

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: *THE UGLY*

Unfortunately, not all of the negative impacts of the Industrial Revolution were unintended. The lack of regulation on business owners also had very bad effects on the people who were moving to the cities during the Industrial Revolution. Sadly, these people had very little or no choice, except to allow the rich business owners to take advantage of them.

The Poor Workers

When families moved to the cities looking for jobs, often times they would sell almost everything they had just to be able to move to the city. Often times, this would mean that they were stuck once they moved. While there were plenty of jobs in the cities, a lot of times these were not good jobs to have.

Working in a factory during the Industrial Revolution was extremely dangerous. Today, there are laws that control workplace conditions, so factories have to make sure that the factory is safe, and workers are not constantly in danger. During the Industrial Revolution, none of these laws existed, and a lot of times the upgrades to make the machines safer were expensive, so the factory owners didn't pay for the safer machines.

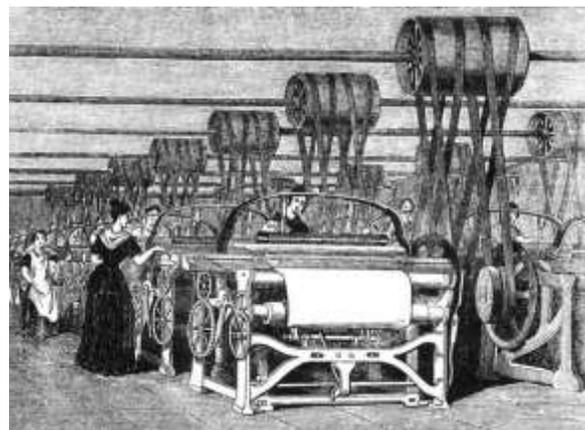
Another thing that didn't exist at this time was a minimum wage. Factory owners knew that people moving to the cities needed a job, or they wouldn't be able to feed their families, so they didn't pay very much. This is another supply and demand situation, the supply of workers was very high, therefore the price of the worker (the salary owners have to pay them) was low. At this time, there was no government welfare programs, so not working wasn't an option, since literally your children would starve to death.



Tenement Buildings, like the ones shown above, were often over-crowded. Sometimes, several families would share a one bedroom apartment.

some jobs required people to go into very tight spaces.

One such job was a chimney sweep. Chimneys on houses are what takes the fire and smoke out of a house, while still allowing the heat from the fire to heat the home. During the 1800's, the only way to heat a home was to have a fire, so during the winter, families would have fires constantly to heat their homes. This made it necessary to keep chimneys clean of debris and dirt, which could catch fire and burn down a home. Since most chimneys were also very small, children were



Workplace dangers—With the belts and machines all exposed, it was common for workers to have hands or feet caught in the machines.

Mines were especially dangerous during this time. Workers would go underground in very tight and dangerous conditions, with dust everywhere. Inhaling the dust would be very likely, and fires, explosions, and mine collapses happened regularly. You would think that for such a dangerous job, these people would be paid more money, but again, there were so many desperate people willing to do any kind of job at all, that often these jobs didn't pay any more money than other jobs.

Child Labor

During this time, it was common for women or even children to also have to work to support the family, due to the extremely low wages. Many children by age 10 or 12, would have to drop out of school and begin working. Children were smaller than adults, and therefore could fit in smaller spaces than adults. This was very good in the growing cities, where



Children working in a mine during the Industrial Revolution



trained to clean them. Being on houses and in chimneys was very dangerous work, and children were also paid less than adults to do the work.

Another place that children were used was in the mines. Again, sometimes the mine shafts were so small, that adults would have a hard time moving the materials back up to the surface in the mine carts. The solution was to pay young boys to pull the carts back to the surface, since they were smaller. It was common for children to have to pull several hundred pounds of coal or other raw materials for hundreds of feet in tight and dangerous mine shafts.

Immigration

Especially in America, many people had heard that jobs and conditions were better than they were in Europe. Sometimes these stories were exaggerated or just wrong. These people would often sell everything they had just for a ticket to be able to come to America. These people were especially vulnerable to being exploited. Since they literally would only have the clothes on their back when they arrived, they had to take the first opportunity that was offered to them. Sometimes, factory owners would rent apartments to these immigrants in exchange for their work, but the apartments would be slums, with rats, roaches, and little in the way of furniture.



A group of immigrant children in the early 1900's. Immigrant families would stop at Ellis Island in New York harbor to officially become citizens of the United States of America.

Silver linings

While the exploitation of the workers by factory and mine owners was common during the Industrial Revolution, it did not continue forever. As women began to be more and more involved in the workplace, they also got more involved and more respect in politics. Normally, as a country industrializes, women slowly gain more and more rights such as suffrage. This is the case throughout America and Europe, and all Western societies as they industrialized. By the time the American Industrial Revolution had finished, women had gained the right to vote. Soon after that came equal rights in other areas as well, such as the right to half of a family's property in the case of a divorce.

Labor Unions also began to form during this time. A labor union is basically a group of workers who join together to stand up to a factory owner or business owner. If the workers feel that they are being taken advantage of, they have the ability to strike, or refuse to work. Since a business owner won't make money if nobody is working for him, they became more motivated to give better working conditions, and better pay to workers when they showed they were willing to go on strike. Since union workers don't get paid while they are on strike, it is also in their best interest to figure out a way to accept what the owner is willing to offer.



A women's march in New York City proclaiming that they should have a right to vote. Women gained the right to vote in America in 1913. They were granted the right to vote in Britain the same as men (age 21) in 1928.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. "Exploit" means to take advantage of something. How were workers exploited by factory owners during the Industrial Revolution?
2. Why did children work during the Industrial Revolution?
3. Who were the big winners and losers of the Industrial Revolution?

Write about it.

In a 5 paragraph essay, state whether you think that the positives of the Industrial Revolution outweighed the negatives. Support your answer with evidence from what you've learned.