

Chapter 4 – Section 3

Industrialization and Workers



Contract Labor Act

- Labor was scarce during the Civil War so this law encouraged immigration to the U.S.
- Allowed employers to enter contracts w/ foreigners and pay the cost of passage in exchange for up to a year of work
- (brought 14 million people to U.S. between 1860-1890)



Move to the City

- In the late 1800's between 8-9 million people moved to the cities
- Due to poor economic conditions on nation's farms
- Drought combined w/ low prices and competition from foreign wheat left farmers poor
- Lot of jobs in factories and faster-paced life of the city was a draw for many



A “family affair”

- Wages were so low that everyone in the family had to work in the factory to provide enough for the family



Typical Family

- Kids usually left school by 12 or 13 to work
- Girls went to factories, brothers might stay in school
- Mom might take job and leave kids w/ relative or neighbor (no daycare)
- If a parent died, kids as young as 6 or 7 had to work or go hungry



Unemployment

- There was no unemployment insurance or welfare
- *Social Darwinism* theory said poverty resulted from personal weakness (helping the unemployed would encourage “idleness”)
- Private charities helped the neediest w/ food and clothing (but they had limited resources and couldn’t help everybody)



Typical work day/week

- 10 hours/day – 6 days/week
- Sometimes 12 hours/day
- Laws limiting workday weren't enforced



Piecowork

- Under this system you were paid per piece that you produced
- Favored the young and strong (the old and less able suffered)



Increasing efficiency

- Workers were negatively affected by this b/c it forced them to do more work at the same pay
- Endangered their health and safety
- Often led to layoffs w/ fewer people doing more work (today we outsource to China or India and have machines doing the work)



Different Routine

- Unlike life on the farm, the routine of the factory was ruled by the clock
- Told when to start, break and stop
- On farm you labored at your own pace



Worker and Product

- The relationship between the worker and the product changed in the factory
- Craftsmen once created a project from start to finish & performed a variety of tasks
- In the factory you did one small task over and over



Division of labor

- Divided production into separate tasks
- This was good for owners, but bad for workers b/c while it made workers more efficient, it also took the joy out of the work (rarely saw the finished product)



“Hands”

- The workers, known as hands, were viewed by the factory owners as interchangeable parts (very impersonal)
- Like parts of a machine (get what they can out of you and then get rid of you)



Harsh Working Conditions

- Strict discipline (fired or fined for being late, answering back, talking on the job, etc.)
- Boring work
- Deafening noise of machines
- Poor ventilation and lighting
- Frequent accidents and deaths (due to faulty equipment and poor training ~ 675 deaths/week compared to 120 today)



So Why Stay?

- It was still better pay and opportunity than most people could find elsewhere



No advancement for women

- Women had little chance of advancing in factory work b/c the better jobs were thought of as “jobs for men”



Extra Dangerous for Children

- Working in factories and children was particularly dangerous and unhealthy for children b/c they were still growing
- Stunted their bodies and minds
- (later laws would begin to end child labor)



Writing Assignment

- In a 200-250 word essay, explain what your day-to-day life is like as a typical factory worker in the late 1800's. Explain who else in your family works and why. Include at least 5 facts from your notes (number them in your essay)