Global History III | Collins

The Industrial Revolution | Thursday, Oct. 30 2011

*Debating child labor*

*in industrial England circa 1832*

During the Industrial Revolution, child labor was commonplace. Children were paid lower wages than adults and were hired to keep labor costs low. The early textile factories employed a large share of children, but the share declined over time. In England and Scotland in 1788, two-thirds of the workers in 143 water-powered cotton mills were described as children. By 1835, the share of the workforce under 18 years of age in cotton mills in England and Scotland had fallen to 43%. About half of the workers in Manchester cotton factories surveyed in 1818 and 1819 began work at under ten years of age. The growth of this experienced adult workforce and new child labor laws help to account for the shift away from child labor in textile factories.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Parliament debated whether and how to limit child labor. In March 1832 Member of Parliament Michael Sadler introduced a Bill in Parliament that proposed limiting the hours of all persons under the age of eighteen to ten hours a day. In April 1832 it was agreed that there should be a parliamentary inquiry into child labor. Sadler was made chairman and for the next three months the parliamentary committee interviewed people who had first-hand experience with factories: industrialists, physicians, social reformers, and child laborers testified before Parliament.

**Directions:**

1. Read your role with a pen.
2. Read the primary documents sheet with a pen (Industrial Revolution part 2).
3. Answer the directions on the back of this sheet.

Your name:

Your character’s name:

Your character’s job:

Are you in favor of or opposed to child labor?

Why might someone be opposed to child labor? Please list three reasons.

Why might someone be in favor of child labor? Please list three reasons.

Based on your character’s experience and position in British society, please write a statement. You must **type** the statement and turn it in **(due: Monday, Nov. 3)**, but the day of the debate, you can use handwritten notes.

Paragraph 1: Introduce yourself with your name, your age, and your job

Paragraph 2: State your position on child labor and explain three arguments. Please use evidence.

Paragraph 3: You are testifying before Parliament; please make a suggestion as to how you would like them to change the law. Thank them for their time.