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Cover illustration by Thomas A. Dorgan ("TAD"), circa 1918, U.S.A.



THE LABOUR HISTORY ASSOCIATION

BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS' FEDERATION  
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## President's Report

Through me, the Executive wishes to extend its sincerest thanks to the many members who have made grants to this Association and thus enabled it to reduce by almost half the debt still standing due to the film production.

The distribution of the film, For Twenty Cents A Day, has been expanded to four firms, three in Canada and one in London, England. The film appears to be selling and renting well. Hopefully, in the near future, the monies received from film sales will move the Association into a more financially advantageous position.

As the Association approached its fifth birthday, it was decided to hold a "purposes meeting", to evaluate the formative years and establish proposals for the future. Such a meeting, open to all members, was held February 14th. Though the meeting had few in attendance, those present did generate a variety of opinions and recommendations. Our special thanks to the steering committee of Tom Morton, Peter Seixas, Colleen Bostwick and Frank Fuller. I have since been contacted by a number of members who were unable to attend and were concerned that the Labour History Association was disbanding. Quite the contrary! True, the Association has just passed through a slow growth period, but resurgence is ahead.

Recommendations from the February 14th meeting include:

- holding regular (monthly) executive meetings;
- assigning each executive a clearly defined task;
- defining the objectives of the Association in more rigid terms (i.e., narrowing the focus and doing a better job in establishing increased contact with classroom teachers);
- redesigning the format and substance of the journal (i.e., more publications, fewer pages, different thematic approach); and
- increasing contact with other Provincial Specialists' Associations and outside organizations.

Denis Ottewill

Don't forget the Annual General Meeting of the Labour History Association on Sunday, April 12, from 12:30 - 2:00 PM in the Waddington Room, Hotel Vancouver.

GUEST SPEAKER: T.B.A.  
THEME: Women in the Trade Union Movement.



# All Work and No Play

## Children in the New Industries

How and why did children enter the workforce? Who were these young workers and where did they come from? These are questions which should be answered in any study of child labour. 1.

Prior to the industrial revolution and the concentration of masses of people in urban areas, farming and goods production were centred around the home. All family members who were physically able took part in whatever trade occupied the household, including young children. From the age of about six years, each child was expected to become part of the household "team," and by the age of 12 or 13, he or she was expected to be self-supportive within the family unit. A system of apprenticeship enabled children at a young age to learn a trade which would prepare them for adulthood. Among the poor (who were a majority), children were indentured as domestics or farm helpers to another family.

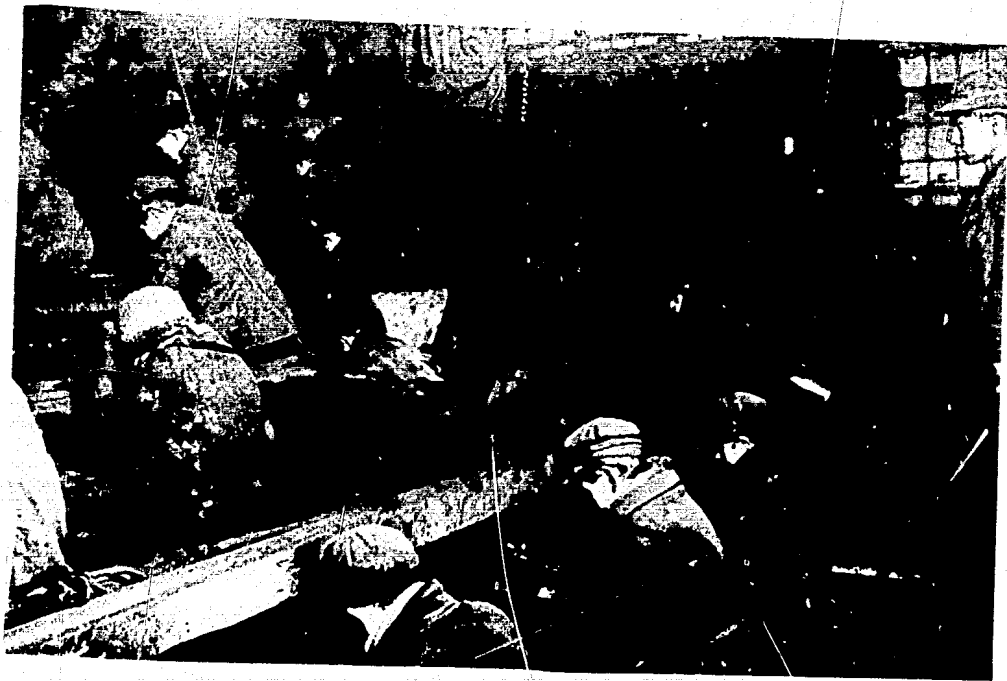
The urban factory system quickly changed this. A feudal and agrarian society was replaced by one of industrial capitalism. The machine manufacture of goods literally ripped apart individual household production and concentrated it in single factories located in urban centres. The demand for labour was overwhelming, both in the factories themselves, and in the industries which fueled them (coal, cast-iron, machine-building, etc.). Instead of selling their wares, people were forced to sell their labour to survive. They were a new "working" class.

The factory system gradually came to dominate all branches of industry. In Britain, by the early 1800s, child labour was the foundation upon which the wheels turned. After 1819, there was a steady decline in the use of child labour. Yet,

even after twenty years of decline, statistics show that nearly half of all factory operatives in the British Empire in 1839 were children under 18 years of age. The Children's Employment Commission of 1833-34 recorded the appalling conditions under which children worked, often beginning at age 5 (although more likely at ages 8 to 9). Children were subject to cruel beatings, fines, 14 to 16 hour work days. By the time they reached adolescence, their spines were curved, their legs bent and deformed, they suffered from hip, back and leg pains, swollen joints, varicose veins, and persistent ulcers on their thighs and calves. "These afflictions are almost universal among the operatives," the Report stated. 2.

The factory owners were not the only ones guilty of barbarity. In 1842, a Parliamentary Commission on Mines submitted its report to the British Government, the result of an intense investigation into the coal and iron industries. The 1841 Census showed that nearly 22% of those working in Great Britain's mines were girls and boys under the age of 20. The Commissioners detailed the conditions under which they worked: "Children are often taken to work when four years old, although eight or nine is the ordinary age for starting. Most children are trappers... (T)his employment scarcely deserves the name of labour... as the children engaged in it are commonly excluded from light, and it (could) amount to solitary confinement of the worst order. In some districts they remain in solitude and darkness during the whole time they are in the pit, and many of them never see the light of day for weeks together during the greater part of the winter season." The Report prompted the passage of the Mines





Act of 1842, which greatly limited the work of children in the mines, but wholly forbade that of females (thus reflecting the social concerns of the day). Despite the legislation, children (and women) continued to work in the mines, and no enforcement of the Mines Act was seriously attempted.

Britain set the example which was to be followed in North America well into the twentieth century. In the United States the factory system, in place by 1814, was characterized by a large proportion of child workers. Agricultural interests were assured that the factories would not compete for male adult workers. Factory work, the American industrialists boasted, was "better done by little girls from six to twelve years old." Mill owners promised to draw upon the "six hundred thousand girls in the country between the ages of ten and sixteen." 3.

Canada's late development is the only thing that prevented Canadian capitalists from reaping the benefits of child labour on so massive a scale. At the time of Confederation (1867) Canada's population was only 3.5 million, 80% of whom were rural dwellers. Only 13% of the population were found in manufacturing and handicraft production, while 18% worked in construction. By 1871, only 5.5% to 5.8% of the population

were categorized in the "industrial class" in Quebec and Ontario, respectively. 4.

Factory legislation was slow in coming, both because the Federal Government was reluctant to involve itself, and because the Provincial governments were in the firm grip of manufacturers and mine owners. In 1880, Ontario passed the country's first Factory Act, regulating the hours of labour; in 1883 it restricted children's employment in shops of twenty or more employees, leaving the worst culprits, the sweat shops, untouched. Quebec followed suit in 1885, and later New Brunswick. Other provinces were even slower, and the regulations were often violated.

Legislation governing the employment of children developed unevenly across Canada, and from sector to sector. The Factory Act of 1911 in British Columbia, for example, prohibited children under 15 years of age from working in all factories except in fruit and fish-canning, which, of course, were among the most numerous. To this day in B.C., Acts regulating the employment of children exclude farm and domestic workers.

The trade unions were among the first in Canada to express concern for the gross exploitation of children by Canadian capitalists. As early as 1873, delegates to the founding convention of

the Canadian Labour Union (Canada's first trade union centre) demanded legislation banning the "employment of children under 10 years of age in the factories and mills and other manufacturing establishments where machinery is used." They charged that the system of apprenticeships, especially in trades like tailoring and carpentering, was providing a reserve of cheap labour for the employers. Children, they said, were not "kept on long enough to learn a trade." 5.

In 1876 delegates to the fourth C.L.U. Convention condemned the practice of bringing pauper children from Britain as another source of cheap labour. They demanded once again the restriction of child labour, and called for a Board of Examiners composed of employer and employee representatives to check on the conditions of employment for apprentices. Throughout the late 1800s and into the 20th century, the trade union movement played a leading and progressive role in the struggle to restrict or eliminate the exploitation of child workers.

### Opposing Views

The elimination of child labour is most often associated with a "softening of the heart" among the more liberal-minded employers, politicians and clergy in Britain and North America. Their children were not to be found toiling in the factories and mines, so their concerns appear to be the dawning of an enlightened consciousness. Indeed, this is the picture often presented by historians. But, this view ignores reality: workers - men, women and children - have never gained major improvements in their lives without a struggle, and the passage of child labour laws was no exception. Social reformers and workers' organizations, often working together, met with furious opposition from capitalists and their political representatives. Upper class proponents of child labour laws were ostracized, and within the Established Church, there was a decided lack of unity on the question. While there were varying reasons for favouring child labour laws, there was only one reason for opposing them: there were profits to be had.

To the social reformer, the factory system signalled the total destruction of the family, wherein the husband earned a wage, the wife tended to the domestic chores and the childraising, and the children spent their youth in school, at play, in healthy pursuits. But, in 1839, less than one-quarter of all factory operatives in the British Empire were adult males. 6. In America, prior to 1861, more than half of all millworkers worked under a "family system", where those with more children (more workers) would be hired over those with fewer or none at all. In Canada, the system of indentured servitude brought tens of thousands of British pauper children across the Atlantic, separating them at a young age from their own families. Obviously, under existing conditions, the attainment of the ideal family model was impossible.

Much of the agitation for factory and mine legislation was initiated by social reformers, and was based on the concerns cited above. But, often the resulting legislation reflected a greater concern for the "lost womanhood" of adult female workers, than for the brutal conditions of workers generally, and of children specifically. As the 19th century progressed, the definition of "the family" included a progressively rigid and narrow ideal of women's role in the grand scheme of things. Factory conditions were causing deformities in the pelvic structures of young girls and many feared that impaired reproductive capabilities would further erode the family. Girls employed from the age of five to eight years were reaching adulthood with no training whatsoever in the duties of wife and mother. For these reasons, much of the early legislation regulating employment attempted to exclude females altogether, while only limiting that of male children.

The capitalists' point of view does not even reflect a concern that they were depleting their own labour supply by sending workers early to their grave. They were bitterly opposed to any legislation which would interfere with their single-minded pursuit of profits. The employer went to great lengths in order to justify the use of child labour. They claimed that "the work of these



lively little elves" resembled a sport. "Those little children love the mill," said one, "They like to work!" Employers insisted they were performing a public service: "It's a great deal better for them to be employed than for them to run the street." And, finally, when pressed, employers were opposed to child labour laws because, otherwise, "We couldn't compete." ?.

In North America and Britain, trade unions linked the issue of child labour to broader concerns: greater job safety and shorter work hours, education, improved housing and sanitation, and more social services. The struggle for better wages and working conditions was often taken up by working children themselves. Children were participants in, and occasionally initiators of strikes and walkouts protesting poor wages or wage cutbacks, particularly in areas where union organizing efforts were underway.

The struggle among workers to eliminate child labour reflected both a

striving for improved conditions in their non-working and working lives, and an acceptance of the "ideal family" model. Working families, however, could not survive restrictive legislation unless and until an adult male wage could sustain a dependent family. This single fact made it necessary for workers to fight simultaneously on many fronts.

Today in North America and Britain, those under 18 spend a good deal of their time in public schools. Yet, what do they learn of their predecessors? There is hardly any recognition of the thousands of young people and small children whose lives were so shamefully ground into the foundation of industrial capitalism. That time seems so long ago and so unrelated to our world - but, is it? Among the most exploited workers today are young people under 18 years old. Their wages are legally below the minimum adult wage in Canada. In the U.S., the introduction of the so-called "teen wage" promises McDonald's, a major employer of young people, a seven per-

cent profit increase. In 1975, over 50% of the world's population under 19 years of age were "economically active," and this excludes "occasional employment." 8. The industries in which young people predominate are the least likely to be regulated by health and safety legislation, the least likely to be unionized, and the most likely to be

vigorously opposed to improved labour standards legislation.



C. Bostwick

## notes

1. Both sexism and racism make the study of child labour a sometimes frustrating endeavour. In most material, both from the past and from the present, words like "he," "girl," and "boy" obscure gender and age among the people they are meant to describe. Masculine nouns and pronouns are often used when referring to the factory workforce of the 19th century, despite the fact that most operatives were female. The use of "girl" to describe all females regardless of age makes real people invisible: "factory girl," for example, could mean anyone between the ages of 5 years and 45 years. Non-white minorities are also lost behind the racist use of "boy" and "girl" in both Canada and America.
2. See Frederick Engels' classic *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Granada Publishing Ltd., England, 1969, pp. 163-193, in which he quotes extensively the Factories Inquiry Commission's Report of 1833.
3. Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, *We Were There, The Story of Working Women in America*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1977, p. 56.
4. Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959*, Canadian Social Publications, Ltd., Montreal, 1966, p. 26.
5. Lipton, *ibid*, p. 36 and p. 43.
6. Engels, *ibid*, p. 171: "Of 419,560 factory operatives of the British Empire in 1839, 192,887, or nearly half, were under eighteen years of age, and 242,296 of the female sex, of whom 112,192 were less than eighteen years old. There remain, therefore, 80,695 male operatives under eighteen years, and 96,569 adult male operatives, or not one full quarter of the whole number."
7. Engels, *ibid*, p. 196, in which he quotes Dr. Andrew Ure's *Philosophy of Manufacturers*; and Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America*, Pantheon Books, N.Y., 1977, pp. 340-341.
8. International Labour Office, *Children at Work*, ed., Elias Mendelievich, I.L.O., Geneva, 1979. Of this figure, over 52 million are children under 15 years of age, and over 180 million are between 15 and 19 years old. The I.L.O. publication states that "...it is impossible to make an accurate estimate of the numbers employed, for the simple reason that, since in most countries child labour is clandestine, it is in the interest of all the parties concerned to conceal it." See pp. 23 - 28 in particular.



# EVIDENCE



In 1886, Prime Minister John A. MacDonald proposed a Royal Commission "for the purpose of enquiring into and reporting all questions arising out of the conflict of labour and capital" in Canada. This was to be the third study of the manufacturing industry carried out by the Federal Government during the 1880s. The first, conducted in 1882, depicted the shocking conditions in the mills and factories of the Dominion, particularly in regard to the employment of children and women, and the lack of safety standards and sanitation facilities. The second study, in 1885, concentrated on the growth of the manufacturing sector as a result of protective tariffs. Neither report resulted in improved conditions for factory operatives.

The Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital, 1886-89, did not confine itself to the mills and factories, but included an investigation of the coal mines, housing conditions of workers, manufacturers' profits, trade union and anti-trade union activities, and much more. During seven months of hearings, the Commissioners interviewed almost 1800 people in Ontario,

Quebec, and the Maritimes (it was decided not to take the Commission west of Ontario). The testimonies included in the evidence are among the most graphic illustrations of child labour in Canada. Though the Commission split into two groups (the "labour" faction and the "paternalist" or "capitalist" minority), each submitting separate reports, many of the recommendations overlapped, especially those regarding children and young people. Five years after the report was submitted to the Federal Government, legislation was passed making Labour Day a holiday -- the only recommendation which was ever implemented.

Below are excerpts from that Royal Commission. The first, submitted by the majority "labour" faction led by John Armstrong, is a description of the factory system as it was in 1889. That which follows is testimony, which was included in the Evidence of the Commission's Report. These excerpts are from Greg Kealey's *Canada Investigates Industrialism, The Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital, 1889* (University of Toronto Press, 1973).

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## Our Factory System

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Factories of various kinds have been in existence in Canada for many years, but it was not until the impetus given by the protective tariff of 1879 had been fully felt that they became an important feature of wealth and prosperity of the Dominion. With us, the factory system has not grown slowly; it sprang into existence almost at one bound, and was the creature of the legislation adopted ten years ago. That a vast amount of good has been accomplished in promoting the material prosperity of the country...is undeniable.

But it has also to be pointed out that in acquiring the industries at one bound, we have also become possessed, just as quickly, of the evils which accompany the factory system, and which, in the other lands, were creatures of gradual growth. These evils have engaged the serious and special attention of the legislators of the motherland for generations. They sprang from the desire to acquire vast fortunes in the shortest possible interval of time, regardless of the suffering which might be caused to the individual or the bad effect upon the State. There seems to be no idea of any obligation existing between the employer and his operatives, any more than the mere payment of wages. To obtain a very large percentage of work with the smallest possible outlay of wages appears to be the one fixed and dominant idea...

To arrive at the greatest results for the smallest expenditure the mills and factories are filled with women and children, to the practical exclusion of adult males. The reason for this is obvious. Females and children may be counted upon to work for small wages, to submit to petty and exasperating exactions, and to work uncomplainingly for long hours. These are the inducements to employ this class of labour and why it is being utilized so largely... So long as one employer is permitted to fill up his factory with this cheap labour, without any restrictions, the others are compelled to do likewise, or suffer the consequences of being undersold in the general market. There are, however, excrescences upon the system for which individuals are altogether responsible, and for which there ought to be some way of holding them to strict account. One such presented itself in Montreal, where the conduct of a cigar manufacturer, in a large way of business, was under examination. The evidence in connection with this matter will repay a careful perusal. It is almost impossible to believe that such things should be done in the latter part of the 19th century, and yet it is very clearly proved that in this factory apprentices were imprisoned in a "black hole" for hours at a time. Occasionally the incarceration

would stretch beyond the working hours, and a special visit would be made to the factory to release the poor little fellows. A special constable, who still wore his constable's badge, was employed to overawe and strike terror into the hearts of the juvenile offenders, and to carry out the punishment awarded by the proprietor and his foreman. Occasionally this...despot would himself be the executioner of his own decrees, and did, upon one occasion, personally chastise, in a flagrantly indecent manner, a girl of 18 years of age. And for all this the law provides no remedy -- nay, incredible as it may appear, law, in the person of the Recorder of Montreal, expressly authorized the punishment inflicted. This gentleman, on being examined, stated that he had authorized employers to chastise their operatives at their discretion, so long as no permanent injury was inflicted; and this evidence was given in the Year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight, much as it might be wished that it referred to some period of the dark ages, when servants had no rights which their masters were bound to respect. The evidence describes a state of affairs which is simply astounding. So vicious was it that a boy who was one of the witnesses before this Commission asked to be sent to the reformatory as a means of escape from the treatment he received. The cigar manufacturer, when detailing his actions in the case of the young girl whom he so shamefully treated, seemed to think it a matter of very small consequence -- a matter-of-fact, every-day occurrence, which it was not worth while making any ado about; and the Recorder was equally complacent when stating that he had empowered employers of labour to chastise their apprentices, because, in his opinion, it was "in accordance with common sense, which is the natural law, and conforms with positive Divine law and the civil law." Comment on such evidence would be superfluous. But it may be said that if there is any civil law in existence which authorizes the infliction of corporal punishment, as stated by the Recorder, it ought at once to be repealed; for so long as it remains upon the Statute Book, Canada has no right to class herself with the civilized nations of the earth.

The general hours of labour are ten per day, but in some instances longer time is worked, and it is particularly noticeable that where this is the case, it is in factories where females and children constitute the greater part of the help.

The sanitary conditions of many of the large factories are good, but there is in nearly all the small mills, and in some of the large ones, vast room for improvement in this respect. Cases are frequent where no separate conveniences exist for the use of the two sexes, and cleanliness in flushing closets, etc., is not locked after... The locking of doors which might entail great loss of life in case of a fire panic, is a very common rule... There are very few cases met with in which suction fans are used to carry off dust in works where a considerable quantity is generated... While acts bearing upon this subject... have been passed in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, it is notorious that they have so far accomplished little or no good. The Ontario Act was passed some two years before the inspectors provided for by it were appointed. Nearly another two years have elapsed since the appointment of these officers and... only one case had been brought before the courts. This inactivity cannot be for lack of material to work upon.

The Act does not include places where less than twenty people work and it is notoriously winked at by employers of labour. Just as long as there is manifested a reluctance to enforce its provisions by process of law, it will remain a delusion and a face upon legislation... The same remarks, to a limited extent, would also apply to the Quebec Act... In none of the other Provinces are there any laws regulating factory labour.

The utter uselessness of a provincial law on a matter like this, where all the Provinces are alike interested, has been made clearly apparent. Where a law has been passed by one Province, imposing restrictions upon the number of hours to be worked, or the ages of children who may be employed, and the adjoining Province refuses or neglects to do so, there is a great temptation on the part of the former not to put the law in

motion for fear of embarrassing the manufacturers. It is apt to be considered, and rightly considered, that no restrictions should be placed upon one industry that do not apply equally to all who are in the same business. The protection which is given to manufacturers against outside competition proceeds from the Federal Government, and is enjoyed by all in common, and equally all should be placed on the same footing in the matter of restrictions. There is, too, a keen competition between different localities for the securing of these industrial establishments, and as the capitalist will naturally locate his mill

at a point where there are no restrictions as to the hours of labour or class of help to be employed in preference to another place, where these laws are in force, an unfair advantage is enjoyed by the Province which refuses to pass a fair, just, and reasonable measure of protection to the factory worker.

In view of all these circumstances, we would strongly urge the desirability of a Dominion Factory Act, wherein uniformity of laws can be obtained. If there be a doubt as to the powers of the Federal Government in the premises there ought to be a way provided for removing that doubt.

## TESTIMONY

J.M. FORTIER, Cigar Manufacturer, called and sworn,  
By MR. HELBRONNER:

Q:-Do you know the age of the youngest apprentice at present employed in your factory? A:-I do not know; I have given strict instructions not to have any boy younger than fourteen years.

Q:-How long is it since you gave that order? A:-That order was given a couple of years ago; but lately, since about a couple of months ago, I noticed there were a few who worked there that might not be of that age, and I have since given strict instructions to the manager to have nobody there of less than fourteen years.

Q:-When you employ an apprentice you have an indenture passed, I believe? A:-Yes.

Q:-Do you mention the age of the apprentice in the contract? A:-Yes.

Q:-So that if you employ a child too young, it is either the fault of the father or the tutor? A:-Yes; because he wants to place the boy. It is generally the financial circumstances of the family that brings him to work so young...

Q:-Under whose control are they during the hours of work? A:-During the hours of work they are under the control of the foremen of the different departments and, in general, of the manager...

Q:-Is it not to your knowledge that those children have been beaten? A:-It is not to my personal knowledge that those boys have been beaten, other than what they have deserved for wrongs they have committed, the same as a parent would punish his child, or I would punish my child, or a school master would punish a child who does not do what is right at school.

Q:-I understand by your reply the children have been beaten? A:-They have been beaten in the same manner; they have been beaten for correction.

Q:-Is it to your knowledge that those children have been beaten? A:-It is not to my knowledge that those children have been beaten.

Q:-You have told us that the children have been beaten as they would have been by their parents, or at school, or for correction? A:-For correction.

Q:-So it is to your knowledge that some have been beaten? A:-For correction.

Q:-Do you believe it to be the duty of the foreman, or proprietor of a shop, to beat a child? A:-No.



Q:-Why did the foremen of your establishment beat them? A:-They did not beat them to my knowledge.

Q:-You have told us that the children have been beaten to correct them? A:-Yes.  
By MR. HELBRONNER:

Q:-Do you believe a foreman, or proprietor of a factory, has a right to strike a child? A:-I believe the foremen of departments, over a certain number of boys of low age, like apprentices, have a right to touch the children with a ruler, or with their hands to correct them.

Q:-To your knowledge, then, correction has been applied in your establishment?  
A:-Yes.



Q:-Please give us the method of correction applied by yourself, or by your foremen, in the factories. A:-For instance: a boy will disobey orders. He is told to do certain things and he will not do them. What I am now speaking of, we have not had any experience of for about a year. We have had a very noisy class of boys within a year or two, and it was very hard to get them to do what they were ordered, but this last year we have had no experience of correcting a boy by hitting him on the fingers. In previous years we had lots of trouble with them; it was during the agitation of the strike, and so forth, and if we told a boy to do certain things, and he did not do them, or if he did not do right by taking tobacco or destroying tobacco, the foreman would very likely hit him on the fingers with a ruler...

Q:-From whom did the foremen receive instructions to beat the children? A:-They have never been authorized by me to beat any children.

Q:-Did you know they were touched? A:-I have given them instructions to correct them, and those instructions come from the Recorder downstairs...

Q:-Did you beat an apprentice, either boy or girl, yourself? A:-Yes.

Q:-Will you give us the name of the person you struck? A: Georgiana Loisel.

Q:-Were you present yesterday when Miss Georgiana Loisel gave her deposition?  
A:-Yes.

Q:-Can you tell us what you can offer in contradiction of what she said? A:-I cannot contradict what she said, for she told the truth, that I asked her to make 100 cigars. It was in the afternoon or in the morning before the quitting hour, and she said she was not going to do it; and she spoke in a very impertinent manner. I had had several troubles with the same young lady previous to that, and I had seen



her mother, and her mother had prayed me to do the best I could... So after receiving those instructions, and as I had three or four of her brothers working for me at the time, I took a great interest in the girl - the mother being alone and supported by her children - to see that the children were properly attended to. I took this young lady by the arm to have her sit down. She would not, so I turned her around and tried to sit her down. She would not. I took the cover of a mould and tried to sit her on my knee, but she was too heavy and fell to the floor. I held her on the floor and smacked her on the backside with the mould. I asked her if she would do it, and after a couple of strikes she said, 'I will.' She got up and sat down at her table and made her 100 bunches and went off quietly. She never lost one hour, and I think she is very glad today to have received the lesson she did, for she has been an obedient girl ever since then.

\_\_\_\_\_, Cigar-maker, of the City of Montreal, sworn.

Q:-Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, were you foreman at Mr. Fortier's? A:-Yes, sir, I was employed as a foreman for four years... I left that job because it is very likely that I should have become as infamous as Mr. Fortier himself.

Q:-How many foreman were there in your time? A:-We were four.

Q:-Which means that the act of which we have just hear might have been committed by a foreman other than yourself? A:-Yes, sir.

Q:-Can you say whether Mr. Fortier knew in what manner his apprentices were treated? A:-Certainly, he knew it as well as I did; only when the superintendent told him something of the sort, he would burst out laughing...

Q:-Was it a general rule to beat the apprentices? A:-Not precisely. But, whenever there was a chance, they made use of it.

Q:-What do you mean by a 'chance'? Did that child do any act that deserved such punishment? A:-If a child did anything, that is, if he looked on one side or other, or spoke, he would say: I'm going to make you pay 10 cents fine, and if the same were repeated three or four times, he would sieze a stick or a plank, and beat him with it...

Q:-Do you know the black hole at Fortier's? A:-Yes, sir. I have seen it several times.

Q:-Are children put in there summer and winter? A:-Over and over again. I have seen them put there in winter and also in summer. What is called the black hole is a sort of coal box. The coals are stored there, and when the children don't behave they stick them among the coals...

\_\_\_\_\_, Tobacco-worker, of Montreal, sworn.

By MR. HELBRONNER:

Q:-In the factory where you work, are there women and children employed? A:-Yes, sir.

Q:-What is the age of the youngest child working in the factory? A:-To my knowledge, I have seen some that were nine and a-half years old; and even nine years. But these were sent back home last week.

Q:-Were there many of these? A:-I think there were about fifty.

Q:-Do you mean to tell us that there were about fifty children sent away? A:-No, but about thirty were sent away.

Q:-At what hour did these children come to the factory? At the same times as the

men? A:-At seven o'clock in the morning.

Q:-At what hour do they leave the factory? A:-At twenty minutes to six; sometimes at a quarter to six...

Q:-Can you tell us the nature of the offences for which you were made to pay fines? A:-I can give you a few. For instance, a child, by accident, may break a small pane of glass worth ten cents, while throwing stones, and he is charged \$1.20 for it.

Q:-Have you seen a child pay such a fine, or have you seen the foreman tell him he would have to pay \$1.20? A:-It is posted up on a black board. The boss takes it out of the pay-list of the foreman in the department where the glass was broken, and the foreman takes it out of the wages of the employee. When a lad who is in a hurry for his work will run to the shop in order to go faster, and if he is caught running he is fined fifty cents...

Q:-Had the lad been warned not to run? A:-It was always understood that he had no business to run.

Q:-Is there a rule posted up to that effect? A:-No, sir.

Q:-Keep on telling us what fines you have seen laid on to the children. A:-One of the lads may want to eat, and some of his food may fall to the ground. We take our dinner in the aisles between the tables, and if he is so unfortunate as to drop food among the tobacco, and there is no other place to eat, except on the floor, he is fined fifty cents...

Q:-Are the children allowed to eat outside, if they are so minded? A:-Yes, just as they like.

Q:-And those who eat in the factory eat in the midst of their work? A:-Yes, beside their work.

Q:-Have you seen other fines? A:-Fines? Why, it is a plaything with them.

Q:-Have you seen fines imposed for talking? A:-If anyone talks during working hours, and if he is not at his work, but goes talking on another bench, he gets a fine of fifty cents, and sometimes \$1...



\_\_\_\_\_, Machinist, of Montreal, sworn.

By MR. HELBRONNER:

Q:-You are employed at the Hochelaga Cotton Factory? A:-Yes, sir.

Q:-Do you know how many hands are engaged in that mill? A:-There are about eleven hundred hands...

Q:-How many children are there? A:-There are a couple of hundreds of children.

Q:-So far as you know, how old is the youngest of these children? A:-There are children of ten years old working there; perhaps some even younger, but I know of several ten years old.

Q:-Of those whom you know to be ten years old, have they worked a long time in the factory? A:-They have been working a couple of years.

Q:-What are the average wages of these children? A:-Twenty-five to thirty cents a day...

Q:-Do the children work as long as the men stay in the factory? A:-The same thing. When some work all work. If any one dares not want to work, the next morning he is fined.

By MR. KERWIN:

Q:-Is it true that the children work in the factory barefoot? A:-Yes, several do.

Q:-At the present time? A:-Yes, sir.

Q:-Do you know whether any of the children employed in this factory were ever beaten? A:-I have heard of that spoken of, but the children are not in my department; they are upstairs...

Q:-If the girls who are employed in the establishment make use of certain pieces of paper to curl their hair, are they fined for it? A:-Yes. Here is one of these pieces of paper, and if a girl uses it to curl her hair, she incurs a fine of 25 cents. This paper is worth nothing, but the fine is imposed to prevent them using that paper...

Q:-Supposing a party should use this paper a second time, after having paid the fine a first time, what will be done to her? A:-Generally, she would be discharged.

By MR. HEAKES:

Q:-When children work 13 hours a day, what time is given them for supper? A:-They do not get any, they work all the time from a quarter to one in the afternoon until nine o'clock at night. Sometimes we are allowed a half hour to get some supper, but generally speaking we work the whole time...

By MR. FREED:

Q:-Can these children wear their shoes if they wish? A:-Yes; they have full right to wear them, but generally they do not wear them, because they have none; many of these children have none at all, and if they have them, have only one pair, and they take care of them...

\_\_\_\_\_, engaged in a Box Factory at Ottawa, being sworn, deposeth as follows:

By MR. BOIVIN:

Q:-How old are you? A:-I do not know.

Q:-Have you made your First Communion? A:-No, sir.

Q:-Have you been in this place (*Ottawa*) long? A:-Yes, sir.

Q:-Have you got your father and mother? A:-Yes.

Q:-What does your father do? A:-He is a mechanic.

Q:-Have you been working long in the mill? A:-No, sir, not long... About a week.

Q:-Have you worked anywhere else before? A:-Yes, sir; with farmers.

Q:-How long did you work elsewhere? A:-About three months.

Q:-How much do you make a day at present? A:-I do not know; I have not been told.

Q:-Have you any little brothers working with you? A:-No.

Q:-What do you do at the box factory? A:-I load up and carry little planks that are cut.

Q:-Do you go near the machinery? A:-Yes, sir; I work near a saw, with a man.

Q:-Do the boys get caught sometimes in the saw? A:-Yes, sir.

Q:-Do you like that kind of work? A:-Yes, sir.

Q:-Wouldn't you like better to go to school? A:-It's all the same to me...



ELISHA PAUL, Coal cutter, Springhill mines (Nova Scotia), sworn and examined.  
By MR. KERWIN:

Q:-What particular branch of the coal industry do you work at? A:Coal cutting.

Q:-About what did you receive when you first commenced this business and at what branch of it were you at? A:-When I first commenced this business I was working in the pit as a boy trapper, that is when I first commenced in the mine.

Q:-What do you mean by trapper? A:-Attending a door, opening and shutting the door after the horses got through.

Q:-What does a boy usually receive for such work as that? A:-Forty-five cents (a day).

Q:-How long does he be trapping before he receives an advance to other work? A:-It is according to whether he is smart or not, or whether he is a bög boy or not...

Q:-Give the Commission the different grades of the boys' work and how they proceed from one to another? A:-If he is a pretty smart boy he would get a raise in perhaps three or four months after he got into the pit and he would get a drive.

Q:-What did you receive when driving? A:-I can't state what they would receive now, but what I received when I was driving was eighty cents (a day).

Q:-What do you think the boys receive now? A:-They get according to their size, from sixty to eighty cents, that is the drivers.



## BOOK REVIEWS

# The Condition of Children's Lives in Canada

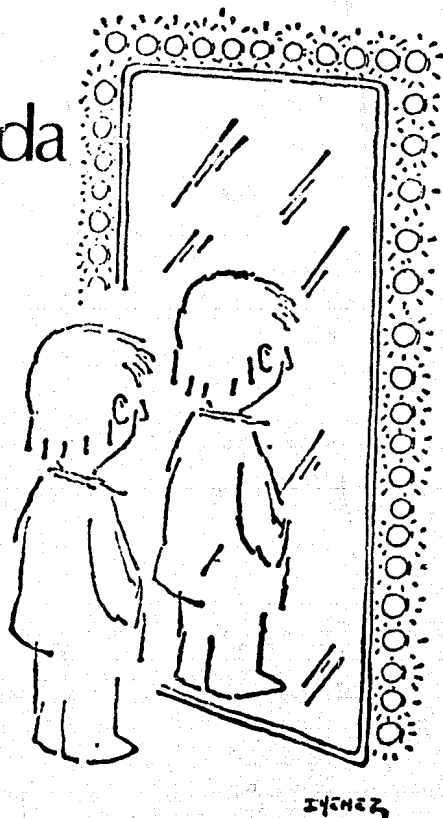
Neil Sutherland, *Children in English Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1976.

Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869 - 1924*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal, 1980.

The condition of the lives of children in Britain and North America has become the focus of a significant body of historical investigation in the past fifteen years. While the Canadian literature is still thin, some significant work has emerged. Each writer must confront a central interpretive question, either implicitly or explicitly: has the condition of children's lives improved over time, and, if so, how? Treatment of the problem of class, the role of the state, and the impact of reform become key in shaping the answer to that question.

Neil Sutherland's *Children in English Canadian Society*, the broadest historical study of children to date, delivers a resounding "yes" in answer to the question of improvement in the quality of life. The years from 1880 to 1920, according to Sutherland, saw the shaping of a consensus among English-speaking Canadians, to provide more resources to children of all class backgrounds. In his interpretation, various state institutions in the fields of public health, criminal law, and education, guided by benevolent reformers, became increasingly co-ordinated in their efforts to ameliorate children's lives. 1.

The public health movement, which had immediate, measurable effects, is the first examined. Three aspects of the movement are surveyed: the protection of



school children, the reduction of infant mortality, and the efforts to deal with "feble-mindedness." Successes in these fields included the reduction, in urban areas at least, of infant mortality, bacteriological discoveries, successful immunization campaigns, dental programs, and improvements in school building cleanliness.

Changes in approaches to juvenile delinquents are recounted next. The harshness of nineteenth century institutions gave way, in Sutherland's interpretation, to the more personalized "family" or "cottage" system (introduced at the Victoria Industrial School in 1887, and not to be confused with the "family system" used in American factories prior to the Civil War). Belief in the reformatory powers of the family setting led to further reforms in the 1890s. Ontario's "Children's Charter," the burgeoning Children's Aid Societies, and separate incarceration for juveniles,



were preludes to the passage of the 1908 Juvenile Delinquents Act. The latter enabled provinces to set up Children's Courts with probation officers, indeterminate sentences, and informal procedures which characterized the American models on which the legislation was based. Sutherland hails the Act as "a great triumph for the idea of family-centred care of problem children" (p. 123).

The third set of reforms is that which took place in the schools. During the period in question, schools managed to enrol a greater proportion of school age children, for longer lengths of time, with more regular attendance. Sutherland identifies two reform thrusts centred on the schools: one which sought to make the school a more humane, child-centred and responsive institution; and another which sought to make schools "more practical and relevant to the later lives of their inmates" (p. 156). These found expression in kindergartens and temperance education before 1900, and afterwards in the various programs of the MacDonald-Robertson movement - manual training, domestic science, physical education, nature study, and the consolidated rural schools to help implement all of the above.

Sutherland's effort is comprehensive. He refuses, however, to examine critically the aims, methods, and outcomes of Progressive reform activity. Somehow, in the rosy picture of a developing consensus (and his choice of words for the description of the coalescence of reform movements is significant), the class conflict which erupted repeatedly during the years in question, the middle-class fears of immigrants, the working class, radicals and the "dangerous classes," are lost. <sup>2</sup> His placement of the discussion of infant mortality at the beginning cleverly sets the tone for the argument. One doesn't question the unambiguous benefits of reduced infant mortality. But, in virtually every subsequent example, from mental hygiene, to juvenile court, to vocational education, formidable critical arguments have been mounted to show the double-edged nature of reforms. Some have argued that good intentions rapidly and inevitably produced institutions which worsened conditions for certain segments of youth. <sup>3</sup> Others have argued that

upper and middle class interest in controlling elements of the population perceived as potentially dangerous was a more significant underlying motivation than benevolence. <sup>4</sup> Vocational education has been examined for its role in rationalizing limited social mobility, and probation officers of the juvenile court for *increasing* disruption of family life among the working class. <sup>5</sup> Sutherland fails to come to terms with any of these arguments.

Joy Parr's *Labouring Children* is a stylistically unpolished, yet gripping historical account of some 80,000 British children sent to Canada without their parents between 1868 and 1925. Sent by evangelicals who claimed they were "rescuing" the children from destitution and immorality, most of the boys and girls could expect years of loneliness and hard work on Canadian farms. Parr makes it clear that, evangelists' claims to the contrary, economic factors were the primary forces at play on both sides of the ocean. Using individual case records, she argues convincingly that parental surrender of children was not an indication of lack of family cohesion, affection, or morality, but of "crises of subsistence." Economic factors were equally determinant at the Canadian end: using indices of farm productivity, Parr demonstrates that children were moved from placement to placement on the basis of their cost and usefulness in the farm economy, but not on the basis of emotional attachments.

Parr follows the story, from the conditions of poor family life in Britain, through the ideology and institutions of "child-rescuers" such as Dr. Barnardo, to the conditions which awaited the children in Canada. Her attention to the families' economic situation, to the changing demands on the children both in Britain and in Canada as they moved through the stages of childhood, and to the eventual circumstances of these immigrants as adults, gives a thorough, if grim, picture. She concludes that the programs were beneficial to the children's physical, if not mental, health. Child emigration was brought to an end by the British Labour government in 1925. Parr cites a new Adoption Act in 1920, falling birth rates, and

mothers' allowances as factors in reducing demand in Canada.

The claims of evangelicals who ran the homes which shipped the children were not so different from those of the men and women in Canada who, Sutherland approvingly notes, were responsible for doubling the number of institutions caring for neglected and dependent children in Ontario between 1874 and 1893. Parr, unlike Sutherland, gets beyond the claims of the child-savers themselves. Increasing intervention by the state in-

to the lives of poor and working class families -- whether through the institutions of the schools, public health agencies, or the courts -- clearly deserves a critical analysis. Notwithstanding the claims of the reformers themselves, class interests may be more significant in the motivation and ultimate effect, than pious notions of "doing good."

P. Seixas

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## notes

1. A number of studies which examine specific Canadian cities during the same period have been considerably less glowing in their evaluation of changes in the conditions of working class children's lives. See, for example, Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929*, Toronto, 1974; Alan Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914*, Montreal, 1975; and Michael Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921*, Ottawa, 1979.
2. See Bryan Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914*, Montreal, 1979; David Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union*, Toronto, 1978; and, A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919*, Toronto, 1977.
3. For example, David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*, Boston, Toronto, 1971, and *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and its Alternatives in Progressive America*, Boston, Toronto, 1980.
4. Sutherland deals only with the early, methodologically crude formulation of this criticism of Anthony Platt's *The Child Savers*, University of Chicago Press, 1969. Paul Boyer's *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920*, Cambridge, 1978, poses a more comprehensive challenge to the Sutherland stance.
5. The work of David Tyack, Marvin Lazerson, and Michael Katz, among others, is an unanswered challenge to Sutherland's formulation of the role of expanded schooling. Steven Schlossman, *Love and the American Delinquent* offers a significantly different interpretation of the juvenile court movement in the U.S. The benefits of "individualized treatment" which Sutherland celebrates, are challenged in Schlossman's "End of Innocence: Science and the Transformation of Progressive Juvenile Justice, 1899-1917," *History of Education*, 1978, VII., No. 3 (Oct., 1978), pp. 207-218. Christopher Lasch has developed a comprehensive critique of the intrusions of state health, education and welfare workers into family life, most recently in "Life in the Therapeutic State," *New York Review of Books*, June 12, 1980. Indeed, the historiography lined up against the Sutherland interpretation is one of the most vibrant schools of writing in the late 1970s.

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Compiled & Annotated by Doris Fuller

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ARNOPOULOS, Sheila, et. al., *To See Ourselves: Five Views of Canadian Women*, Government of Canada, Status of Women, 1975. Illustrated, 217 pages.

Through photos and text, women talk about their jobs, working conditions, economic status and their role as homemaker. Excellent. GRADES 7 up.

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*Doris Fuller is the librarian at Gibsons Elementary School, Gibsons, B.C.*



*Drucker*

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