

[A letter from "A Souldier Returned to his Wife and weeping Orphans" to a Member of Parliament from Wiltshire (1802)]:

We know that it have been mentioned to our great men and Ministers in Parliament by them that have Factorys how many poor they employ, forgetting at the same time how many more they would employ were they to have it done by hand as they used to do. The Poor house we find full of great lurking Boys.... I am informed by many that there will be a Revolution and that there is in Yorkshire about 30 thousand in a Correspondent Society.... The burning of Factorys or setting fire to the property of People we know is not right, but Starvation forces Nature to do that which he would not....

[An anonymous letter to a Gloucestershire clothier (1802)]:

Wee Hear in Formed that you got Shear in mee sheens and if you Dont Pull them Down in a Forght Nights Time Wee will pull them Down for you Wee will you Damd infernold Dog. And Bee four Almighty God we will pull down all the Mills that heave Heany Shearing me Shens in We will cut out Hall your Damd Hearts as Do Keep them and We will meock the rest Heat them or else We will Searve them the Seam.

Nottingham Review

6 December 1811

The machines, or frames ... are not broken for being upon any new construction ... but in consequence of goods being wrought upon them which are of little worth, are deceptive to the eye, or disreputable to the trade, and therefore pregnant with the seeds of its destruction.

[16 December 1811]

Ned Lud Gives Notice, to the Coperation,

if the Coperation does not take means to Call A Meeting with the Hoseiars about the prices Being--Dropped Ned will asemble 20000 Menn together in a few Days and will Destroy the town in Spite of the Soldiers....

[A letter to Mr. George Smith, a resident of Huddersfield and prominent user of the new frames (Feb/Mar 1812)]:

Sir,

Information has just been given in that you are a holder of those detestable Shearing Frames, and I was desired by my men to write to you and give you fair warning to pull them down, and for that purpose I desire that you wil understand I am now writing to you. You will take notice that if they are not taken down by the end of next week I shall attach one of my Lieutenants with at least 300 men to destroy them, and furthermore take notice that if you give us the trouble of coming so far we will increase your misfortunes by burning your Buildings down to ashes, and if you have the impudence to fire at any of my Men they have orders to Murder you and burn all your Housing....

By the General of the Army of Redressers,
Ned Ludd, Clerk

[To] all Croppers, Weavers &c & Public at large:

Generous Countrymen. You are rquested to come forward with Arms and help the Redressers to redress their Wrongs and shake off the hateful Yoke of a Silly Old Man and his Son even more silly and their Rogueish Ministers, all Nobles and Tyrants must be brought down. Come let us follow the Noble Example of the brave Citizens of Paris who in sight of 30,000 Tyrant Redcoats brought A Tyrant to the Ground. By so doing you will be best aiming at your own Interest. Above 40,000 Heroes are ready to break out, to crush the old Government and establish a new one.

Apply to General Ludd Commander of the Army of Redressers.

Child Labour in Cotton Factories, 1807

A conversation between Southey and a Manchester gentleman who is showing him over the cotton factories.

Mr. ----- remarked that nothing could be so beneficial to a country as manufacture. 'You see these children, sir,' said he. 'In most parts of England poor children are a burthen to their parents and to the parish; here the parish, which would else have to support them, is rid of all expense; they get their bread almost as soon as they can run about, and by the time they are seven or eight years old bring in money. There is no idleness among us: they come at five in the morning; we allow them half an hour for breakfast, and an hour for dinner; they leave work at six, and another set relieves them for the night; the wheels never stand still.'

I was looking, while he spoke, at the unnatural dexterity with which the fingers of these little creatures were playing in the machinery, half giddy myself with the noise and the endless motion; and when he told me there was no rest in these walls, day or night, I thought that if Dante had peopled one of his hells with children, here was a scene worthy to have supplied him with new images of torment.

'These children then,' said I, 'have no time to receive instruction.' 'That, sir,' he replied 'is the evil which we have found. Girls are employed here from the age you see them till they marry, and then they know nothing about domestic work, not even how to mend a stocking or boil a potato. But we are remedying this now, and send the children to school for an hour after they have done work.' I asked if so much confinement did not injure their health. 'No' he replied, 'they are as healthy as any children in the world could be. To be sure, many of them as they grew up went off in consumptions, but consumption was the disease of the English. ...'

'We are well off for hands in Manchester,' said Mr. -----; 'manufacturers are favourable to population, the poor are not afraid of having a family here, the parishes therefore have always plenty to apprentice, and we take them as fast as they can supply us. In new manufacturing towns they find it difficult to get a supply. Their only method is to send people round the country to get children from their parents. Women usually undertake this business; they promise the parents to provide for the children; one party is glad to be eased of a burden; and it answers well to the other to find the young ones in food, lodging and clothes, and receive their wages.' 'But if these children should be ill-used', said I. 'Sir,' he replied, 'it never can be the interest of the women to use them ill, nor of the manufacturers to permit it.'

It would have been in vain to argue had I been disposed to it. Mr. ----- was a man of humane and kindly nature, who would not himself use any thing cruelly, and judged of others by his own feelings. I thought of the cities in Arabian romance, where all the inhabitants were enchanted: here Commerce is the Queen witch, and I had no talisman strong enough to disenchant those who were daily drinking of the golden cup of her charms

Robert Southey, *Letters from England* (1807).

Report of the Commissioners on the employment of children in Factories (1833) p. 1418

This section of the Report concerns parental collusion in the employment of children for long hours in the textile workshops of the north of England. The 1833 Factory Act sought to restrict the working hours of children and young persons.

From the causes already assigned, namely the irregularity with which the operative is supplied with material for his work, irregularity of the power by which the machinery is driven, and the dissipated habits of the workers, favoured, if not induced, by the occasional idleness growing out of the two first causes, it appears that in the carpet factories it is the constant practice, and in the clothing district the frequent practice, to work extra hours:

"It is very much the case with some sort of men to go idle part of the week and to work extra hours the rest. In such cases I have known men to work from three o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock at night; the drawers must work the same hours; they must always go together; they can't do without one another."

"It is the practice for the weavers to be idle and dissipated part of the week and to work extra hours the rest. We abound with that evil; we witness it every week round; even the regular workmen must often be idle part of the week, from the irregularity of the work coming in. It is very oppressive indeed to the children."

"I have known instances, in the depth of winter, of drawers being called up to work by four o'clock in the morning, and earlier. I believe it is the common practice for the idle weavers to place their draw-boys in the looms, and to employ younger boys or girls as drawers, to make up for their own laziness or dissipation. The weavers are in general idle the early part of the week and they afterwards work from eighteen to twenty hours to make up their lost time, during which the draw-boy or draw-girl must attend them. I have known frequent instances of their commencing work at two or three o'clock in the morning."

In the clothing district both workmen and masters agree in stating that if extra work for extra pay were refused when a press of business comes, the workmen so refusing would lose their situations; both also concur in the statement, that it is the constant practice for parents, and even for children themselves, to apply to the masters for extra work for additional wages, and cases have been detailed in which children have worked upwards of fourteen hours.

It appears that parents encourage their children to make the extraordinary efforts, of which we have given some examples, by leading them to consider the wages which they thus earn as peculiarly their own, although a cheat is often practised upon them even with regard to these extra wages. While all the witnesses agree in the statement, that whatever the child earns by its regular hours of labour is uniformly appropriated by the parent, it appears that a large portion of the additional wages earned by extra hours is also taken by the latter.

Extracts from The Factory Act of 1833

This piece of legislation was the first effective Factory Act to be passed. Two pieces of factory legislation had been passed earlier: the 1802 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act and the 1819 Cotton Mills Act but neither of them had had much effect.

... no person under eighteen years of age shall [work] between half-past eight in the evening and half-past five in the morning, in any cotton, woollen, worsted, hemp, flax, tow, linen or silk mill...

... no person under the age of eighteen shall be employed in any such mill ... more than twelve hours in ... one day, nor more than sixty-nine hours in ... one week...

There shall be allowed ... not less than one and a half hours for meals.

It shall not be lawful ... to employ in any factory ... as aforesaid, except in mills for the manufacture of silk, any child who shall not have completed his or her ninth year.

It shall not be lawful for any person to employ ... in any factory ... as aforesaid for longer than forty-eight hours in one week, nor for longer than nine hours in one day, any child who shall not have completed his or her eleventh year...

It shall be lawful for His Majesty to appoint four Inspectors of factories where ... children and young persons under eighteen years of age [are] employed, empowered to enter any ... mill, and any school ... belonging thereto, at all times ... by day or by night, when such ... factories are at work.

The Inspectors shall have power to make such rules as may be necessary for the execution of this act, binding on all persons subject to the provisions of this act; and are authorised to enforce the attendance at school of children employed in factories according to the provisions of this act.

Every child restricted to the performance of forty-eight hours of labour in any one week shall attend some school.

Statutes of the Realm, 3 & 4 William IV, c. 103.