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Research and Writing

This article enlightened me about the life of industrial workers in nineteenth-century England, regarding how gruesome and cruel their working conditions were. The first man that testified for the case was Joshua Drawk. He shared how he would rather have less wages and less hours due to the horrible conditions that he had to work under. He explained that if there was a limit on hour of labor then he would be pulled into employment because it meant that there would be more workers at the machines and more regularly spread out, so that not just one man is working day and night. It sounds like the factories at this time overworked the employees tremendously and relied too heavily on their workers. He also said that people were forced to send their children into these poor working environments because they had to in order to provide for their families. I can only imagine the stress it was on the parents to know what they are sending their kids into but having to do so nonetheless.

The second person to testify was Matthew Crabtree, who is a 22 year-old blanket manufacturer. He says that he started working at the age of 8 with fourteen to sixteen hour shifts and only a one hour break time. He explains how if he was late, which he was often, then he was beaten severely. He said how you would rarely go a full hour without hearing crying from people being beaten. He says because he lived two miles from his work, he knew when he would be late, so he would run crying all the way to work knowing the beating he was going to get. These working conditions seem horrific and cruel, for they force the employees to work 14 hour shifts,

but yet, if they are tired and can't keep up with their machine then they are beaten. It does not seem like fair rules at all.

Another person that testified was Elizabeth Bentley. She shared how she started working at the age 6 with 16 hour shifts. She shares how she barely had time at all to eat and the work was so active and demanding it was exhausting. She says how she was strapped severely many times working the job, however, only the boys would be beaten. She says that if she was late then she would lose a portion of her wage for the day. In order for these kids to get to work on time they would wake up at 2am-4am in the morning, then work 16 hour shifts day after day with cruel punishments if they could not keep up with the work. The labor conditions in the 1900s set employees up for failure; they were unfair and cruel. Each interviewee shares that they worked incredibly long hours, they started at an unreasonably young age, they were constantly fatigued, they had little energy or time to eat, they were beaten in cases of mistakes or tiredness, and they had to wake up incredibly early in the morning. I can only imagine working under such conditions, as the world today has changed so drastically. The thought of working and hearing constant shouts of cries because of workers arriving late or having let their fatigue fail them at their role, sounds truly horrific. The worst part is that the parents had to send their children to work under these conditions even though they knew how mentally and physically straining it would be on them. Working conditions in the 1900s were truly horrific.