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Research and Writing Assignment 19

Testimonies of Victorian Workers document gathers the accounts of real workers from various trades and occupations who spoke before the British government's Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery in 1824. The workers included John Doherty, a cotton spinner, John Mason, a coal miner, and John Brown, a shoemaker, among others. They described the tough and dangerous working conditions they faced in industries like cotton mills, lace making, coal mining, and shoe making, working long hours with poor lighting and inadequate ventilation. Some workers even had to handle hazardous chemicals like sulphuric acid.

Sadly, the workers felt that their employers prioritized profit over their health and safety, with many reporting inadequate medical care, wage deductions, and constant surveillance. Workers felt they couldn't unionize or demand better conditions without risking immediate termination.

These testimonies show the struggle that Victorian workers faced in the early 19th century and the lack of concern for their welfare. But, the testimonies were important in fueling the labor movement and pushing for better treatment and more equitable working conditions.