a far too drastic medicine for a sickness which does not exist.

It must be borne in mind that the supposed grant of power to the Federal Congress has no conditions. The regulation proposed would not be contingent on any consideration of the child's health, his physical, mental or moral welfare, or any normal wish of a parent for fostering his child's development. The power would simply be there, in all its sweeping nature, for Congress to use as it pleased. If the Congress, in response to pressure from groups formed for purposes of interfering in the lives of people, wished to prohibit employment of grown young people on the farms of Texas, it would have the power, under this amendment, to do so. It could ordain that in order for any 17-year-old boy or girl, on farm or in city, to be permitted to enjoy the right to healthful and character-building employment he must live in barracks presided over by proctors appointed by Congress and attend daily classes for whatever sort of instruction was decreed by the agents in charge at Washington.

Of course, this is an extreme assumption. But if there is one fundamental rule for preservation of the liberties of democracy it is that powers should never be granted to Government in excess of that which it is intended government shall use. If the people do not want the extremes of regulation of their young people from Washington their only insurance against having it forced upon them is steadfastly to