adults, who were used to traditional handicraft routines. Child labor took children away from their parents, undermined family life, and deprived children of schooling. Factory routines dulled their minds, and the long hours spent in often unsanitary environments endangered their health.

Sadler Commission
REPORT ON CHILD LABOR

Due to concern about child labor, in 1832 a parliamentary committee chaired by Michael Thomas Sadler investigated the situation of children employed in British factories. The following testimonies are drawn from the records of the Sadler Commission.

COMMITTEE ON FACTORIES BILL: MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

[*April 12.*] *1832.*

Michael Thomas Sadler, Esquire, in the Chair.
William Cooper, called in: and Examined.

What is your business? — I follow the clothdressing at present.[1]

What is your age? — I was eight-and-twenty last February.

When did you first begin to work in mills or factories? — When I was about ten years of age.

With whom did you first work? — At Mr. Benyon's flax mills, in Meadowlane, Leeds.

What were your usual hours of working? — We began at five, and gave over at nine; at five o'clock in the morning.

And you gave over at nine o'clock? — At nine at night.

At what distance might you have lived from the mill? — About a mile and a half.

At what time had you to get up in the morning to attend to your labour? — I had to be up soon after four o'clock.

Every morning? — Every morning.

What intermissions had you for meals? — When we began at five in the morning, we went on until noon, and then we had 40 minutes for dinner.

Had you no time for breakfast? — No, we got it as we could, while we were working.

Had you any time for an afternoon refreshment, or what is called in Yorkshire your "drinking?" — No; when we began at noon, we went on till night; there was only one stoppage, the 40 minutes for dinner.

Then as you had to get your breakfast, and what is called "drinking" in that manner, you had to put it on one side? — Yes, we had to put it on one side; and when we got our frames doffed,[2] we ate two or three mouthfuls, and then put it by again.

Is there not considerable dust in a flax mill? — A flax mill is very dusty indeed.

Was not your food therefore frequently spoiled? — Yes, at times with the dust; sometimes we could not eat it, when it had got a lot of dust on.

What were you when you were ten years old? — What is called a bobbin-doffer;[3] when the frames are quite full, we have to doff them.

Then as you lived so far from home, you took your dinner to the mill? — We took all our meals with us, living so far off.

During the 40 minutes which you were al-

[1] In the original source, each paragraph was numbered; paragraphs 1–18 and 21–35 are in this section.

[2] *Frames* refers to the spinning machines, which were built on a bulky framework; *doff* means to lift off the spindles full of yarn.

[3] A bobbin-doffer was usually a child, whose job was to remove the spindles (bobbins) when filled with thread or yarn.

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lowed for dinner, had you ever to employ that time in your turn in cleaning the machinery? — At times we had to stop to clean the machinery, and then we got our dinner as well as we could; they paid us for that. . . .

Did you ever work even later than the time you have mentioned? — I cannot say that I worked later there. I had a sister who worked up stairs, and she worked till 11 at night, in what they call the card-room.[4]

At what time in the morning did she begin work? — At the same time as myself.

And they kept her there till 11 at night? — Till 11 at night.

You say that your sister was in the card-room? — Yes.

Is not that a very dusty department? — Yes, very dusty indeed.

She had to be at the mill at five, and was kept at work till eleven at night? — Yes.

During the whole time she was there? — During the whole time; there was only 40 minutes allowed at dinner out of that.

To keep you at your work for such a length of time, and especially towards the termination of such a day's labour as that, what means were taken to keep you awake and attentive? — They strapped [beat] us at times, when we were not quite ready to be doffing the frame when it was full.

Were you frequently strapped? — At times we were frequently strapped.

What sort of strap was it? — About this length (describing it).

What was it made of? — Of leather.

Were you occasionally very considerably hurt with the strap? — Sometimes it hurt us very much, and sometimes they did not lay on so hard as they did at others.

Were the girls strapped in that sort of way? — They did not strap what they called the grown-up women.

Were any of the female children strapped? — Yes; they were strapped in the same way as the lesser boys.

What were your wages at 10 years old at Mr. Benyon's? — I think it was 4 *s.* [shillings][5] a week.

[*May 18,*] *1832.*

Michael Thomas Sadler, Esquire, in the chair.

Mr. Matthew Crabtree, called in; and Examined.

What age are you? — Twenty-two.[6]

What is your occupation? — A blanket manufacturer.

Have you ever been employed in a factory? — Yes.

At what age did you first go to work in one? — Eight.

How long did you continue in that occupation? — Four years.

Will you state the hours of labour at the period when you first went to the factory, in ordinary times? — From 6 in the morning to 8 at night.

Fourteen hours? — Yes.

With what intervals for refreshment and rest? — An hour at noon.

Then you had no resting time allowed in which to take your breakfast, or what is in Yorkshire called your "drinking"? — No.

When trade was brisk what were your hours? — From 5 in the morning to 9 in the evening.

Sixteen hours? — Yes.

With what intervals at dinner? — An hour.

How far did you live from the mill? — About two miles.

Was there any time allowed for you to get your breakfast in the mill? — No.

Did you take it before you left home? — Generally.

During those long hours of labour could you be punctual, how did you awake? — I seldom

[4] In the card-room was a machine for separating fibers from one another, prior to being spun into yarn.

[5] A shilling equals 12 pence or 1/20 of a British pound.

[6] Like the preceding section, each paragraph in this section is numbered in the original source: 2481–2519 and 2597–2604.

did awake spontaneously. I was most generally awoke or lifted out of bed, sometimes asleep, by my parents.

Were you always in time? — No.

What was the consequence if you had been too late? — I was most commonly beaten.

Severely? — Very severely, I thought.

In whose factory was this? — Messrs. Hague & Cook's, of Dewsbury.

Will you state the effect that those long hours had upon the state of your health and feelings? — I was, when working those long hours, commonly very much fatigued at night, when I left my work, so much so that I sometimes should have slept as I walked if I had not stumbled and started awake again, and so sick often that I could not eat, and what I did eat I vomited.

Did this labour destroy your appetite? — It did.

In what situation were you in that mill? — I was a piecener [see below].

Will you state to the Committee whether piecening is a very laborious employment for children, or not? — It is a very laborious employment. Pieceners are continually running to and fro, and on their feet the whole day.

The duty of the piecener is to take the cardings from one part of the machinery, and to place them on another? — Yes.

So that the labour is not only continual, but it is unabated to the last? — It is unabated to the last.

Do you not think, from your own experience, that the speed of the machinery is so calculated as to demand the utmost exertions of a child, supposing the hours were moderate? — It is as much as they could do at the best; they are always upon the stretch, and it is commonly very difficult to keep up with their work.

State the condition of the children towards the latter part of the day, who have thus to keep up with the machinery? — It is as much as they can do when they are not very much fatigued to keep up with their work, and towards the close of the day, when they come to be more fatigued, they cannot keep up with it very well, and the consequence is that they are beaten to spur them on.

Were you beaten under those circumstances? — Yes.

Frequently? — Very frequently.

And principally at the latter end of the day? — Yes.

And is it your belief that if you had not been so beaten, you should not have got through the work? — I should not if I had not been kept up to it by some means.

Does beating then principally occur at the latter end of the day, when the children are exceedingly fatigued? — It does at the latter end of the day, and in the morning sometimes, when they are very drowsy, and have not got rid of the fatigue of the day before.

What were you beaten with principally? — A strap.

Any thing else? — Yes, a stick sometimes; and there is a kind of roller which runs on the top of the machine called a billy, perhaps two or three yards in length, and perhaps an inch and a half, or more, in diameter; the circumference would be four or five inches, I cannot speak exactly.

Were you beaten with that instrument? — Yes.

Have you yourself been beaten, and have you seen other children struck severely with that roller? — I have been struck very severely with it myself, so much so as to knock me down, and I have seen other children have their heads broken with it.

You think that it is a general practice to beat the children with the roller? — It is.

You do not think then that you were worse treated than other children in the mill? — No, I was not, perhaps not so bad as some were. . . .

Can you speak as to the effect of this labour in the mills and factories on the morals of the children, as far as you have observed? — As far as I have observed with regard to morals in the mills, there is every thing about them that is disgusting to every one conscious of correct morality.

Do you find that the children, the females especially, are very early demoralized in them? — They are.

Is their language indecent? — Very indecent; and both sexes take great familiarities with each other in the mills, without at all being ashamed of their conduct.

Do you connect their immorality of language and conduct with their excessive labour? — It may be somewhat connected with it, for it is to be observed that most of that goes on towards night, when they begin to be drowsy; it is a kind of stimulus which they use to keep them awake; they say some pert thing or other to keep themselves from drowsiness, and it generally happens to be some obscene language.

Have not a considerable number of the females employed in mills illegitimate children very early in life? — I believe there are; I have known some of them have illegitimate children when they were between 16 and 17 years of age.

How many grown up females had you in the mill? — I cannot speak to the exact number that were grown up; perhaps there might be thirty-four or so that worked in the mill at that time.

How many of those had illegitimate children? — A great many of them, eighteen or nineteen of them, I think.

Did they generally marry the men by whom they had the children? — No, it sometimes happens that young women have children by married men, and I have known an instance, a few weeks since, where one of the young women had a child by a married man.

Friedrich Engels
≪ THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS IN ENGLAND ≫

Rapid industrialization produced a drastic change of environment for workers, who moved from the casual, slow-paced English villages and small towns to large, congested, and impersonal industrial cities. The familiar social patterns and cherished values by which preindustrial people had oriented themselves grew weak or disappeared, for these patterns and values clashed with the requirements of the new industrial age. Many people in England, from the highest to the lowest classes, still felt wedded to the old ways and hated the congested industrial centers. The miseries of the industrial towns distressed Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), a well-to-do German intellectual and son of a prosperous German manufacturer. In the early 1840s, Engels moved to Manchester, a great English industrial center, where he eventually established himself in business. In that decade, he also entered into a lifelong collaboration with Karl Marx, the founder of modern socialism (see page 156). Engels yearned for the fellowship and the pleasures of nature that he had experienced in preindustrial Germany. In the new urban centers, even in cosmopolitan London, he found only alienation and human degradation, which he described in his *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844).

. . . It is only when [a person] has visited the slums of this great city that it dawns upon him that the inhabitants of modern London have had to sacrifice so much that is best in human nature in order to create those wonders of civilisation with which their city teems. The vast majority of Londoners have had to let so many of their potential creative faculties lie dormant,