

Document Packet: "The Industrial Revolution"

Document 1

Committee on Factories Bill: Minutes of Evidence.
[April 12,] 1832.

Michael Thomas Sadler, Esquire, in the Chair.

William Cooper, called in; and Examined.

What is your business? --- I follow the cloth-dressing at present.

What is your age? --- I was eight-and-twenty last February.

When did you first begin to work in mills or factories? --- When I was about 10 years of age.

With whom did you first work? --- At Mr. Benyon's flax mills, in Meadowlane, Leeds.

What were your usual hours of working? --- We began at five, and gave over at nine; at five o'clock in the morning.

And you gave over at nine o'clock? --- At nine at night.

At what distance might you have lived from the mill? --- About a mile and a half.

At what time had you to get up in the morning to attend to your labour? --- I had to be up soon after four o'clock.

Every morning? --- Every morning.

What intermissions had you for meals? --- When we began at five in the morning, we went on until noon, and then we had 40 minutes for dinner.

Had you no time for breakfast? --- No, we got it as we could, while we were working.

Had you any time for an afternoon refreshment, or what is called in Yorkshire your "drinking?" --- No, when we began at noon, we went on till night; there was only one stoppage, the 40 minutes for dinner.

Then as you had to get your breakfast, and what is called "drinking" in that manner, you had to put in on one side? --- Yes, we had to put it on one side; and when we got our frames doffed, we ate two or three mouthfuls, and then put it by again.

Is there not considerable dust in a flax mill? --- A flax mill is very dusty indeed.

Was not your food therefore frequently spoiled? --- Yes, at times with the dust; sometimes we could not eat it, when it had got a lot of dust on.

What were you when you were ten years old? --- What is called a bobbin-doffer; when the frames are quite full, we have to doff them.

Then as you lived so far from home, you took your dinner to the mill? --- We took all our meals with us, living so far off.

During the 40 minutes which you were allowed for dinner, had you ever to employ that time in your turn in cleaning the machinery? --- At times we had to stop to clean the machinery, and then we got our dinner as well as we could; they paid us for that . . .

Did you ever work even later than the time you have mentioned? --- I cannot say that I worked later there. I had a sister who worked up stairs, and she worked till 11 at night, in what they call the card-room.

At what time in the morning did she begin work? --- At the same time as myself.

And they kept her there till 11 at night? --- Till 11 at night.

You say that your sister was in the card-room? --- Yes.

Is not that a very dusty department? --- Yes, very dusty indeed.

She had to be at the mill at five, and was kept at work till eleven at night? --- Yes.

During the whole time she was there? --- During the whole time; there was only 40 minutes allowed at dinner out of that.

To keep you at your work for such a length of time, and especially towards the termination of such a day's labour as that, what means were taken to keep you awake and attentive? --- They strapped {beat} us at times, when we were not quite ready to be doffing the frame when it was full.

Were you frequently strapped? --- At times we were frequently strapped.

What sort of strap was it? --- About this length (describing it).

What was it made of? --- Of leather.

Were you occasionally very considerably hurt with the strap? --- Sometimes it hurt us very much, and sometimes they did not lay on so hard as they did at others.

Were the girls strapped in that sort of way? --- They did not strap what they called the grown-up women.

Were any of the female children strapped? --- Yes; they were strapped in the same way as the lesser boys.

What were your wages at 10 years old at Mr. Benyon's? --- I think it was 4s {shillings = \$.32} a week.

[May 18,] 1832.

Michael Thomas Sadler, Esquire, in the chair.

Mr. Matthew Crabtree, called in; and Examined.

What age are you? --- Twenty-two.

What is your occupation? --- A blanket manufacturer.

Have you ever been employed in a factory? --- Yes.

At what age did you first go to work in one? --- Eight.

How long did you continue in that occupation? --- Four years.

Will you state the hours of labour at the period when you first went to the factory, in ordinary times? --- From 6 in the morning to 8 at night.

Fourteen hours? --- Yes.

With what intervals for refreshment and rest? --- An hour at noon.

They you had no resting time allowed in which to take your breakfast, or what is in Yorkshire called your "drinking"? --- No.

When trade was brisk what were your hours? --- From 5 in the morning to 9 in the evening.

Sixteen hours? --- Yes.

With what intervals at dinner? --- An hour.

How far did you live from the mill? --- About two miles.

Was there any time allowed for you to get your breakfast in the mill? --- No.

Did you take it before you left home? --- Generally.

During those long hours of labour could you be punctual, how did you awake? --- I seldom did awake spontaneously. I was most generally awoke or lifted out of bed, sometimes asleep, by my parents.

Were you always on time? --- No.

What was the consequence if you had been too late? --- I was most commonly beaten.

Severely? --- Very severely, I thought.

In whose factory was this? --- Messrs. Hague & Cook's, of Dewsbury.

Will you state the effect that those long hours had upon the state of your health and feelings? --- I was, when working those long hours, commonly very much fatigued at night, when I left my work, so much so that I sometimes should have slept as I walked if I had not stumbled and started awake again, and so sick often that I could not eat, and what I did eat I vomited.

Did this labour destroy your appetite? --- It did.

In what situation were you in that mill? --- I was a piecener.

Will you state to the Committee whether piecening is a very laborious employment for children, or not? --- It is a very laborious employment. Pieceners are continually running to and fro, and on their feet the whole day.

The duty of the piecener is to take the cardings from one part of machinery, and to place them on another? --- Yes.

So that the labour is not only continual, but it is unabated to the last? --- It is unabated to the last.

Do you not think, from your own experience, that the speed of the machinery is so calculated as to demand the utmost exertions of a child, supposing the hours were moderate? --- It is as much as they could do at the best; they are always upon the stretch, and it is commonly very difficult to keep up with their work.

State the condition of the children towards the latter part of the day, who have thus to keep up with the machinery? --- It is as much as they can do when they are not very much fatigued to keep up with their work, and towards the close of the day, when they come to be more fatigued, they cannot keep up with it very well, and the consequence is that they are beaten to spur them on.

Were you beaten under those circumstances? --- Yes.

Frequently? --- Very frequently.

And principally at the latter end of the day? --- Yes.

And is it your belief that if you had not been so beaten, you should not have got through your work? --- I should not if I had not been kept up to it by some means.

Does beating then principally occur at the latter end of the day, when the children are exceedingly fatigued? --- It does at the latter end of the day, and in the morning sometimes, when they are very drowsy, and have not got rid of the fatigue of the day before.

What were you beaten with principally? --- A strap.

Anything else? --- Yes, a stick sometimes; and there is a kind of roller which runs on the top of the machine called a billy, perhaps two or three yards in length, and perhaps an inch and a half, or more, in diameter; the circumference would be four or five inches, I cannot speak exactly.

Were you beaten with that instrument? --- Yes.

Have you yourself been beaten, and have you seen other children struck severely with that roller? --- I have been struck very severely with it myself, so much so as to knock me down, and I have seen other children have their heads broken with it.

You think that it is a general practice to beat the children with the roller? --- It is.

You do not think then that you were worse treated than other children in the mill? --- No, I was not, perhaps not so bad as some were

Can you speak as to the effect of this labour in the mills and factories on the morals of the children, as far as you have observed? --- As far as I have observed with regard to morals in the mills, there is every thing about them that is disgusting to every one conscious of correct morality.

Do you find that the children, the females especially, are very early demoralized in them? --- They are.

Is their language indecent? --- Very indecent; and both sexes take great familiarities with each other in the mills, without at all being ashamed of their conduct.

Do you connect their immorality of language and conduct with their excessive labour? --- It may be

somewhat connected with it, for it is to be observed that most of that goes on towards night, when they begin to be drowsy; it is a kind of stimulus which they use to keep them awake; they say some pert thing or other to keep themselves from drowsiness, and it generally happens to be some obscene language.

Have not a considerable number of the females employed in mills illegitimate children very early in life? --- I believe they are; I have known some of them have illegitimate children when they were between 16 and 17 years of age.

How many grown up females had you in the mill? --- I cannot speak to the exact number that were grown up; perhaps there might be thirty-four or so that worked in the mill at that time.

How many of those had illegitimate children? --- A great many of them, eighteen or nineteen of them, I think.

Did they generally marry the men by whom they had the children? --- No, it sometimes happens that young women have children by married men, and I have known an instance, a few weeks since, where one of the young women had a child by a married man.

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SOURCE: The Sadler Commission Report on child labor initiated by the British Parliament, 1832.

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No master would wish to have any wayward children to work within the walls of his factory, who do not mind their business without beating, and he therefore usually fines and turns away any spinners who are known to maltreat their assistants. Hence, ill-usage of any kind is a very rare occurrence. I have visited many factories, both in Manchester and in the surrounding districts, during a period of several months, entering the spinning rooms, unexpectedly, and often alone, at different times of day, and I never saw a single instance of corporal chastisement inflicted on a child, nor indeed did I ever see children in ill-humor. They seemed to be always cheerful and alert, taking pleasure in the light play of their muscles-enjoying the mobility natural to their age. The scene of industry, far from exciting sad emotions in my mind, was always exhilarating. It was delightful to observe the nimbleness with which they pieced the broken ends, as the mule-carriage began to recede from the fixed roller-beam, and to see them at leisure, after a few seconds' exercise of their tiny fingers, to amuse themselves in any attitude they chose, till the stretch and winding-on were once more completed. The work of these lively elves seemed to resemble a sport, in which habit gave them a pleasing dexterity. Conscious of their skill, they were delighted to show it off to any stranger. As to exhaustion by the day's work, they evinced no trace of it on emerging from the mill in the evening; for they immediately began to skip about any neighboring play-ground, and to commence their little amusements with the same alacrity as boys issuing from a school. It is moreover my firm conviction, that if children are not ill-used by bad parents or guardians, but receive in food and raiment the full benefit of what they earn, they would thrive better in our modern factories than if left alone in apartments too often ill-aired, damp and cold.

Of all the modern prejudices that exist with regard to factory labor, there is none more unfounded than that which ascribes to it excessive tedium and irksomeness above other occupations, owing to its being carried on in conjunction with the "unceasing motion of the steam-engine." In an establishment for spinning or weaving cotton, all the hard work is performed by the steam-engine, which leaves for

the attendant no hard labor at all, and literally nothing to do in general; but at intervals to perform some delicate operation, such as joining the threads that break, taking the cops off the spindles, etc. And it is so far from being true that the work in a factory is incessant, because the motion of the steam engine is incessant, that the labor is not incessant on that very account, because it is performed in conjunction with the steam engine. Of all manufacturing employments, those are by far the most irksome and incessant in which steam-engines are not employed, as in lace-running and stocking weaving; and the way to prevent an employment from being incessant is to introduce a steam-engine into it....

Occupations which are assisted by steam engines require for the most part a higher, or at least a steadier, species of labor than those which are not; the exercise of the mind being then partially substituted for that of the muscles, constituting skilled labor, which is always paid more highly than unskilled. On this principle we can readily account for the comparatively high wages which the inmates of a cotton factory, whether children or adults, obtain...In power-loom weaving also, the wages are good, and the muscular effort is trifling, as those who tend it frequently exercise themselves by following the movements of the lay, and leaning on it with their arms. It is reckoned a very healthy occupation, as is shown by the appearance of the females engaged in it, in every well-regulated establishment in England and Scotland....

Under what pretext, or with what face of pretension, operatives, whose labor is assisted by steam or water power, can lay claim to a peculiar privilege of exemption from more than ten hours' daily labor it is hard to conjecture. They compare their toil with that of the small class, comparatively, of artisans, such as carpenters, bricklayers, stone-masons, etc., who, they say, work only from six to six, with two one-hour intervals for meals: a class, however, in this material respect distinguished from most factory operatives, that their work is done entirely by muscular effort, and after serving a long apprenticeship with no little outlay. But what do the factory operatives think of the numerous class of domestic operatives, the stocking or frame-work knitters, the hand-loom weavers, the wool-combers, the lace-manufacturers, and a variety of others, who work, and very hardly too, from twelve to sixteen hours a day, to earn a bare subsistence; and this frequently from a very early age, and in a state of confinement irksome to the mind and injurious to the body? ...

The most recent, and perhaps most convincing, evidence regarding the healthiness of factory children is that given in the official report of Mr. Harrison, the inspecting surgeon appointed for the mills of Preston and its vicinity. There are 1,656 under 18 years of age, of whom 952 are employed in spinning-rooms, 468 in carding rooms, 128 at power-looms, and 108 in winding, skewering cops, etc. "I have made very particular inquiries respecting the health of every child whom I have examined, and I find that the average annual sickness of each child is not more than four days; at least, that not more than four days on an average are lost by each child in a year, in consequence of sickness. This includes disorders of every kind, for the most part induced by causes wholly unconnected with factory labor. I have been not a little surprised to find so little sickness which can fairly be attributed to mill work. I have met with very few children who have suffered from injuries occasioned by machinery; and the protection, especially in new factories, is so complete, that accidents will, I doubt not, speedily become rare. I have not met with a single instance out of the 1,656 children whom I have examined, of deformity, that is referable to factory labor. it must be admitted, that factory children do not present the same blooming robust appearance as is witnessed among children who labor in the open air, but I question if they are not more exempt from acute diseases, and do not, on the average, suffer less sickness than those who are regarded as having more healthy employments. The average age at which the children of this district enter the factories is ten years and two months; and the average

age of all the young persons together is fourteen years."

SOURCE: Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufacturers: or, An Exposition of the Scientific, Moral, and Commercial Economy of the Factory System*, 1835.

Document 3

"Heaven helps those who help themselves" is a well tried maxim, embodying in a small compass the results of vast human experience. The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigor and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done *for* men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over-guidance and over-government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless.

Even the best institutions can give a man no active help. Perhaps the most they can do is, to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition. But in all times men have been prone to believe that their happiness and well-being were to be secured by means of institutions rather than by their own conduct. Hence the value of legislation as an agent in human advancement has usually been much over-estimated. To constitute the millionth part of a Legislature, by voting for one or two men once in three or five years, however conscientiously this duty may be performed, can exercise but little active influence upon any man's life and character. Moreover, it is every day becoming more clearly understood, that the function of Government is negative and restrictive, rather than positive and active; being resolvable principally into protection---protection of life, liberty, and property. Laws, wisely administrated, will secure men in the enjoyment of the fruits of their labor, whether or mind or body, at a comparatively small personal sacrifice; but no laws, however stringent, can make the idle industrious, the shiftless provident, or the drunken sober. Such reforms can only be affected by means of individual action, economy, and self-denial; by better habits, rather than by greater rights....

Indeed, all experience serves to prove that the worth and strength of a State depend far less upon the form of its institutions than upon the character of its men. For the nation is only an aggregate of individual conditions, and civilization itself is but a question of the personal improvement of the men, women, and children of whom society is composed.

National progress is the sum of individual industry, energy, and uprightness, as national decay is of individual idleness, selfishness, and vice. What we are accustomed to decry as great social evils, will for the most part be found to be but the outgrowth of man's own perverted life; and though we may endeavor to cut them down and extirpate them by means of Law, they will only spring up again with fresh luxuriance in some other form, unless the conditions of personal life and character are radically improved. If this view be correct, then it follows that the highest patriotism and philanthropy consist, not so much in altering laws and modifying institutions, as in helping and stimulating men to elevate and improve themselves by their own free and independent individual action.

One of the most strongly marked features of the English people is their spirit of industry, standing out prominent and distinct in their past history, and as strikingly characteristic of them now as at any former period. It is this spirit, displayed by the commons of England, which has laid the foundations and built up the industrial greatness of the empire. This vigorous growth of the nation has been mainly the result of the free energy of individuals, and it has been contingent upon the number of hands and minds from time to time actively employed within it,.....

The career of industry which the nation has pursued, has also proved its best education. As steady application to work is the healthiest training for every individual, so is it the best discipline of a state. Honorable industry travels the same road with duty; and Providence has closely linked both with happiness. The gods, says the poet, have placed labor and toil on the way leading to the Elysian fields. Certain it is that no bread eaten by man is so sweet as that earned by his own labor, whether bodily or mental. By labor the earth has been subdued, and man redeemed from barbarism; nor has a single step in civilization been made without it. Labor is not only a necessity and a duty, but a blessing: only the idler feels it to be a curse. The duty of work is written on the thews and muscles of the limbs, the mechanism of the hand, the nerves and lobes of the brain—the sum of whose healthy action is satisfaction and enjoyment. In the school of labor is taught the best practical wisdom; nor is a life of manual employment, as we shall hereafter find, incompatible with high mental culture.

SOURCE: Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, 1859.