

Ayisha Adekanmbi

Professor O'Hara

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### Research & Writing 19: Sadler Committee

In 1832 Michael Sadler conducted an investigation in textile factories to investigate the working conditions of the factories. This investigation led to the creation of a committee report which detailed the life of the industrial class workers, and sanitary conditions in the factories. This report contains testimony and eyewitnesses from several workers in these factories. This report issued the way for labor reforms such as the Act of 1833, which limited hours of work for women and children in the textile industry.

Joshua Drake, a factory worker described his hours of work as being long with very little pay, and when asked preferred having short hours of labor and receiving a lower wage. When asked the question of why he let his children work in ill-suited factories; he says he only allows it because the family needs the money to be financially stable. When Joshua was asked about a law being passed to limit the hours of labor to eight hours of the day; he was in favor of this idea; stating it would create more job opportunities for more people to work.

Matthew Crabtree was a blanket manufacturer and worked in a factory. Matthew reveals that he acquired his first job at the age of eight. He described his typical work day to be 14 hours long, with an hour rest break at noon; he said that he wasn't allowed to eat breakfast at the workplace. When asked about his punctuality for work; he said he often arrived to work late

which resulted in severe beatings, and he said in the factory there was constantly crying from the overlookers beating children for not keeping up with their work. Matthew described his experience of working in the factory as a child as one of dread and sorrow. Mr. John Hall was then called in and testified to the horrors of children's bodies being contorted and disfigured as a result of being caught up in factory machines.

Elizabeth Bentley was a twenty-three-year-old woman; who began working at a flax-mill factory at the age of six. On an average workday, she would work about 19 hours a day; with forty-minute periods allocated for meals. Sometimes meal times were missed or taken home depending on the quality of work done by the children that given day. Elizabeth's work was tiresome as it kept her on her feet all day; if there was any delay in work the children were beaten. The consequence of being late was a penny an hour off of a paycheck.

The last person Examined was a man by the name of Peter Smart; a factory worker who worked and lived in a water mill. He describes this experience as being bound and locked up all day and night; with children often attempting to run away; but being later caught and whipped as punishment. His mother sold him for 15s for six years to this mill master. Later in his life, he took a job as an overseer in a water mill; he worked nineteen hours a day and on Sundays; the wages were also fixed. Children in this mill were constantly bound and suffered health conditions that prevented them from doing their work. From reading this committee report I've learned more about the experiences of working in factories and the conditions during the industrial revolution.

Works Cited

*Life of Nineteenth-Century Workers - Evidence given before the Sadler Committee*  
(1831-1832), <https://victorianweb.org/history/workers1.html#sadler>.