The Rescue, Reform and Restoration of Childhood:

A Hundred Years of Child Labour in Britain (1780 - 1880).

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Abstract

Over the past twenty years, child labour has drawn heightened attention from the global community, especially through debates over labour standards and international trade. The plight of these working children in the present-day Third World is however not unlike the plight of those children who were once employed in the fields, factories, mines and workshops of Britain. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was the industrialisation of the British economy that intensified the exploitation of children and normalised their labour. Today, it is globalisation and the World Market that assumes this role, overwhelming the lives of millions of children in the Third World. The interests of working children in Britain were clearly of low priority in the years prior to the 1840's, just as they are today in many underdeveloped countries around the globe.

This thesis aims to draw attention to these similarities by revisiting the past and by trying to unravel the interconnected narratives that have produced the countless theories that seek to explain this phenomenon. This study also analyses the relationships between child labour on the one hand, and economic development and the socioeconomic structures of a society on the other and challenges the simplistic common belief that

poverty is the cause of child labour and that child labour can be reduced only through economic development.

One important conclusion of this study is that child labour is affected by the transformation of the economic and social structure rather than merely dictated by the economic necessities of households that supply child labourers. Thus the one thing that becomes abundantly clear from this study is that when it comes to understanding and evaluating child labour – regardless as to whether it is the spinning of cotton in a British mill of the nineteenth century or the weaving of carpets in a Pakistani factory of the twenty-first century – childhood and adulthood are interdependent and the ways in which children are treated are in turn a reflection of the values and priorities of adult society.

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In fond memory of my own childhood this thesis is dedicated with much love and gratitude to my parents, Ernest (1902-81) and Amy (1905-90) whose kindness and undying love for their children was to play such a large part in my own development.

Contents

Illustrations

1

Introduction

During the 1980s and 90s, child labour in the Third World drew a lot of attention from the global community, in particular through debates over child labour and international trade. However, this concern about the safety and well-being of working children is not new but is a revival of much of the same arguments employed against child labour in nineteenth century Britain. As Seabrook points out, the more recent defenders of child labour, like those in early nineteenth-century Britain, have always had a ready rationale for the necessity of child labour in the same way as the abolitionists have always had a clear justification for releasing children from their occupations (2000:80).

In Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries children were integral to the agricultural and handicraft economy of the period and often their wages were the most common source of family income aside from what fathers earned (Wasserman 2000:10). Much as it is today in the poorer countries of the world, Britain had depended on the labour of all able-bodied people, including children. Yet while today, most people in the West believe that full-time work for children is bad, in eighteenth century Britain, work was believed to be beneficial for a child's character

and moral upbringing. Far from being exploitative, work integrated children into their societies and prepared them to assume even greater responsibility as adults. But in today's world, the children of the industrialised nations have been disassociated from productive work.

What then is so new in the child labour equation? The answer is very little, except that the arguments that were voiced in nineteenth century Britain about child labour are now being heard, on the global stage. No one would think to argue that the child labourers of the British eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were better off than their twentieth and twenty-first century descendants. The appropriate comparison, however, is not between twentieth and twenty-first century childhood and eighteenth and nineteenth century childhood in Britain but whether or not children were better off from their participation in the industrialisation of the British economy. The general consensus is that they were not.

The arguments posed by those who are in favour of child labour in the twenty-first century are often expressed in terms that would have been familiar to people living in nineteenth-century Britain. Their support for child labour often reflects the certainty that 'reform', and 'improvement' can follow the same – retrospectively – fairly simple path pursued by the first great industrial power two hundred years ago (Seabrook, 2000:82). Today's international debate about child labour, therefore, is in many ways a revival of the late nineteenth century anti-child labour movements when attitudes were fuelled in part by images of children being sucked into the new factories, and in part by nascent perceptions that childhood should be a period for play and education instead of work (Bachman, 2000:548). It is all too easy, of course, to dwell upon the horrors of child labour, even though it is beyond dispute that hours were too long and that in some cases the children were ill-treated. Today the endangered child-subject is a focal and unique issue that intersects with foundational epistemological categories of this period, specifically those of social welfare. Although this constitutes a recognisable and familiar social

category, it is also unique because the child occupies a position that homogenises rather than fragments the social community (Berry, 1999:4).

It is, as Cunningham suggests, 'history's task to deconstruct stories; to lay bare the elements and the purposes which have gone into their making' (1991:232). But historians never speak with a single authorial voice. This study of British working children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries tries to unravel a number of different interconnected narratives that often contain contradictory meanings. Children have nearly always had a marginal place in history, despite the fact that they must have formed a substantial part of whatever society that one might study. To a certain degree, because of the arguments about industrialisation, the children of the nineteenth century were an exception to this general rule, although compared to the vast amounts of literature available on the industrialisation of Britain only a few writers have shown any great interest in the subject[1]. Walvin argues, that 'the numerical presence of children in the nineteenth century is in inverse proportion to the attention devoted to it by historians' (1982:1). If we consider the fact that at no time during the nineteenth century did young persons under the age of fourteen represent less than one third of the population of Britain, then one is only left to speculate as to why it is so? For it is this exclusion that makes my task more difficult.

This point leads us to a further question, just who is a child? Many of the modern Western attributes to children never existed in the lives of poor children in the early nineteenth century. The very definition of `child labour' is uncertain with legal, historical, comparative, customary and academic definitions all being somewhat contradictory. During the Victorian period there were thousands of poor children – some as young

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[1] Cunningham, Hopkins, Horn and Nardinelli, for example dedicate complete works to the subject of child labour in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries. The Hammonds also made child labour an important part of their interpretation of life during that period, especially with regard to the movement for reform. Whereas others, such as Crouzet, Morgan, Thames and a collection of works edited by Malthais and Davis rarely, if at all, mentioned it.

as seven or eight – living in the streets who were worldly wise and often economically independent. These children were the victims of their own economic and social circumstances. Abandoned by society they had been forced to survive by their own wits. Modern legal concepts of childhood don't help much either, as they can differ between distinct branches of the law; between tort, contract, guardianship, property, marriage, sexual and criminal matters. Nor is the distinction between childhood and adulthood provided by the current boundary between schooling and employment of much use because prior to the Education Act of 1871 few poor children went to school. Trying to conceive an adult-child distinction supports the view that childhood is simply a matter of degree and that there is a continuos and obvious path between the two. Schapiro best describes childhood as a condition in which the agent is not yet in a position to speak in his or her own voice because there is simply no voice which counts as theirs (1999:729). Even as a status concept the minimum notion of a child is that it is a person who does not yet qualify as an adult. But if we accept the view that childhood exists in greater or lesser degrees, then this cannot be the whole story. Clearly then, in trying to define the child one will frequently be confronted with difficulties. Defining at what point a child becomes an adult is arbitrary and depends on the time, the place and the context. Any unimpeachable definition will therefore always have to infringe certain rules and transgress a number of ever shifting boundaries. Therefore in order to avoid the difficulties posed in such a classification, I have avoided defining it.

There is another point that needs to be resolved before we can continue. That is, just what is "child labour"? If we define the work performed by children as only paid employment then we are ignoring the fact that most work done by them is often without pay. As Roberts points out, 'such a definition does not recognise the ways in which unpaid and paid work are connected, even mutually constitutive, as well as the ways such definitions of labour are part of wider key social constructs' (1988:5) – essentially those of gender, age and class. Is, for example, a young girl

who looks after her younger brother a child labourer? Many children perform a range of tasks in any given day and in some cases, as Katz points out, it is hard to distinguish the difference between work and play (1991:501).

There is a huge difference, however from accepting work as part of growing up to accepting the involvement of children in work situations that are clearly harmful or exploitative. What is important to note here however, is that the old stereotype of child labour – small children dwarfed by clanking machines in the textile mills of the early Industrial Revolution – represents only a small minority of nineteenth century working children. Child labour in the nineteenth century, just as it is today, exists on a continuum of effects on children which, as White reasons, progresses from the worst to the best, that is, from the most intolerably harmful through neutral to wholly beneficial (1996:10-11) with various degrees and combinations between. Defining child labour or at least differentiating between its various forms is important because 'it is essentially political, posing an emotionally charged choice of social values and objectives' (Myers, 1999:22). Fortunately, trying to draw an unambiguous line between the more acceptable forms of children's work which are relatively not harmful and the unacceptable forms which are exploitative, harmful and a social evil usually turns out to be easier in practice than in theory[2]. Such a definition is, as Bequele & Myers suggests, 'a question more successfully lived through in practice than intellectually agonised over beforehand' (1995:26-27). And while I believe that in this thesis it should be quite obvious – by Western standards – as to what type of child labour is tolerable and what is not tolerable the final decision is left to the reader.

In the contemporary setting, child labour continues on a global scale,

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[2] Most attempts to draw such a theoretical line are either too general, vague and circular to be of use, or if they try to be concrete and specific, are contradictory and illogical, and out of line with the views of children. The term 'child labour' itself has such a long institutional history that over the years it has become so burdened with political and emotional undertones that the term has now become meaningless.

only now the space is segregated within specific national contexts. But far from eradicating it, globalisation has intensified the exploitation of its child victims and normalised their plight. Hence, globalisation puts us in a position that is often morally indistinguishable from those of the Victorians who cheerfully allowed children to clean their chimneys and mine their coal two hundred years ago. Some even presume, that child labour in the poor countries of South America and Asia can be eradicated in much the same way that the widespread employment of children was eradicated in Britain in the nineteenth century. This deadly form of Rostowian Modernisation Theory[3] therefore defends the exploitation of children because it is characteristic of countries which are in a stage of development that is 'behind' those occupied by the countries of the developed West. As a result its representation normalises child labour and holds out that in the future, as a country develops, child exploitation will, as it once did in Britain, disappear. Economists talk of a 'sweatshop phase' in the development of a modern manufacturing sector and speak of child labour as a 'necessary' evil (Nichols, 1993:20).

But such descriptions act to set countries on a single teleological track with some ahead and some lagging. The only connection is that the more advanced countries of the West are now the role models for the rest. Nonetheless, the images and descriptions of Britain's earlier experience are still sufficiently powerful as to create the myth that 'development is a predictable pathway and that if the creation of wealth is allowed to take its natural course all known evils will be swept away' (Seabrook, 2000:86).

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[3] Walt Whitman Rostow was an American economist who argued that for countries to industrialise successfully, they needed to meet certain prerequisites such as a highly productive agricultural sector, functioning markets, and a stable government. Once these preconditions are met, industrialisation could enter the 'take-off' phase – a brief period of twenty to thirty years in which the process of industrialisation is completed. In Rostow's framework, the industrialised countries of today all went through similar stages of development. According to his theory, Great Britain was the first country to manifest a take-off into industrialisation between 1780 to 1800 and although Rostow's explanation of the stages of industrialisation are accepted as a general theory, recent works on the British Industrial Revolution suggest that the British economy did not take off, but rather experienced a steady pace of industrialisation throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

However the reality is that child labour is not one single issue or a homogeneous problem. There are many different circumstances in which children work and there are countless factors to consider when assessing any particular problem. Therefore there cannot be any universal solutions.

When looking at child labour in the third world today it soon becomes apparent that a similar situation has existed before. The erosion of rural life and the movement of people to the cities has been a matter of much debate ever since the industrialisation of Britain. Clearly, there is a contemporary relevance in the continuous and unresolved arguments over how far industrialisation raised the living standards of those generations that first experienced it, since these same issues are now being raised again in the modern context of the Global Market and the Green Revolution. In the pages that follow, I hope to show how history can offer the best chance of making sense of the world and while historical research is not the most exciting way to study anthropology, I do feel that by seeing things as they were, we are better able to understand things as they are. This study of child labour in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain, will I hope, accomplish this objective.

2

Methodology

Historical anthropology, according to Brettal, seems to follow 'one of two directions, each of which calls for distinct kinds of methods of research neither of which is, necessarily, mutually exclusive of the other. For some,' Brettal adds, 'to be a historical ethnographer means to interpret historical events through the eyes of others. While for others, the major focus of historical anthropology is ... [the] understanding of the social, political, economic, and cultural processes that characterise human behaviour in the past' (1998:532). For this thesis I have chosen to follow the latter path concerning myself mostly with the interconexions of events, with the structure of ideas, values, and with the way in which people interacted with one another. As a student of social anthropology I am aware that I am nonetheless making my own creative choices, just as others before me have chosen to do in their own research. What I am trying to emphasise here is the human need for self-understanding through a coherent narrative of the past and the need for objective explanations of how the past has worked. Of course the children of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries understood their situation better than I will ever be able to do and I can never hope to appreciate their condition as they did. But my strength is in the advantage I have of hindsight and a

more global view.

Trying to reconstruct the lives of working children for this thesis was difficult. There were a multiplicity of sources of evidence available, none of which provided me with a complete picture and all of which produced problems of one sort or another. These however can be loosely divided into what some authors have identified as the 'optimists' and the 'pessimists' schools of thought[1]. That is, those holding the more positivist orthodoxies, such as the proponent's of the more conservative theories of economic history and modernisation, and those who tend to have a more Marxist leaning who believed that the children of the working classes were as Thompson puts it, a 'spontaneous generation of new productive forces and relations' (1980:14). The one thing that will soon become obvious to the reader of this thesis is that I have not delved deeply into the archives and added to the vast amounts of knowledge of child labour. While I was able to locate a few primary documents[2], for the most part the sources used for the thesis are essentially secondary in nature and what I endeavoured to accomplish here was an analysis of the research and writings of others. The cultural frames and structural contradictions of these sources became a kind of lens through which I could then view the practices and politics of the larger system that will then permit me to reconcile both the meaning and the impact of the larger political and economic forces in question. Thinking, according to Hartwell, can also be research (1971:xiv) and by comparing and reflecting on the works of others I have been able to appreciate child labour in the eighteenth and

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[1] For example seeThompson (1980:366), Hartwell, (1971:94-5) and Nardinelli (1990:29).

[2] Massey Universality has thirty-one issues of *The British Labourers Protector, Factory Childs Friend* (21st Sep. 1832 - 19th Apr. 1833) on microfiche and *Fleet Papers*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2nd Jan. 1841) - vol. 4, no. 15 (13 Apr, 1844) is also available on microfilm. The *Working Conditions in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue from 19th century Critical Journals (1973)* contains numerous reprints of articles published in journals from 1819-1868 that may considered to be representative of a range of educated public opinion. Frederich Engles', *The Conditions of the Working Class in* England (first published in 1845) remains a world classic and is still in print. In addition, Andrew Ure's *The Philosophy of Manufactures* first published in 1835, was reprinted in 1967and available from most academic libraries.

nineteenth centuries as a story. For as Ginzburg points out, every history even if it is filled with statistics and figures is a story or a piece of narrative: but different models of narrative that have been selected by historians in different times (1982:277-78).

While most of these writers relied heavily on the accounts of the nineteenth century critics, two basic views seemed to emerge. There were the optimists who believed that while the conditions under which children worked were frequently harsh, child labour was a 'necessary evil' and indispensable for the economic growth of Britain and the Empire. Macaulay, in the mid-nineteenth century, was perhaps the first of the optimists arguing with a kind of confidence that none of his successors could quite match. Later Paul Mantoux, another adherent of the optimist school expressed the view that the problem lay not in the employment of children but the unrestrained power and greed of the employer. J. L. and Barbara Hammond on the other hand took a far more pessimistic approach. In a series of works the Hammonds made child labour a central concern of their writings. The Hammonds, like many others, relied heavily on the reports from the government select committees, but unlike Mantoux, who chose to concentrate on factory employment, they turned their attention to other aspects of child labour especially those children employed in mines and as chimney sweeps. The writings of the Hammonds had a profound effect on many of the ensuing works not least of which was that of John Clapham. It was Clapham who pointed out that even in the mid-nineteenth century most children were still employed either in agriculture or in the workshop industries. Clapham, another optimist, also downplayed the brutality suffered by children despite the persuasive and compelling evidence given to the many parliamentary commissions.

Another member of the pessimist school was C. R. Fay who examined the treatment of children in the supplementary occupations such as chimney sweeping in order to reveal how the greed and

insensitivity of the ruling classes were responsible for the employment of children rather than an economic necessity. Industrialisation, he believed did not create this situation, it just worsened it. Much of the historical debate over the treatment of children was also focused on the reform movement and the way in which the government responded to the ever-increasing awareness of child labour. Several writers, notably Fay and the Hammonds, were convinced that the ratification of child labour laws to protect children was proof in itself that the conditions were bad, and as Nardinelli points out, 'had reached levels society would no longer tolerate' (1990:29). Others of the optimist school – R. M. Hartwell and T. S. Ashton for example – saw legislation as evidence that conditions were in reality improving.

But it was Edward Thompson's imaginative and widely read book *The Making of the English Working Class* (1961), which helped, more than any other work to reassert the view that the exploitation of little children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 'was one of the most shameful events in our history' (Thompson 1961:384). Thompson's controversial assessment of the popular traditions of the eighteenth century influenced specialists in a whole range of academic fields, far beyond the study of history itself. However it was left to Clark Nardinelli to give this continuing debate a neo-liberal twist. In his book *Child Labour and the Industrial Revolution* (1990), he adopted models of 'household economics' and neoclassical definitions of exploitations to examine the condition of factory children, and argues that factory children were better off than their predecessors, and that the decline in children's waged work was due to economic growth altering the terms of household calculation in favour of 'higher quality' - healthier and more educated - children. These arguments are certainly contentious and some writers might even question Nardinelli's reliance on models of the 'household' abstracted from historical and cultural variation.

There are of course methodological difficulties posed by the

fragmentary sources, from which figures are fed into the economic equations, especially in the analysis of children's wages. There is also a tendency - not uncommon in literature on this topic - to ignore the variations within similar occupations. The much vaunted decline of child employment was regionally uneven, and subject to periodic reversals and even small and declining proportions of the workforce could still account for thousands of children. Of all this, one thing remains abundantly clear, it is that for every definite point of view there is an equally definite conflicting point of view. Of course there will always be room for objective disagreement for as Hartwell points out 'all to often historians have had a tendency to abuse the evidence in favour of particular beliefs' (1971:94).

My most difficult methodological problem was in understanding why different writers, when given the same sources of evidence could have such distinctly different interpretations on child labour and then to try to use that knowledge to overcome my own prejudices. My own biases will, I am sure, become apparent to the reader of this thesis. I have for example, some reservations about the explanatory power of eighteenth century economic developments and the defensiveness of the economic historians themselves as they struggled to stress durable and fundamental continuities. Historical evidence can be arranged into different and contending pictures and no workable definition of objectivity can ever hide the likelihood that I would have been confronted with more than one version as to what happened to working children in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. The indisputable fact that there can be a multiplicity of sincere histories increased the necessity for me to read as many messages of the past as possible and to follow their different trajectories as they linked together through time (Appleby et al, 1994:262). Equally, it can be said, no authors have control over the readers imaginative reconstruction of their words and any given text can be read in many different ways and it is possible that there can be a number of meanings to the same sentence. This thesis therefore, is merely my interpretation of child labour in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

centuries based on the work of others more conversant with the subject than myself.

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An Anthropological Perspective of the Child

For those who are interested in the topic, any study of child labour can provide a convenient platform for evaluating the lives of children, through an array of perspectives that, I believe, are crucial to the better understanding of human behaviour. At the heart of many of the current debates lies the question: who and what is a child? In this respect, one finds that much of the literature available today still retains the outdated view that children are merely 'small and unfinished specimens of the social beings whose ideas and behaviour are the proper subject matter for social science' (La Fontaine 1986:10). 'Children were thus, of little account other than as passive representatives of the future generation' (Prout & James, 1990:14); childhood then, was seen as a rehearsal for adult life (Shildkrout, 1978:109); and the 'unsocialised' child therefore, could not be included in any social analysis.

This Western conception of childhood - seen as a period of innocence, frailty and dependence - is linked to the shift in the value of children that occurred in Europe, around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Philippe Ariès (1962), in his pioneer study, *Centuries of Childhood*, was the first to put forward the proposition that childhood is a

modern Western invention. Ariès concludes that:

> In medieval society, the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children.... As soon as the child could live without constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle rocker, he belonged to adult society (Ariès, 1962:128).

Once children were established as being different from adults, they were then gradually removed from the adult world of work, sexuality and politics, beginning first among the middle classes, and then later, across the whole social spectrum. However, Ariès assumption that childhood did not exist before the sixteenth century seems somewhat overladen with Western twentieth century attitudes and values. Of course, children and therefore childhood existed before the sixteenth century. It was not that there was no conception of childhood, but rather that the difference between adults and children was, at that time, thought of differently from the way that it is thought of today. For this reason, if we are to better understand the institution of childhood in today's world, then we first need to place it within its broader framework. While the Ariès concept of childhood is significant, it is not as he suggests, the 'invention', but is instead, the 'reinvention' of the 'Western' concept of childhood.

Anthropological studies have clearly demonstrated that many varieties of development are possible, and that our own ideas of maturity, attachment and ability are specific to our own culture. The continuity of these ideas is dependent on the structural continuity of the individual society or, in other words, how people in a particular society relate to one another. This concept of social relationships was explored by Radcliffe-Brown in 1940 when he wrote:

> Every human being living in society is two things; he is an individual and also a person. As an individual, he is a biological organism, a collection of a vast number of molecules organised in a complex structure within which, as long as it persists, there occur physiological and psychological processes and changes. The Human being as a person is a complex of social relationships. He is a citizen of England [sic], a husband and a father, a bricklayer, a member of a particular Methodist congregation, a voter in a certain constituency, a member of his trade union, an adherent of the

> Labour Party and so on. Note that each of these descriptions refers to a social relationship, or to a place in a social structure. As a person, the human being is the object of study for the social anthropologist. We cannot study persons except in terms of social structure, nor can we study social structure except in terms of the persons of which it is composed (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952:193-4).

This distinction between the 'individual' and the 'person,' as envisaged by Radcliffe-Brown in 1940 is still used today as a basic conceptual tool in anthropological discourse, although its basic concept has long since been found to be too inflexible to fit contemporary models. And while subsequent developments have modified his concept of social structure, the predominant outcome of this concept is often seen as focusing anthropology too much on adults (La Fountaine, 1986:14-17) and not on children. If therefore, social structures are just as real as are individual organisms, then it also follows that any social phenomena that can be observed in human society cannot be 'the immediate result of the nature of individual beings, but ...the result of the social structure by which they are united' (Evans-Prichard, 1968:190-91).

But Radcliffe-Brown left it to a later generation of structuralists to shift the focus of attention from communities seen by him as local, isolated and without history to one where they are observed as 'diverse sets of phenomena that can be related to one another, once relevant factors and their relationships have been ferreted out (Gardner 1973:40). Although I must say, that I find it difficult to define structure with any degree exactness because, as Gardner (1973) points out 'it would be difficult to find any two structuralists who define structure in the same way'. However, I do think it important at this point to briefly mention just two of this new generation in this chapter. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jean Piaget[1] both sought to establish that the range of cognition is not limitless and that human knowledge can be studied and acknowledged simply

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[1] Both were pioneers in the creation of new methods for probing thought language, and the human condition. Piaget looked at children of various ages, while Lévi-Struass focused his studies on 'primitives' of diverse cultures.

because it has specific and determinable structural properties. Gardner's (1973) comparison of both Lévi-Strauss and Piaget suggests that while the pair seem to differ somewhat in their approach, their differences are more often than not complementary than critical. Piaget's hypothesis is structural-developmental and ties cognition with action, whereas Lévi-Strauss places his emphasis for intelligent thought in the perception of opposites or contrasts in the world. From this brief outline one might therefore conclude that neither of these approaches restrict the other, not, that is, that they might merge onto one grand theory, but that they might complement one another, since both Lévi-Strauss and Piaget seem to believe that both organisms and societies have an inner wisdom.

In this context then, it follows that in any anthropological study of a society, the reality which the researcher should be most focused on, is the enormous number of existing relations, at a given point in time, which link together certain human beings and constitute their particular social structure. It is the individual together with the all the social aspects of personhood who should be the focus of the anthropologist. But as Tonkin (1982) suggests, traditional functionalist accounts of socialisation often conflate these distinctions and ultimately fail to satisfactorily explain the process by which the 'individual acquires [this] personhood' (1982:245). 'Socialisation is not the process which magically transforms the child into the adult, nor is it the key which turns the asocial child into a social adult, childhood and adulthood are simply 'two instances of the same species' (Prout & James, 1990:13). Children are social actors and childhood is a particular kind of social reality that is neither fixed, constant nor unitary (*ibid*:15). Earlier studies designed to illustrate the infinite plasticity of culture and cultural relativity paid little attention to childhood as a phenomenon in it or that children were indeed, active participants in the process of their own progression into adulthood.

In her work on child-rearing and socialisation in Samoa and New Guinea, Margaret Mead (1928, 1930) viewed behaviour simply as an

expression of personality and based her paradigm of childhood on a 'simplistic set of connections between social behaviour, personality and childhood experience[2], while virtually ignor[ing] all social life outside the domestic sphere' (La Fontaine 1986:12). But despite the criticisms[3] regarding her animistic premise, her anthropomorphic interpretation, and her faulty logic, she was nonetheless the first anthropologist to recognise children as valuable informants and the importance of a child thinking in its own right (Hardman, 2001:503). What is most important when studying children, is that one should always seek the child-oriented perspective and provide the opportunity for the children concerned to speak for themselves.

Despite much criticism, the outdated concepts that exclude children, still continues to dominate much of the social discourse today. However, the deep-rooted beliefs that marginalise children as dependent, passive and subordinate to adults in their social world are no longer acceptable. The fundamental issue here, is, that by defining the ideal of childhood as set apart from the real world in which they live, 'denies [the] children's agency in the creation and negotiation of [their own] value' (Nieuwenhuys, 1996:237). In one notable example of this, in 1995, a British TV program exposed the fact that twelve to fifteen year old girls were making pyjamas in Morocco for a UK supplier to Marks and Spencer. In order to placate

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2 The early proponents of this approach were largely students of Franz Boaz, as of course Mead was. Based on the view that cultural integration was a psychological rather than a sociological pursuit, this school of thought was labelled *culture personality*. People were thought to acquire certain personality characteristics in keeping with the dominant themes of their culture. Mead's work in Samoa sought to link psychology with culture, focusing specifically on the ways in which children were taught their cultures and in her classic work *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), she attempted to demonstrate how certain childrearing practices produced certain character structures among adults.

3 The controversy surrounding assertions by Derek Freeman (1983) that Mead's work with Samoan youth was inaccurate, caused a furore in the United States. Freeman argued that Mead was duped regarding her depiction of sexual freedom among Samoan adolescents who gave her factitious accounts of casual love affairs. Moreover, Freeman believed that Mead's distortions were related to her biased theoretical outlook and her desire to present an appealing picture of 'primitive life'. The controversy illustrated just how difficult it is to achieve a reasonable level of detachment and that direct observation in field research does not guarantee objectivity.

its critics and to assuage the consciences of Western consumers over the evils of child servitude, the manufacturers dismissed many of the girls, despite the fact that their families had thought this was a perfectly acceptable and, indeed, essential occupation which augmented their otherwise inadequate family income. 'That the fate of the children disemployed by Western conscience was not considered, demonstrated ...that the agenda of the West was not necessarily the well-being of the children themselves' (Seabrook, 2001:53).

Much of the resistance to the reconceptualisation of childhood is also deeply inscribed amongst those in the professions that are closely associated with children – doctors, teachers, social workers, psychologists and so on – and it is often their critique that ultimately flows on to the general populace. This is not to say that these notions of childhood are the spurious principles, that are sanctimoniously submitted to in the service of self interest, but are, what Foucault (1997) refers to, as 'regimes of truth[4].' These truths operate as the self-fulfilling prophecies, that fuse with institutional practices to produce self-conscious subjects who think about themselves through the terms of those ways on thinking (Prout & James, 1990:25). To fully understand childhood, it must be placed within the context of meaning it has for the children concerned; those shared assumptions, about culture, about family and about childhood that are all too often taken for granted by those whom it involves. They are as La Fontaine suggests, the 'self-evident truths,' which are beyond our capacity to alter (1986:17).

Anthropologists are constantly confronted with ideas that differ from their own and 'must content [them]selves with the analysis of how different discursive practices produce different childhoods, each and all of which

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[4] Ambert (1996), also encountered this in her survey of North American Childhood. She suggests that the reason why children seem to be excluded from social discourse is, as it often is with women, that the conservative, male dominated discipline does not give worth to children. This means that '...the gate keepers of the discipline ...continue to place a high value on certain types of knowledge, data and research methods' (Ambert, 1996:16; cited in Prout & James, 1990:23).

are real within their own regime of truth' (Prout & James, 1990:27). Over the past twenty or so years much of the academic interest in children has shifted away from the stereotyped topics of family and schooling to other areas, such as politics, work and health. Yet 'despite the recognition that children are active social beings it [also] remains true that their lives are determined and/or constrained in large measure by adults' (ibid:30) and while adults seemingly act in the best interests of the child, the children themselves are rarely consulted on the very matters that shape and constrain their lives. Ignoring the distinct and sometimes separate world of children, many writers prefer to take the conventional view of socialisation as a moulding process carried out by adults, paying little attention to childhood as a 'phenomenon in itself or to children as active participants in their own rearing process' (*ibid:18).*

What is now emerging in the writings of many researchers is a pattern of thought that sees children as subjects, rather than just objects or as 'receptacles of adult teaching' (Hardman, 2001:504). And as Green, points out in his study of Latin America children, 'one afternoon spent in the company of children from any poor community soon dispels the ...portrait of the silent, suffering victim, ...children are increasingly being seen for what they are, that is, human beings with their own ideas and experiences and their own inherent human rights' (1998:4). Childhood is now beginning to be understood as having its own particular needs, interests and obligations which in turn have their own values relative to those of adults. It is the chronologically qualitative process of normal human development, 'not a plateau of age but the asymptote of life's' development curve' (Archard, 1993:36). By studying children in their own right, as Hardman proposes, one is able to view childhood as a 'self-regulating, autonomous world, which does not necessarily reflect early development of adult culture' (2001:504). Therefore, in order for adults to comprehend children's thoughts and behaviour, one needs interpret them in the terms of a child.

Childhood like many other value-laden concepts reveals a certain ambiguity, 'referring at the same time to a state of physical being and a social position' (La Fontaine, 1986:20). It is often wrongly assumed to be equal in duration and character, for all children the world over. However, in recent years many anthropologists have pointed out that, because age classification has so many different aspects, and that biological maturity can not, in itself, be associated with adult status, there can be no specific age or status category that can be used as a valid system for studying childhood across cultures or even classes within the same society[5] (La Fontaine, 1978; cited in Nieuwenhuys, 1994:24). When Roberts tries to define the 'child' he asks: is an eighteen-year-old always and everywhere a child; is a fourteen-year-old unmarried boy a child; and is a thirteen-year-old married girl a child?' (1998:4).

Clearly, the process of childhood is socially constructed and divided across classes, genders and economic circumstances etc, into stages each with their own characteristics which can also change as circumstances shift. It is not a universal experience of any fixed duration. Furthermore, age boundaries can shift depending on the sphere of activity. In the United Kingdom for example, a child reaches the age of criminal responsibility at the age of ten, but is not politically an adult until they turn eighteen. Thus, the definition that everyone from birth up until their eighteenth birthday is a child obscures the absolute diversity of childhood itself, since it is during childhood that one experiences the most rapid and extensive physical, emotional and intellectual development. Yet, when people in the West speak of the difficulties of childhood and of adolescence, they are, more often than not, thinking of them as unavoidable periods of adjustment through which everyone has to pass.

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[5] Consolidated global statistics on children are elusive, not only because of difficulties involved designing and implementing surveys but also because of the differing definitions and perceptions about what constitutes a child. One age categorisation based on information from qualitative research in Bangladesh has suggested three rough stages of children's lives: 5-7 years, 8-11 years and 12-16 years. However, it is recognised that there is no consensus on what age ranges should be used to define a child (Delap, 2001).

So that whenever a child reacts to the universal standards of their society, their behaviour is identified by adults as being part and parcel of their growing up, and that in due coarse, 'they will grow out of it'. The universal standards that I refer to - such as courtesy, manners, respect, loyalty, etc. - that are so deeply ingrained in our own behaviour can, of course, also be found amongst people in other societies, although they may differ as to what constitutes this standard in sometimes the most unexpected ways.

It was, according to Nieuwenhuys, industrial society, that placed chronological age as the predominant determinant of childhood, in other societies, she adds, age is far less relevant than, for example, the attainment of stages of biological maturity which are, in some cases considered important milestones in the life of the individual (1994:24). It is often the experiences of children in other countries that can radically subvert the mythologised Western understanding of childhood, revealing to us that any definition of 'child' or 'childhood' articulates a society's values and attitudes towards children.

There are many societies that have no word in their language to describe a person between five and fifteen, for example, there is no Bengali equivalent to the English word 'child', *shishu* means one who needs milk and implies dependence, therefore a child that can fend for itself can not be *shishu.* In Bangladesh, children are considered grown up once they were capable of internalising the moral norms of their society (Seabrook, 2001:80). The conception of what is a 'child', is therefore, determined by how a culture thinks[6] about the extent, nature and significance of that child. As Archard notes;

> ...any conception of childhood will vary according to the ways in which its boundaries are set, its dimensions ordered and its divisions

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6 One of the most influential figures in the development of ethnolinguistics was Edward Sapir (1884-1941), among his many interests was analysing vocabulary in order to uncover the 'physical and social environment in which people live. Sapir, argued that all human experience is to some extent, mediated through culture and language and that 'the vocabulary of language may indeed be looked upon as a complex inventory of all the ideas, interests and occupations that take up the attention of the community' (1949:90-91).

> managed. This will determine how a culture thinks about the extent, nature and significance of childhood. The adoption of one conception rather than another will reflect prevailing general beliefs, assumptions and priorities. ...what matters to a society is that a human can speak, be able to distinguish good from evil, exercise reason, learn and acquire knowledge, fend for itself, procreate, participate in the running of the society or work alongside its other members? Whatever conception is adopted it will be subject to difficulties or tensions which show themselves in tendencies to incoherence or ambiguity, and which undermine its practical utility. These difficulties arise from the ways in which the dimensions, boundaries and divisions of conceptions of childhood interrelate (1993:27-28).

The more that we recognise the enormous diversity of children's lives, the clearer it becomes that childhood is not unitary, constant or homogeneous, but a synthesis that includes many elements; time, place, age, gender, class, kinship, family resources, religious tradition and so on.

One of the problems today, lies in the globalised market economy, where the forces of 'universalism' - i.e. the global and the unified market place - clash with those of 'relativism' -. i.e. the local and the independent market place. Some researchers have even suggested that 'the tension between the two principles is both real and necessary' (Donnelly, 1984; cited in White, 1999:136). However, real or imagined, necessary or unnecessary, the tensions between these two opposing forces of globalisation and localisation have been no better manifested over the past two decades, than in the context of children's rights. According to White, for instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[7] seems to represent 'the antithesis of cultural relativism and of the principles of recognising and respecting differences. Comprehensive global standards on children's rights ...explicitly strive to establish rights or norms for and to be adhered to by all countries in the

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[7] The signing of the CRC in 1968 by nearly every country in the world, – with the notable exceptions of Somalia and the United States – marked a new departure for child protection. By abrogating their commitment in the name of economic necessity, the signatories engendered a certain euphoria about a 'universal' commitment to the protection of the worlds children. The problem is that, the convention promotes an idealised notion of the Western norms of the family as a basis for the protection of children, which according to Seabrook, is already in an advanced state of dissolution (Seabrook, 2001:50-51).

world - something therefore that is seen as really, intentionally, *literally* universal, in short a relativists nightmare' (1999:134). The UN has however overcome this dilemma by embodying relative and subjective notions within its own convention. 'The best interests of the child,' for example, - enshrined in Article 3 of the CRC as the cornerstone of all decisions affecting children - is not defined by the convention, but instead, left to each individual state to determine for themselves, thereby retaining relativist principles in a global - standard-setting exercise (*ibid* :141). So that while cultural relativism stresses the ideas that notions of childhood are themselves socially constructed and respects the lives of others, there are also those that would want to use it to legitimise their own universalist agendas.

Anthropological cross cultural studies, have demonstrated that childhood can only be fully understood when it is placed in the context of the meaning it has for the children concerned. By developing an integrated picture of childhood, it soon becomes clear that, the process of childhood is socially constructed and divided across classes, genders and economic circumstances etc. And although childhood constitutes a recognisable and familiar social category, as does 'gender' or 'class', 'childhood' is unique because the child occupies a position that homogenises rather than fragments the social community. Simply put, this means that everyone can lay claim to membership, at least for a time, in the community of children, because everyone must have been or is still, a child (Berry, 1999:4). Thus, by studying children in their own right, as Hardman (2001) proposes, one is able to view childhood from their own child-oriented perspective and as active participants in their own rearing process. However, while it is important to recognise that child-oriented studies can offer an essential child focused perspective, they should not be considered as substitutes for the more conventional adult evaluation research (Woodhead, 1991:45), since children, like adults, are also social actors within their own adult society. The ideology of today's child-centred society has focused academic discourses on the understanding of

the particular qualities of children and childhood, but despite all the recent rhetoric on the subject, the very concept of childhood has in many instances - such as in the case of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - become problematic (James and Prout 1990:1-2). As a result, new paradigms for study are now being developed in which children are heard themselves as well as reported on by others, and where the contributions that children make to their own family and society are recognised.

4

Structural Change in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain

This chapter will review some of the fundamental and interrelated events that took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The major outcomes of these events being the reconstruction of British agricultural society into the worlds first industrial 'super power', the transfer of political power from landed aristocracy to a new middle class and the transformation the rural working poor into new urban 'working class.

If we are to locate the phenomenon of child labour in its proper time and context we need to first identify the criteria and meaning of the phenomenon. Specifically these were: first, the higher rates of economic and population growth, and secondly, the structural change that occurred between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But while the first is closely linked to the second, the crucial element was the redeployment of resources away from agriculture (Mathias, 1990:2-3). Crafts (1990) suggests that, between 1760 and 1840 the English economy experienced a very rapid and pronounced structural change, while the rate of per capita income remained quite modest. Central to Craft's thesis

was his reinterpretation of the English economic history, rural change and the redeployment of resources away from agriculture. In the period up until 1840 there was no pervasive growth in productivity or modernisation throughout the industry and the experience in the textile industries was atypical. However structural change never occurs in a social or organisational vacuum and associated with this change were the profound changes that occurred in the organisation, content and management of work (Bruland, 1990:154). This is not to say that the employment of children was anything new, – child labour was common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – however what the factories did was to draw attention to the problem and lay the foundation for reform.

In the late eighteenth century, most working-class children worked from an early age, were often treated cruelly and frequently died young. They had few, if any, legal rights; and could actually be sold and or otherwise disposed of by their parents or guardians. Children could even be hanged for pick-pocketing at the age of seven (Hopkins, 1994:1). Over the past two centuries many researchers have produced theories to account for these disparaging attitudes towards working-class children, but the difficulty here has been, that most of the material drawn upon has unavoidably, been of a middle-class nature. But since very few of the working classes were literate at the time, they did not, as a rule, record their experiences. There is therefore, a danger of assuming that the views and attitudes of the middle-classes are also those of the working-classes. This cannot be avoided, and the fact remains that we can only make educated guesses as to what the thoughts of working class children really were in the early nineteenth-century.

Prior to the eighteenth century, the social structure of Britain was a complex hierarchy or strata, based on rank and order – the Tudors referred to this as, ones 'degree' in society. Starting at the top with the aristocracy, society was then structured downwards through the 'great merchants', members of the 'liberal professions', those who styled

themselves 'Gent.' or 'Esquire' – meaningful titles then, not democratic courtesies as they would be when used today – and finally to common 'husbandmen', 'cottagers' and paupers. Within this carefully regulated environment everybody would know their place and generally people would not expect to change their social status during their lifetime[1]. Landed property also had definite responsibilities as well as privileges and each generation would accept the customs and traditions of the past as the norm and would be fearful of change. But with the economic ascendancy of capitalism in the early eighteenth century this paternalistic outlook began to disappear. Central to this paternalistic outlook were the three obligations; to rule, to guide and to help, and while this commercial fervour did not lessen the desire of the ruling classes to rule and guide those beneath them, they were less inclined to help the destitute (Roberts, 1979:21). E. P. Thompson when writing about eighteenth century society spoke of 'the illusion of paternalism'[2] because although landowners had abandoned close and personal economic relations with their workers they still ruled the country, preserving what Thompson refers to as a 'cultural hegemony' (1974:382-87).

Social structure in Britain based on class, was very much a product of industrialisation that, began to emerge in the period between 1780 and 1830. In his classic book The *Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson (1980), argues that there were 'workers' in 1790 and a 'working class' in 1832. And that the 'workers' were servile to a landed aristocracy at the end of the eighteenth century: and that the 'working class' were servile to a bourgeois democracy by the mid-nineteenth

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1 There was always room for some mobility amongst the labouring poor – in fact, it was considered a virtue – but of course not everybody could move. There still had to be poor, not because God chose them to be so, but because they lacked the requisite gifts of character and perseverance to be anything else (Briggs, 1959b:65).

2 This was the century that saw the erosion of living-in and the advance of free and mobile wage labour. Yet despite this, there were nonetheless, many masters who wished to have the best of both the old and the new without the disadvantages of either. So that while they disclaimed their paternal responsibilities towards their labourers, they never ceased to complain at the breach of the 'great law of subordination' (Thompson, 1974:382-3).

century[3]. The enormous economic and social changes caused by industrialisation led directly to the revival and invigoration of paternalistic ideals, forcing the ruling classes to think seriously about social problems (Roberts 1979:57). The units of production that prevailed during the eighteenth century were also small and this had persistently helped to reduce class tensions (Briggs, 1959a) and maintain social relationships between the classes. But as the Industrial Revolution advanced these small units were joined by large ones that ultimately changed the nature of the market for the craftsmen's products and resulted in the diminution of labour and a downward pressure on wages. But it was the speed and fundamental nature of these changes that upset the established social relationships and identities the most, by casting doubt upon the appropriateness of established values and identities (Morris, 1986:2-7).

But the greatest concern of the ruling classes during the early nineteenth century was their fear of social revolution and of an attack on the existing public order. Consequently the majority of the upper classes came to look upon judges and magistrates not as persons trying to do justice between man and man, but as the most effective part of the system of repression These judges and magistrates had a relatively free hand, and with few exceptions, regarded themselves as the policemen of the existing order. The law had put unlimited powers in their hands and in using those powers they did not think of the working classes as men and women to whom they owed justice, but as a body of rebels dangerous to society (Hammond & Hammond, 1966:71-2). Certainly there was good reason for their concern, for between 1775-1783, thirteen British colonies in North America attained their independence from Britain in a revolution

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[3] Thompson's thesis is mainly concerned with class, which he defines as 'a historical phenomenon unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of existence and in consciousness'. Class he says 'happens when some men, as a result of common experiences – inherited or shared – feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from – and usually opposed to – theirs.' Class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born – or enter involuntarily (Thompson, 1980: 8-9).

that created the United States of America and established a republican form of government, in which power resided with the people. Then again, six years later, in 1789 and just thirty-five kilometres from the English coast another revolution took place in France. The French revolution lasted ten years, transforming the society and political system of France from an absolute monarchy, where the King monopolised power, to a republic of theoretically free and equal citizens.

The French Revolution had an enormous effect on the upper classes[4] because, as the Hammonds point out, 'it seemed to many, a warning against [their] irreligion and the frivolous life' (1966:229). Mantoux concluded that the fear of revolution, similar to that which had taken place in France, 'haunted so many heads and disturbed so many minds that every popular association, whatever its professed aims might be, became an object of suspicion' (1945:456). Peace, order and progress, it was assumed, all turned on discipline and in order to guard against mutiny and insubordination the government introduced the laws against combinations[5], that banned all workmen from taking a common action in defence of their common interests. Even to belong to a combination carried a penalty of three months imprisonment. Combinations between masters to reduce wages or to increase the hours of work were also declared illegal, but the penalty for them was only a twenty pound fine (Marshall,1982:144) and was rarely enforced. The Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 lasted for a quarter of a century and assumed a new aspect for the governing classes, placing the working classes at the mercy of their masters.

The subsequent exploitation of adults also led to the exploitation of

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4 The French revolution had initiated three simultaneous processes: a panic-struck counter-revolutionary response on the part of the landed and commercial aristocracy; a withdrawal on the part of the industrial bourgeoisie and an accommodation (on favourable terms) with the *status quo* and a radicalisation of the popular reform movement (Thompson, 1968:888).

5 One problem for the industrial worker lay in the poor organisation of collective bargaining. Trade unionism in the form of workers' combinations had a long and active history, but was relatively weak, ineffective and traditionally only catered for the workers with craft skills.

children. By keeping adult wages low, parents had little choice but to send their children out to work. The employer's capacity to exploit child labour led to the increased hiring of children which in turn reduced the demand for adult labour. Children therefore, became inadvertent collaborators in their own enslavement in that it was their own labour that drove their fathers' wages down and it was their fathers' low wages that forced them to work. However the Combination Acts never really managed to discourage trade unionism, instead it forced them into an illegal world in which secrecy and hostility towards the authorities were intrinsic to their way of existence. Ironically though, it was during these years when the Acts were in force that trade unionism registered great advances (Thompson, 1982:550).

For the first twenty years of the nineteenth century industrial strife was endemic. 'Few areas and few trades', maintains Marshall, 'escaped trouble; the Home Office was flooded with accounts of strikes and violence' the cause she adds, 'was economic rather than political.' The workers wanted food for their families, not political reform (1982:145-46). Hobsbawm even goes as far as to suggest that this upheaval reflected not merely material poverty but social pauperisation: 'the destruction of old ways of life without the substitution of anything the labouring poor could regard as a satisfactory equivalent' (Hobsbawm, 1968:74). In some communities, displaced workers attacked factories and factory owners while in others, rioters known as Luddites[6] attacked the machines themselves. Such outbreaks of social discontent, like those of the Luddites, were frequent in the first part of the nineteenth century. One of the largest public demonstrations was in August 1819 when at Saint

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[6] The most famous series of protests came with the Luddites in 1811-12. The Luddites were a secret group of workers in the textile districts of Nottinghamshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire who went about destroying the machinery that threatened their livelihoods. While they never had a serious opportunity to cause any prolonged and severe disturbance they did show that workingmen were willing to meet contentious labour practices with fierce opposition.

Peter's Field in Manchester, between fifty to sixty thousand[7] people gathered to demand universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments[8] and the repeal of the 1819 Corn Laws[9]. Government cavalry troops then attacked the crowd killing eleven people – including two women and one child – and injuring more than four-hundred in a blood bath that was become to be known as the Peterloo Massacre.

1. A representation of the Peterloo Massacre1819 (Richard Carlile)

The Swing Riots took place in the Midland counties between August 1830 and January 1831. Fuelled by the frustrations of 'ill-paid and ill fed men and women, for whom the future looked bleak' (Horn, 1987:82), discontented agricultural workers destroyed agricultural machinery and set barns and ricks ablaze. In the summer of 1830, three hundred and

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7 The Hammonds (1966) believe the crowd to have numbered 80,000 persons.

8 'Peterloo' exemplifies the state of affairs for the working class at the time. Those who met there were excluded from the rights of citizens; they were refused representation, education, or the liberty of collective representation. In their eyes law existed solely for their repression and punishment.

9 The Corn Laws gave English grain growers a virtual monopoly of the domestic market. High grain prices were artificially maintained and wheat could not be exported unless the domestic price fell below a specified level or imported unless it rose above that level. Wage controls, high wheat prices, and the resultant high bread prices placed a heavy burden on the mass of the population. The 1815 Corn Laws thus perpetuated the economic distinction between the classes and were a source of continuing discontent. The increase in the price of bread led to widespread protests, which were met by repressive legislation suspending the legal right of habeas corpus, abridging freedom of assembly and the press, and reducing immunity from arbitrary house searches.

eighty-seven agricultural machines were destroyed causing terrified farmers to give up their use for some time (Hobsbawm and Rude, 1968). There were many other minor local outbreaks – e.g. bread riots in East Anglia 1816 and 1822, the Pentrich rising in Derbyshire in 1817 – and overall there was a sense of imminent social explosion'. However, the most outstanding reality of this period was not so much the formation of the working class itself, but the arousing of class awareness. It was a revolutionary process of intense significance as it shaped the consciousness of the working class.

At the same time an 'agrarian revolution' was also taking place in the rural areas. This had begun much earlier, in the seventeenth century, but was, by the late eighteenth century, following the same path of invention and enterprise as the Industrial Revolution (Briggs, 1959b:41-43). The path of change focused on four things: improvements in farming practices; the introduction of new crops; the use of new agricultural machinery; and increase in the size of farms as a result of enclosure[10]. 'Land previously outside the system of activities,' notes Ashton, was being drawn in and put to better use' (1997:5-6)[11]. Much attention was paid to the draining of fens and marshes, to turning rough common pasture into arable land, and to the hedging and fencing of land so as to make it more productive.

While the land enclosures and the more efficient farming methods

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10 Enclosure is a process known in many European countries, by which commonly held or unoccupied lands or wastelands passed into private ownership. Stimulated by improved agricultural methods, enclosure saw the rise of a landlord class that farmed for profit rather than for subsistence, and the growth of cities as large markets for agricultural products. This process resulted in problems for tenant farmers, who were often displaced without reason or compensation by landlords who wanted the land to serve their own interests. However, in its broadest aspect, enclosure was a key element in the transition from feudal, subsistence agriculture to modern, commercial agriculture.

11 Not all writers agreed with the optimistic view of Ashton. Deane for example, while accepting fact that enclosure may have been a necessary condition of agricultural improvement, it was not, she believed, a sufficient one. Because although enclosure removed the restrictions on technological change inherent in the open-field system, it did not of itself ensure the adoption of the new techniques of production for the market and the higher productivity they entailed. Some of the larger farmers she argues made less intensive use of their newly acquired wastes and commons than the cottagers and squatters who had used them to support families (Deane, 1979:42).

increased food output, it deprived many of the rural poor from the precarious independence that they had once enjoyed, resulting in a 'rural depopulation and the downgrading of the peasant to an "agricultural labourer" or a kind of "serf"' (Hartwell, 1971:71). Hammonds took a more far-reaching view in suggesting that enclosure was 'fatal to three classes: the small farmer, the cottager and the squatter'. For these classes, their common rights were worth more than anything they received in return, not only did their rents increase but the old village life and all the relationships and interests were extinguished (Hammond & Hammond, 1978:58). Thompson, for example saw land enclosure as, 'a plain enough case of class robbery, played,' he suggests, 'according to the fair rules of property and law laid down by a parliament of property-owners and lawyers (1982:237-38). Enclosure had profound social consequences for the peasants because it undermined the customary relations to their agrarian means of production (*ibid:*239). Few would argue that enclosure did not, for the most part, result in a huge rise in agricultural efficiency or that it was possibly even 'necessary' to feed, what was then a rapidly growing population. But looking from the peasant farmers stand point it was nothing less than an economic and cultural catastrophe, destroying many integrated family economies where man, wife and children all contributed in different ways to their own viability. The dispossession of the cottager from common land and the buying out of lesser smallholders who were too poor to find the necessary investment in fencing meant that fewer families were producing the food and clothing that they themselves consumed (Deane, 1979:133) With the inexorable advance of the 'agrarian revolution,' the simpler verities[12] of country life together with the social cohesiveness of the village community were changed forever.

Few people with any knowledge of the period would disagree that

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12 This is not to say that rural Britain was a place of pastoral serenity, since, as Roger Sales has pointed out, 'to assume such a vision is to conveniently ignore the harsher realities of day-to-day life on the land'. It gives, 'no indication of the long hours of drudging labour expected from most peasant cultivators or the feudal dues exacted from them by many landowners' (1983:58).

the nineteenth century was an age of transition, or that it was a period that saw a distinct change in the social and economic structure of English society. In pre-industrial Britain, for example, more than three-quarters of the population lived in small villages. But by the mid-19th century, half of Britain's population were then living and working in its cities. This rapid change from an agricultural society to an industrial one first began in Britain because the social, political, and legal conditions that existed at the time were favourable for change. For instance, property rights[13], such as those for patents on mechanical improvements, were well established. But more importantly, the predictable, stable rule of law in Britain meant that the monarchy and aristocracy were unlikely to arbitrarily seize earnings or impose taxes than they were in many other countries. As a result, earnings were safer, which also meant that ambitious business people could gain wealth, social prestige, and power more easily than could people in any other country on the European continent. These factors encouraged the risk taking and investment in new business ventures that were crucial to economic growth. Accordingly, not only did the overall amount of goods and services produced expand dramatically, but the proportion of capital invested per worker also grew.

Essential to all of this was the British government's relatively hands-off economic policy – made fashionable by the British philosopher and economist Adam Smith and his book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)[14] –

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13 In Britain by the eighteenth century the concept of property – politically, socially and legally – was not confined, as on the Continent, to the ownership of 'real things', but extended to the ownership of non-tangible claims to property, like copyrights and company shares. There was a practical, empirical approach to legal problems, an aversion to restrictive theoretical definitions of legal concepts, and a preference for working in terms of 'legal relationships, of powers and liabilities, rights and obligations, types of a legal action rather than abstract concepts'. This facilitated the greater, earlier and essential use of non-tangible claims to property which were so important for the growth and modernisation of the economy (Hartwell, 1971:251-3).

14 Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) represents the first serious attempt in the history of economic thought to divorce the study of political economy from the related fields of political science, ethics, and jurisprudence. His central thesis is that capital is best employed for the production and distribution of wealth under conditions of governmental non-interference, or *laissez-faire*, and free trade. To explain this concept of government maintaining a *laissez-faire* attitude

which permitted fresh methods and ideas to flourish with little interference or regulation. It was this free-market approach together with property rights to all citizens and a stable political system that sanctioned the new groups of investors, businesspeople, and managers to take the financial risks that plunged Britain into the Industrial age. In practice, however, Smith's doctrine also undermined the very basis of the legal regulation of commerce and industry that was designed to prevent the exploitation of the public by the monopolists and to maintain the standard of life for all citizens (Hammond & Hammond, 1966:195).

Smith's views were also reflected by the Revered Thomas Malthus in his famous *Essay on Population* (1798) in which he expressed the notion that population increased geometrically while the supply of food increased only arithmetically. Work, he emphasised, was a normal state and poverty was the natural outcome of the balance of people and resources. Poverty, therefore, was inevitable and unless mankind deliberately sets itself to check the increase of the race, vice and misery are the only means by which population and food could be adjusted to each other[15]. This view undoubtedly helped ease the conscience of the ruling classes since 'his teachings seemed to show that poverty was the medicine of nature' (Hammond & Hammond, 1966:199). Relief of the poor therefore meant increased poverty, for if the conditions of the poor were improved, population would increase.

The persuasive influence of Malthus and his theory of the interrelation of population and economy were to dominate English thinking for the first half of the nineteenth century – long after it had, in practical

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toward commercial endeavours, Smith proclaimed the principle of the "invisible hand": Every individual in pursuing his or her own good is led, as if by an invisible hand, to achieve the best good for all.

[15] Malthus qualified this statement by including a number of important considerations in the second edition of his thesis. These were largely ignored by the ruling classes. Here, it is important to recognise that Malthus is remembered, not for what he taught the world but for what for what the upper classes learnt from him.

terms, become redundant. By then, the population of England and Wales was approaching twenty million and Britain had secured enough world trade that it no longer needed to depend on its own agricultural production to feed its population (Briggs, 1959:34). The population had been liberated from the constraints imposed by diminishing returns to labour in the agricultural sector and had escaped the Malthusian trap.

To the early economic historians, who followed the evidence of writers such as Engels[16] and Marx, industrialisation was a total disaster for the majority of workers, whether or not they worked in the towns or in the country. In their book, *The Town Labourer* (1917), *the* Hammonds, alleged that economic progress was debased by an inequitable distribution and the consequent social division created by the Industrial Revolution produced a social system that, 'in its extreme form ... made the mass of the people the cannon-fodder of industry'. Its perseverance, according to the Hammonds, showed what humanity must lose if it makes a god of industrial power. Almost eighty years earlier Marx and Engels had made much the same point in their Communist Manifesto[17] maintaining that:

> The bourgeoisie. ...has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors' and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man but naked self-interest, than callous 'cash-payment'. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation that ultimately ended in, 'complete social disruption without affording them the compensation of higher material standards of living' (The Communist Manifesto).

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16 Engels, from his position as a middle manager in his fathers textile mill in Manchester, was able to give a first hand account of the condition of the working class. In his *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, first published in 1845, he maintains that disease in the textile workers was rooted in the organisation of capitalist production and the social environment in which they had to live as a result of their meagre wages.

17 Written by Karl Marx in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, the *Manifesto* was first published in London in 1848 and originally titled *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei.* It was a declaration of principles and objectives of the Communist League – a secret organisation of *émigré* German artisans and intellectuals. The *Manifesto* is the most concise and intelligible statement of Marx's materialist view of history. Although it produced little immediate effect, it has since become the most widely read of his works and the single most influential document in the socialist canon.

One of the earliest critics of industrialisation was William Cobbett (1763-1835) a radical journalist who was later to become a member of parliament. It was Cobbett, according to Thompson, who created the Radical intellectual culture in the early nineteenth century Britain (1980:820). Through his journal *The Political Register*, he became an advocate of radical social and parliamentary reform, and brought about a Radical consensus out of the diversity of grievances. From the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 up until the passing of the Reform Bill[18] in 1832. Cobbett fought for the cause of various oppressed classes of British society. In his writings of the 1820's he not only castigated the pretensions of the larger farmers who had prospered in an era of high food prices during the Napoleonic Wars, but also mourned the passing of a village 'golden age' recollected from his youth. Cobbett was also noted for the sarcasm, wit, and the violence of his polemic style and wrote nearly fifty prose works, the most notable being *Rural Rides* (1830), a description of rural England, in which he showed an intimate knowledge of rural life.

But a later generation of optimists, notably Sir John Clapham and T. S. Ashton, cast doubt on the value of generalised contemporary polemics, whether they were of those of Engels or Cobbett, as valid evidence for changes in material standards. Clapham's work relied heavily on the work of statisticians, focusing mainly on wages and prices, work that he complained had been 'constantly ignored by social historians' (Clapham, 1926:561). In 1926 Clapham prefaced the first volume of his massive *Economic History of Modern Britain* with a general attack on legends in

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[18] The Reform Bill of 1832 provided for the redistribution of parliamentary seats and virtually tripled the electorate. It disenfranchised 56 boroughs, which had no or very small populations, and those known as pocket boroughs, in which the number of representatives had been controlled by aristocratic landowners. The parliamentary representation of other boroughs was decreased, while that of a number of large towns and of the counties generally was increased. The electorate was also broadened by the elimination or lessening of various restrictive residential requirements and financial qualifications so that on the whole, the Reform Bill of 1832 resulted in the transfer of political power from the landowning aristocrats to the middle class and in the subordination of the House of Lords to the popular will.

history, and in particular, the view that the average standard of living was declining between 1800 and 1850. 'For every class of urban or industrial worker about which information is available, 'he wrote, 'except – a grave exception – such dying trades as common handloom cotton weaving, wages had risen markedly during the intervening sixty years [since 1790]. For the more fortunate classes, such as London bricklayers or compositors, they had risen well over forty per cent, and for urban and industrial workers in the mass, perhaps about forty per cent' (Unwin *et al*, 1924:561). For Clapham the Industrial Revolution was not a total disaster as Marx and Engels had alleged. There was in his view, no serious class conflict or oppression, it was, in fact, a period of economic progress. Yet while Clapham had his critics[19], he was still considered to be one of Britain's leading economic historians and it was, to a certain extent, the authority of his scholarship that marked a turning point in a modern interpretation of the Industrial Revolution.

In his *An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century,* T. S. Ashton centred his attention on the changes in organisation and technique that led to an expansion of economic output. The Industrial Revolution, to Ashton, was 'a sudden quickening in the pace of output' dated firmly in the 1780s (1964:125). Hartwell suggests that, Ashton was the least abstract of historians: 'he wrote of capital and not of capitalism, of industry and not industrialisation' and, continues, 'he clearly sees the end of economic activity as output, and he judges economic change by changes in output' (1971:50). Ashton, like Clapham, clearly believed that the Industrial Revolution in Britain benefited the workers, not only in the long term, but also in the short term as well. While this is not to say that

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[19] The Hammonds offered a reply to the Clapham thesis in the *Economic History Review* (1930), arguing that by totting up the county averages, and then dividing them by the number of counties in order to reach a national average, Clapham concealed the fact that 60% of the labouring population were in counties where wages were below the national average (Thompson 1980:227). The researcher therefore, needs to be aware that averages can conceal crucial differences, and stereotypes, like 'the ordinary working man', which takes no account of the particularities of occupation, region, age and size of family.

the standard of living was high, or that it was rising fast at any time before 1850, it was nonetheless improving. Of course there was poverty and a high level of unemployment, but as Ashton maintains, 'to admit the existence of distress is not to deny the upward trend in living standards, nor the opportunities created by industrialisation' (*ibid*:129).

The impact of the Industrial Revolution on the working classes has been an enduring topic of debate for more than two centuries. Clearly there is a certain amount of bias, passion and conviction within the various versions. Hartwell believes that, 'the combination of bias, passion and conviction, and the varied sources of a complex event, have compounded differences into irreconcilable points of view' (1971:55), 'the differences in the interpretation' he proposes'... can be explained, but can they be resolved?' (*ibid*:103). In the final analysis the question that needs to be answered is, did the lives of the working poor improve during the Industrial Revolution?

There are really two parts to this question. First the 'standard of life', which consists of measurable data that also lends itself to statistical analysis – such as wages or rent and other items of consumption. It is here that there seems to be some agreement – even by the most convinced pessimists – that the standard of life gradually increased for most people during the Industrial Revolution. The worst period for the working poor seems have been 1790-1815 but by 1840 the living conditions had improved to the extent that most people were better off than their predecessors were fifty years earlier. Given the level of investment and the rapid growth in the population at the time, industrialisation was, in a Malthusian[20] sense, a remarkable accomplishment. Evidently, Malthus had not foreseen the tremendous increase in agricultural productivity nor had he envisaged Britain's rising

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20 The Malthus theory contradicted the optimistic belief prevailing in the early 19th century, that a society's fertility would lead to economic progress. His theory won many supporters and was often used as an argument against efforts to better the condition of the poor.

capacity to import food from her Empire.

The second part of the debate relates to the 'way of life', here – unlike 'standard of life' where statistical evidence is appropriate – one has to rely on intangibles such as happiness, freedom and comfort – often referred to by statisticians as 'imponderables'. While during the period 1790-1840 there was a slight improvement in average material standards, there was, over the same period intensified exploitation, greater insecurity, and increasing human misery of the working classes (Thompson 1982:229). Many of the points at issue here are complex and while the economists are content to use global indicators such as mortality rates, consumption indices and figures of national *per capita* income, this approach tells us little about the welfare and general happiness of specific groups of workers.

Certainly living conditions were bad in many of the working-class areas during the early part of the nineteenth century. This was due partly to the huge urban development taking place[21] and partly because of the primitive sanitary amenities that were provided at the time[22]. Although Hopkins argues that the high death rates were associated more to overcrowding and poorly constructed buildings of the new industrial towns than the lack of proper sanitation and an adequate supply of clean water (1994:107). Nevertheless, it is also necessary to maintain some sense of perspective here, since while attention is more often fixed on the expanding industrial towns, one must not overlook the fact that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of the working classes still worked on the land and were housed in agricultural cottages. These were often of very poor quality with limited accommodation consisting of no

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21 Urbanisation, like industrialisation was an unplanned process and no one was responsible for providing amenities. For example, in just a single decade (1821-1831) the urban population of Liverpool grew by 46 per cent while in Manchester, over the same period, it grew by 40 per cent.

22 Perhaps the best account of rural housing during this period is in J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1970* (1978), other useful references would include E. Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working Class Housing, 1780-1918* (1972), and R Dennis, *English Industrial Cities in the Nineteenth Century*(1984).

more than two rooms, an earthen floor and a leaky thatched roof (Burnett, 1994:31). Whatever may be said about the horrors of urban housing, the fact still remains that in the rural areas, most working-class children grew up in cramped, damp, insanitary hovels[23]. While it is impossible to generalise, much depended on the fortunes of the family, and in particular the occupation of the principal breadwinner, for his income was the biggest single determinant of the family life-style. As one would expect, the worst housing was occupied by the worst paid and most irregularly employed, although, as Hopkins points out, there was also a considerable variation of working class housing in any one town (1994:108).

Nevertheless, the notion that the period prior to the Industrial Revolution was a sort of a golden age is a myth. Many of the evils of the early industrial age were no worse than those of an earlier period. Domestic spinners and weavers in the eighteenth century for example, had been 'exploited' by the clothiers who were just as ruthless as the factory owners were to their workers in the 1840's. And the many domestic workers also had to work long hours for low wages under the domestic system just as they did under the factory system. While in the early part of the nineteenth century, the majority of the English working population were still engaged in agricultural or domestic modes of production, it was nonetheless, the factory workers that experienced the main impact of this social and economic transformation. For it was the factory system that changed the ways in which labour was organised, substituting homogeneous work for heterogeneous work. The worker not only had to acquire the new skills, but also had to be willing to work in a new way, where the control of the period of work and the execution of work were increasingly in the hands of the employer. With the continuing

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23 In 1843 there were a number of references in the report from the *Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* to the poor state of agricultural workers' housing. In fact, Professor Burnett has suggested that the agricultural worker was almost certainly the worst housed among fully employed workers. Rural children suffered accordingly, and probably only a life lived in the fresh air away from home prevented rural death rates from rivalling the urban rates (Burnett, 1980).

switch to the new methods of factory manufacturing, old skills and knowledge became redundant and traditional income differentials disappeared. Social and working relationships also became depersonalised as children became more removed from the occupational supervision of their parents. The rhythm of the seasons was supplanted by the rhythm of the machine and the clock imposed a new order upon daily life.

The social and economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution not only helped to create a new rich but it also helped to create a new poor. It was an 'age of investment', with the rising National Income being absorbed into more factories, machines, buildings, docks and railways instead of improving the wellbeing of the poor. As industry grew it brought into existence a new labour force, larger in numbers, more regular in its working habits and more directly disciplined than either agricultural workers or skilled artisans ever had been before. While it is difficult to generalise about working conditions or standards of living, there were certain generalising tendencies in the new industrial society that contrasted sharply with the agricultural and mercantile society that had preceded it (Briggs, 1959b:57). The contrast was not between a golden age and an age of slavery, but one that involved social disorganisation as well as economic progress.

It was the expansion of factory production that made child employment such a controversial issue in the first half of the nineteenth century (Horn, 1994:15). The factories brought so many child workers under one roof that it became impossible for one not to notice the appalling conditions under which they laboured. In rural society, the existence of child labour was taken for granted, often unseen in the isolated cottages and workshops. Although 'child labour was not the invention of the Industrial Revolution, the changes that it inaugurated ensured that for the first time, children were important factors in the economic system' (*ibid*:16).

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Childhood in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain

It is the aim of this chapter to focus on some of the 'concepts' and 'conceptions'[1] of eighteenth and nineteenth century British childhood so that the reader might better understand what is to be explored in the following two sections. The significance of being aware of the gap between concept and conception is to realise, as Archard suggests, 'that there can be and are different conceptions of childhood, and that these different conceptions imply different general values, priorities and assumptions'. After all, he continues, 'the way we see the difference between children and adults owes every thing to what concerns us about being adults in an adult world' (1993:28).

Child labour has always been an important ingredient in Britain's

[1] The 'concept' of childhood requires that children be distinguishable from adults in respect of some unspecified set of attributes. A 'conception' of childhood is a specification of those attributes. In simple terms to have a concept of childhood is to recognise that children differ interestingly from adults; to have a conception of childhood is to have a view of what those interesting differences are. One has the concept of childhood in one's behaviour towards children and the way I talk about them. One has a particular conception of childhood' in so far as one's treatment of children and discourse concerning them reveals a particular view of what specifically distinguishes children from adults.

long and turbulent history. Over the past years confusion about child labour has arisen due to the assumptions and misconceptions made by the writers of English history. Some of these assumptions were that self-employment was better and more secure than waged labour, that child labour was something new, that rural life was naturally better than town life and that the domestic system was preferable to the factory system. In other words, the perpetual myth of the 'golden age', the belief that since working conditions were bad, and since one did not approve of them, the conditions of children in work could not have been worse, and, indeed, must once have been better! But, as Alfred Marshall has pointed out: 'popular history under-rates the hardships of the people before the age of factories' (1920:73).

Hopkins makes much the same analogy in concluding that, there was hardly any noticeable change in working conditions for child workers in the first part of the nineteenth century (1994:37). When conditions finally did start to improve around the 1830's it was largely as a result of middle-class action. These reforms were initially triggered by the despicable state of the pauper apprentices and gradually extended to all factory children. However, despite the fact that much attention was given to urban children the plight of agricultural children was largely ignored until the 1860's. While the earliest reforms were clearly of a philanthropic nature, there was also a widespread belief amongst the ruling classes for social control and the reconciliation of the working classes to their subordinate place in society. Consequently benevolence was utilised – along with whatever amount of coercion was necessary – to establish the institutional framework for social order (Donajgrodzki, 1977b:56).

In the eighteenth century children were legally the property of their parents, being regarded as personal or family assets. They could be sold as climbing boys, hired out as servants, and if convicted of a crime, they could be hanged or transported from the age of seven. In one case described by Bayne-Powell, a woman was sentenced to two years

imprisonment for putting out the eyes of the children[2] who she used when begging about the country (1939:14). At a time when a man might be hanged for petty larceny, a two year sentence for the premeditated blinding of defenceless children would seem to be somewhat derisory. Had, as Pinchbeck & Hewitt point out, it been the eyes of her own children then quite possibly there would have been no notice taken in the matter because parents were entitled – and commonly did – treat their offspring in any cruel and callous way they wished (1973:350). Even the theft of children was a petty offence during the period. The low standing of children and the ambiguity of the law is borne out by the many well authenticated stories of children living in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. In 1802 Elizabeth Salmon was prosecuted for receiving a child's cap, gown and other articles of wearing apparel, knowing them to have be stolen. What the accused had in fact done was to arrange for the abduction of a child and then try to pass it off as her own. But since the law did not take cognisance of the theft of a child, the only charge that could be laid on the kidnapper was for the theft of the clothes it was wearing (Annual Register, 1805:394; quoted in Cunningham, 1991:56). This vagueness in the law was endemic of a general apathy of parents and the community to the suffering and exploitation of children, and was bred, as Pinchbeck and Hewitt suggest, 'of a long familiarity with both' (1973:355). A familiarity bound in the principle of paternal domination which both the state and the church had long supported.

Prior to the passing of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act in 1889[3], the father's authority over his legitimate children was paramount. And while both parents had a moral duty to support their children and

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[2] Children were often traded to beggars to help them excite the generous pity of passers-by. Blind children, it was alleged, excited an even greater degree of open-handedness.

[3] An interesting social comment here is that the concern for the protection of animals predated a similar code for children by more than sixty years. The first legislation to check the cruelty to animals was passed in 1824.

could both be held accountable should they abandon them or allow them to die through lack of proper care, it was the father who had the absolute authority over his children[4]. But in practice this was very much an imperfect commitment because, except for the Poor Laws which laid down the duties of parents and grandparents to maintain their poor progeny[5], there was no officially sanctioned system to enforce these parental obligations. Children were expected to be submissive to parental authority and it was a matter of constant distress to Victorian society that the virtues of obedience and respect seemed to disappear lower down the social scale. When the truth was that they had merely sunk in the morass of domestic poverty (Walvin, 1982:102) and class prejudice.

In 1818 a Wesleyan Methodist Minister wrote of the, 'natural rights' and 'unalienable privileges' of children. These rights were, in his view, 'God given' and consisted of the right to be protected from the evils of danger, to succour and nourishment, to tuition in the duties and obligations of life, and to be instructed in religion (Martin, T. 1818. *The Sunday School*; quoted in Kessen, 1965:39-41). Cunningham believed that by emphasising these rights, he was by implication, casting doubt on the incontestable right of parental authority while at the same time suggesting that some parents were not giving their children their 'God given' rights (1991:87).

But the law remained powerless to protect these unfortunate children against the exploitation, abuse and neglect of their parents. And irrespective of who they were, what they did or even what they thought, the mere fact that they were children set them ideologically apart as a category of people and excluded them from being looked upon as being of

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[4] A mother had no rights over her children during the lifetime of the father, nor was her position improved after his death, since a father had the right to appoint a testamentary guardian, who on the death of the father took priority over the mother. In fact the rights of the father as against the mother were so absolute that the courts did not have the power to grant the rights of access to a mother whose husband had not granted it himself first (Pinchbeck & Hewitt, 1973:362-63).

[5] The poor laws gave the overseerers the right to apprentice poor children so that they might learn a trade and hence be able to support themselves as adults.

any significance. The justification for all this, it was said, was the belief that children were evil by nature, and their wicked propensities needed to be checked. To interfere with parental authority would be to undermine family stability, and indeed to oppose the will of God. Therefore any cruelty imposed upon children employed in agriculture, industry and domestic service was merely a reflection of the brutality of life outside, both generally and in the home.

To a large extent, eighteenth century society saw social order in much the same way as did Durkheim[6], attainable only through the moralisation of the poor. Corporal punishment of Victorian children was, as Walvin notes, 'often rooted on [the assumption] that obedience was the prime virtue to be encouraged among the young' (1982:47). The belief that social order was intimately linked with morality also meant that the church was a crucial agency for social control (Donajgrodzki, 1977a:16). Many of the clergy were well aware of the practical advantages of their doctrines – the most important being the need to get manual work done and of the danger of educating children above their station in life (Hart, 1997:110). The Puritan conception of childhood as being inherently sinful dominated late eighteenth and early nineteenth century thinking and there was a consequent need to curb and control youthful high spirits. Idleness was therefore equated with moral weakness, and children had to be trained so as to ensure that the correct values and beliefs were absorbed.

Concern about the idleness of poor children during this period was obsessive. In London, for example, a one Thomas Simons bemoaned the effects of idleness 'amongst the inferior ranks ... man untaught and accustomed to idleness,' he wrote 'will never become a useful citizen'

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[6] Durkheim proposed that religious beliefs and rituals functioned to integrate people in groups and to maintain the smooth functioning of societies. He was also concerned with the basis of social stability, the common values shared by a society, such as morality and religion. In his view, these values, or the collective conscience, are the cohesive bonds that hold the social order together. A breakdown of these values, he believed, leads to a loss of social stability in society (see Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* 1925).

(Simons, *A Letter to Every Housekeeper in London, on Behalf of Parochial Schools*, 1792; quoted in Cunningham, 1991:23). The same fixated belief was also evident in the rural areas where the agrarian revolution had reduced the need for child labour. In 1837 the Bishop of Oxford claimed there was 'perhaps too much outcry against children being taken from schools early to work on farms' adding that they 'did not want everybody to be learned men, or to make everybody unfit for following the plough' (Horn, 1994:10-11).

It is patently clear from these and many other similar accounts of the period that the need for the children of the lower orders to work was commonly accepted as a natural and necessary function of life. In an age of imperialism and prejudice, any representation of children of the lower classes was prone to lead to polices that emphasised their subordination. Even when factory and mining legislation was first introduced in the early part of the nineteenth century it was designed to regulate and not to prohibit child labour. Nor were educational clauses of the 1833 Factory Act[7] conceived in the spirit of true altruism but were interwoven with the supply of young workers and the demands of industry. And as Rose points out, the early motives for the schooling laws was not to broaden children's minds but to 'tame' them as child workers and to make them more tractable in their place of work (Rose, 1991:6).

Around about the beginning of the nineteenth century the Puritan ethic to childhood was being challenged by the followers of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In their view childhood was a separate and distinct stage of life, with its own intrinsic worth. To Rousseau and the supporters of this new ideology, children are not evil by nature. Instead, they stressed the natural goodness and innocence of the

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[7] One of the provisions of the 1833 Factory Act which also excluded children under nine years of age from all textile mills with the exception of silk mills, was that children between the ages of nine and thirteen years were required to have two hours schooling a day and to produce a voucher proving that this had been done. This was later extended in the Act of 1844 to a definite period of three hours daily.

young and the loss of these qualities in adult life[8]. Furthermore, while children were naturally dependent on the nurturance and guidance of their parents, their dependent status was not a matter of being but rather of condition. And as Kessen points out 'the child engages his environment, using it to suit his interests. He fits his abilities to the world in play and in the solving of problems, not as a passive recipient of a tutors' instruction ... but as a busy, testing, motivated explorer. Knowledge is not an invention of adults, poured into willing or unwilling vessels; it is the joint construction of the child in nature and the natural world' (1965:75).

To some degree, the influence of Rousseau did lead to children being valued for their own sake and it did provide the foundation for reform by those seeking to improve the working conditions of chimney sweeps and pauper apprentices (Horn, 1994:11). However, along with the resurgence of evangelical opinion in the early nineteenth century there came a renewed 'intensification of adult demands for obedience and conformity' of the young (Pollock, 1998:10) and this meant Rousseau's influence, in the main, proved to be unsuccessful.

Rousseau's ideals on childhood were, however, taken up by the English Romantics, notably Blake, Wordsworth and Browning who also saw the child as a creature of natural innocence (Walvin, 1982:46). William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) provided the first examples of literature concerned with the essential goodness of children in the spirit of Rousseau's educational philosophy. In a *Voice from the Factories* Wordsworth saw childhood as a lost Eden:

> When fallen man from paradise was driven
> Forth to a world of labour, death, and care;

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[8] Rousseau's ideas on childhood are best expressed in his novel *Émile* (1762), in which he pointed out that the mind of a child was not simply the mind of an adult in miniature and that it must be considered on its own terms. Rousseau's views were in fact similar to those of Plato given the fact that both believed children should be free to express their energies in order to develop their special talents. Normal development, they both concluded. occurs best in a non-restrictive and supportive environment. Similar concepts are popular today.

Still, of his native Eden, bounteous Heaven
Resolved one brief memorial to spare,
And gave his offspring an imperfect share
Of the lost happiness, amid decay;
Making their first approach to life seem fair,
And giving, for the Eden past away,
Childhood, the weary life's long happy holiday.
(Poetic Works of William Wordsworth v.5. P.274).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's well-known work *The Cry of the Children*, is but another example of how verse helped to awaken Britain's sleeping conscience. The work of the Romantics deeply influenced other nineteenth-century authors and the most important diffusion of the romantic view of childhood came through the novels of the 1840's, 50's and 60's[9]. These novels were written predominately by middle-class authors and, as Jefferson suggests, were a sort of social propaganda directed at the reader with the purpose of changing attitudes and reforming practices (1972:189). The images of deprivation and cruelty suffered by children in works such as; Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong* (1840), Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845), Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley* (1849), Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854), and Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863), all in their own way highlighted the impact and evil effects of child labour.

Each and every one of these novelists shared the view that the policy of *laissez-faire* encouraged by classical economists such as Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo and Nassau Senior[10] were responsible for the wretchedness and despair of the children they immortalised in their novels. In *Hard Times* for example, Charles Dickens satirised the

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9 Victorians liked to read about, reflect upon, and exclaim over child victims. Like Berry suggests, they wept over Little Nell and identified with Jane Eyre, who at one point calls herself a "pariah of the nursery." Victorians were also self-righteously indignant about child labour and reproduced the story of the child victim as a kind of originating welfare story that promoted state intervention. But Berry continues, they were also capable of using the child victim to explore the possibility, that the home and the state were themselves prisons (1999:166).

10 The influence of the political economists made itself felt in Malthus's theory of population and was reinforced by Ricardo's theory of wages which intimated that the labourer's income could not rise above subsistence level, except locally and for short periods (Inglis, 1971:53).

manufacturers of 'Coketown' who regarded their property rights as far more sacred than the preservation of human health or life, and who were 'ruined' every time restrictive legislation was proposed, periodically threatening to 'pitch their property into the Atlantic' rather than submit to any restriction. (Trattner, 1970:28). But by the time the works of these writers were published, the working conditions of children were already beginning to change. The 1832 Reform Act had by then reassigned political power from the landowning aristocrats to the middle classes, while under the provisions of the 1833 Factory Act children were gradually being removed from the factories and beginning to attend school. Nonetheless the very fact that these novels were even written and so widely read reveals that there was a growing awareness of the suffering of working children amongst the middle class society.

Widespread concern for child labour did not surface in Britain until the early 1830's, and when it did it coincided with similar concerns about slavery and the assertion of rights of all freeborn Englishmen against the tyranny of unprincipled employers (Cunningham, 1991:95-96). The language of all three, Cunningham concludes, 'intermeshed, and existed in a dynamic relationship to each other.' The freeborn Englishman looked towards independence in employment and political rights within the state. The Negro slave, it was hoped, was to be freed for waged labour. While the child worker needed to be liberated from the waged labour that the others sought as their right (ibid:96). The newfound concern for working children was not so much a consequence of any intense change in the attitudes towards children, but was instead the product of philanthropic action, backed with a concern for social control during a period that saw unprecedented social change (Hopkins, 1994:6). The soaring population together with rapid industrialisation and urbanisation had placed huge demands on the countries' infrastructure and resources. Collectively these demands provided an explosive situation that some feared might end in rebellion.

While the conditions of working children were at the heart of the struggle for factory reform, this was overwhelmed by factional issues that focused on an emerging working class political presence. The 'mill-oracy' of the new industrial middle class, along with their doctrine of *laissez-faire*[11] were, as James Walvin stated, 'sharply opposed to the notion of state intervention in the impersonal, and inhuman march of economic utility. They were,' he continues, 'quite happy to see the new industrial labour force, of whom children were the most exposed, become the sacrificial offering to the gods of economic progress' (1982:63). As the population increased the law courts became increasingly more obsolete and defective. But instead of reforming the system, the governing class contented itself with adding new felonies and making the penal law more savage.

Britain survived these demands by adjusting to these forces and with the application of pragmatic solutions to problems as they arose, choosing to treat the symptoms instead of trying to cure the disease. Reform was slow, piecemeal, and came in a variety of forms. Sometimes it was in the form of traditional Christian charity or compassion while on other occasions it was simply brought about by a middle-class concern for self-preservation. Nonetheless, as Horn points out, the primary importance of the factory reform movement was the way it gradually encouraged society to accept that the state had a responsibility to prescribe minimum conditions of existence for the most vulnerable sectors of the population (1994:62). While the scope of the 1833 Factory Act was limited to certain textile trades and its enforcement was far from perfect, its implications were, in the long run, crucial to all subsequent child legislation. Its greatest significance, as far as child labour was concerned, was that childhood finally had a definition with respect to age. It was this Act,

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[11] While the political economists were promoting their theories of the advantages of *laissez-faire* and the freedom of contract between employers and employed, the men who were brought face to face with the true conditions of their employment recognised that there was no such thing as freedom of contract (Hutchins & Harrison, 1911:49-50).

perhaps more than any other, that established the bench mark from which subsequent legislation to further improve the conditions of child workers could be based.

One of the most remarkable features of the 1830's and 1840's was that childhood was finally being recognised and valued as a distinct stage in life. Happiness, it was said, should encompass all children and not merely the wealthy. Once this had been acknowledged it soon became apparent that children should not work but should occupy their time with play and schooling. The difficulty in the past had been that, despite all the rhetoric, there was never a universal definition as to when childhood ended. Moreover it was not until the end of the 1840's that it became generally accepted that childhood ended at the age fourteen[12], beyond which a person was considered to be an adult and therefore beyond any need for legal protection. Reports from the government inspectors recruited under the provisions of the 1833 Factory Act facilitated a hastened bureaucratic involvement in the promotion of measures deemed necessary to protect the youngest and most vulnerable members of the labour force (Horn, 1994:54).

When Thomas Bailey demanded 'a full restitution of the rights of humanity to the long oppressed and neglected children of the poor in 1832'[13] part of that restitution consisted of allowing their voices to be heard. Accordingly children were allowed to testify before select committees regarding the cruelties perpetrated upon them. It was also the first time that the treatment of working children had been the subject of any comprehensive examination by the ruling classes. Most of the commissioners, Hopkins suggests, would presumably have seen and heard what they expected to see and hear, with the one important

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12 The age of sexual consent in England still remained at twelve and was to remain so until 1871 when it was raised to thirteen. It was not until 1929 that it was raised to sixteen.

13 See *The Justice, Humanity and Policy of Restricting the Hours of Children in the Mills and Factories of the United Kingdom* (1833:20); cited in Cunningham 1991:92.

qualification that it was now judged in the light of the newer sensibility informed by newly acquired knowledge of the horrors of the factory system. It was this knowledge that facilitated the new standards by which conditions and treatment of all working children were to be assessed (1994:38-38). Fortunately these new standards were to come when the increasing wealth and economic capacity of the nation would allow them to be imposed.

As Hopkins notes, Keynes is supposed to have said that England had Shakespeare when she could afford him. This was, he suggests, a provocative and over-simplified way of putting it, but it has similarly been argued that England abolished child labour when it became economically possible to do so (1994:37-38). Economist Clarke Nardinelli clearly believes that child labour ended because of technological changes and the increased competitiveness of the labour market. As working class wages rose, child labour declined, and far from being 'the source of their enslavement,' their labour, in the long run became 'the source of their liberation' (1990,102). The passing of the child labour legislation may, according to Nardinelli, well have signalled that child labour was becoming less important or that close substitutes had become available (ibid:154).

Without doubt, the improved living standards enjoyed by the working classes in the mid-nineteenth century would have helped to shift public opinion and to convince the politicians that legislative reform would be effective. But, to suggest that there was any direct and immediate connection between the growth, prosperity and the ending of child labour – as Nardinelli does – would be to ignore the mounting furore about child labour that took place in the 1830's and 40's together with the important role played by the humanitarian movement. The indignation, investigation and legislation of the period bears witness to the fact that to many educated middle and upper class Victorians, child labour was seen as an evil to be remedied (Hartwell, 1971:398). What had been tolerable in the

eighteenth century had, by the 1830's, become intolerable. This was further evidence of the growing humanitarianism of the period as well as the representation of an affirmation of human rights by the workers themselves. The irony in this shift of thinking was that while humanitarian and legislative pressure directly benefited the child workers, it would have also increased the social-overhead cost of industry, driving out of business those employers whose inefficiency had been formerly protected by the exploitation of children (ibid, 324). Prior to this even the most benevolent employer was limited to what he could offer his employees, for without legislative protection he would not be able to stand against the competition of his less feeling rival.

The transformation in the lives of working children that took place between the end of eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century was shaped by various factors that are not always easy to identify. Undeniably the economic and technical changes of the time were important but more significant was the change in the way people thought about their children. Whilst the lawmakers were instrumental in this transformation, their actions were no more than a reflection of shifting values of society. To a large extent, the shifting attitude towards children and work were part of an overall increase in sensitivity towards the young and an expression of the change from the concept of them simply being miniature adults to where they were seen as a distinct group in need of individual care and protection (Walvin, 1982:194). The law was simply an extension of this change in outlook and the lawmakers were simply acting in response to an emerging consensus that children were in need of legal protection. Humanitarian action was therefore crucial as a way towards change and it was only due to the efforts of people like Hanway and Shaftsbury that necessary compassion and commitment were added to the rather detached and undiscriminating approach of government procedure. These changes were not only directed towards children but were part of a new civilised sensibility that denounced and eventually had banned many other forms of uncivil behaviour.

There are two important facts that are worthy of note here. The firstly early instances of this new civilised sensibility were not directed at children at all. The first bill against the cruelty of horses and cattle, for example, was passed in 1823, slavery was abolished 1833, the transportation of convicts suspended in 1846 and public executions were ceased in 1856. Secondly very little progress was made in improving conditions for working children until the Reform Act was passed in 1832 and all classes of society[14] were able to participate in a system of collective self management. While the 1833 Factory Act has always been acknowledged as a turning point in child welfare, it wasn't until 1889 that the first Cruelty to Children Act was passed into Law. Clearly then, children's interests were of low priority in the early nineteenth century and it took another half century and a succession of legislation before children began to enjoy adequate levels of material wellbeing and humane treatment. Part of this triumph was brought about through the gradual elimination of child labour and the introduction of compulsory education[15]. And as Archard suggests, children empowered by knowledge and a sense of their own independence, are more capable of resisting their own exploitation (1993:169).

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[14] Women were not included this process. They were not enfranchised by parliament until 1918 and then it was only to women householders, householders' wives, and women university graduates over 30 years of age. It wasn't until 1928 that Parliament lowered the voting age of women to 21 giving them complete political equality with men.

[15] Perhaps the most important aspect of factory reform was the fact that young children had more time to go to school, and by the Education Acts of 1876 and 1880 school attendance became compulsory.

6

The Rural Working Child

This chapter aims to draw attention to the way in which change affected the lives of rural children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And while some people may want to look back at country living before enclosures as a supposedly more harmonious period or golden age, this was in actual fact, never a reality. If that period had about it some sort of gilded patina it was because its problems were less great and less difficult to solve. However, the effects of rural reform inevitably had many social and economic implications not least of which was the increasing need for the waged labour of children.

In early nineteenth century Britain, childhood was accepted as a time for preparation into habits of work. For the more privileged classes this meant an emphasis on education and the 'culture of the mind', while for the lower orders, it simply meant early employment – paid or unpaid[1]. Long before the Industrial Revolution got underway in the late eighteenth

[1] Such views were based on a widely held belief that individuals should be encouraged to remain in their 'proper stations' in life and although, as Cunningham (1991) suggests, this might have involved some schooling for the lower classes, it a was nonetheless, a function of the preparation of the child for a predestined future life.

century, children were considered to be an intrinsic part of the English agricultural and industrial economy – Locke even suggested that they should begin work at three. While the work performed by these children seems by contemporary standards to have been arduous, it at least had a certain amount of variety and was more often than not carried out within the family economy and under parental supervision. Certainly there were some children – particularly the climbing boys and hurryers – who were worse off than most, but it would be wrong to assume that the lives of all working children was a horrifying experience.

When seen in perspective, child employment, whether it be in agriculture, industry, trade, or service, was much the same as it was for adults with long hours often under wretched conditions, and accompanied from time to time by maltreatment from their employers. The active participation of children within the household economy during this period was not only economically acceptable, it was a legitimate social practice and, as Zelizer (1985), points out, a 'morally righteous institution.' This situation only began to change when, in the early part of industrialisation, it was recognised that certain distinctions could be made between rural and urban, and between agriculture and manufacturing. As Hugh Cunningham points out, 'rural and agricultural children of the poor still had an existence and still constituted a problem but' he adds, 'they gained far less attention than those living and working in an urban environment' (1991:4). Sydney Pollard also points out that prior to industrialisation 'children were employed perhaps even more widely, though usually far less intensively' (1978:123). What the Industrial Revolution did was simply increase and regularise their work and it did so both in the factory and in the home. Consequently, for the first half of the nineteenth century the discourse about the children of the poor was to become a discourse about children at work. It was this that eventually led to major and irreversible changes in the representation of childhood.

Prior to industrialisation there was always work for rural children –

especially at harvest time – and even in the quieter periods there were numerous chores that needed to be done. For centuries, agriculture had been the largest single occupation, and in 1801 it still employed thirty-one per cent of the labour force (Hopkins, 1994:11). Given the importance of this occupation and the traditional belief that children should be encouraged to remain in their 'proper stations' in life it is understandable that they would be expected to help their parents and older siblings in the fields. Tending the animals, and driving them to fresh grazing, for example, was something that could quite easily be accomplished by a child of seven or eight, while bird scaring or foraging for food or fuel done by even younger children.

2. Young children bird scaring (Mansell Collection).

By the age of ten a boy might be strong enough to lead a horse at the plough and by eleven he most likely would be capable to plough the fields on his own. Hours could be long and during the spring sowing or at harvest time children would often be expected to work from dawn until dusk alongside their parents. But in the winter there was very little that

could be done except for jobs such as turnip lifting – a gruelling task if the ground was frozen. Girls undertook a lot of farm work too, although there was often less work available for girls than there was for boys. Nevertheless, the work that they did undertake was no less severe than it was for boys. When they were not employed in farm work young girls were often employed full-time in household duties, thereby releasing older family members for other work (Jitteringham, 1975). But despite the fact that the work was at times monotonous and often arduous most children did not, according to Hopkins, seem to have suffered from the nature of their agricultural employment (1994:13).

There was however, one form of agricultural employment where child workers did suffer considerably. This was the gang system, where migratory gangs of young women and children, – some as young as four or five (Hopkins, 1994:12 & Horn, 1994:26) – were brought from the villages and market towns to work in the fields[2]. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, gangs were employed to bring many hundreds of acres of land into production. Much of this new land was located many miles from any existing sources of labour and farmers, preferring not to hire permanent labour – which would also have entailed building cottages to house them – could get the work done far quicker and cheaper by recruiting gang labourers. Some farmers organised their own gangs, recruiting women and children from the nearest village to work for a few days on the farm (Patrick, 1986:22). While others would use 'public gangs' organised by 'gang masters', who recruited anything between ten and forty women and children and then contracted their labour with the farmer for specific work on his farm. Much of the work was exhausting and the younger children may have earned no more than three or four pence for a day's labour (Horn, 1994:26). One major objection to the system was that the children were often required to walk some distance to

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[2] It was in East Anglia that the exploitation of children probably reached a peak, particularly in the fens and marshlands where steam pumping engines were used to drain what was up till then an intractable wetland.

their work – perhaps five miles or more – and if the job was rained off they received nothing. But as mechanisation, enclosure and improved efficiency increased the seasonal aspect of farm work, farmers began to rely more and more on casual labour.

3. Child workers in an agricultural gang (Radio Times Hulton Picture Library).

In conjunction with this was the increasing level of rural poverty and displacement which created a valuable supply of needy workers (MacRaild & Martin, 2000:76-77). The painful truth about this system was first revealed by a government committee on Agriculture in 1836, where it

was shown that the abolition of the Speenhamland system[3] and the introduction of the new Poor Law had been instrumental in the expansion of this type of child labour (Hammond & Hammond, 1923:90). Slowly, the worst abuses were brought under control, first by the Gangs Act of 1867[4] and then by the means of the Agricultural Children's Act of 1873[5]. But it was not until the compulsory provisions of the 1880 Education Act that any palpable reduction in the employment of children in agriculture took place.

But neither agricultural children's legislation nor education laws could on their own protect rural children from exploitation. Poverty and the semi-feudal relationship between farmer and farmhand, for example, ensured that the employee's children would always be available for work when required (Rose 1991:33: Horn, 1994:24). It was as if there was also no sense of a national labour for children and the notion that they might be able to find employment elsewhere was unthinkable. 'The poorly-paid rural workers remained in their native villages, anchored there by early marriage and family ties, by their claim to Parish relief, by ignorance, and by the lack of means of moving' (Hammond & Hammond, 1978:xiii). Children were also completely immobile, dependent only on whatever work was available within daily walking distance. Consequently the child labour market, as well as being seasonal, was also highly localised, with a child's employment prospects varying from one locale to another. But in

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3 In a major work initiative begun in the late 1700s, a group of local justices in Berkshire assigned relief recipients to work at private farms and businesses. They were then offered wage supplements pegged to the price of bread and the size of a worker's family. This plan was rapidly adopted by local governments in other regions and became known as the *Speenhamland System,* after the British parish in which it was pioneered

4 The Agricultural Gangs Act 1867 sought to eliminate unsuitable gang-masters by setting up a licensing system. It also prohibited the employment of all children under the age of eight, and barred male and female workers being in the same gang. Females also had to be supervised by a gang mistress. Private gangs were left unregulated.

5 The Agricultural Children's Act, 1873 prohibited the employment of children generally in agriculture under eight, and set the minimum age for public gangs at ten. Children between eight and twelve could be employed only if they attended school part-time or if they had reached a prescribed standard before twelve, they could start full-time work. The Act also allowed for children over eight to work full-time during harvesting and school holidays.

the long run it was technological and structural change, that did the most to reduce the demand for child labour in agriculture. With the onslaught of the agrarian revolution and a newly expanded canal system[6] the employment prospects of children were soon being compromised. The expansion of the major towns, particularly London and those in the industrial centres of the North, created huge markets for farm produce that was able to be met with the use of the new and more efficient agricultural practices. Over time, this would lead to a measure of regional specialisation; with grain production the prerogative of East Anglia and Essex, while in Kent, hop gardens, orchards and market gardens flourished, and in the West Country, cider was widely produced. A similar specialisation emerged among livestock farmers with cattle raised in Scotland, being fed on Norfolk meadowland before being sent to market in London while animals bred in South Wales were fattened on the Essex marshes. Cheshire and parts of Wiltshire, Dorset, Suffolk and the Vale of Pickering in Yorkshire concentrated on dairy farming, while geese and capons were produced in Sussex and Surrey and turkeys and geese reached the capital from Norfolk and Suffolk (Horn, 1987:4). These developments inevitably had their social implications, threatening what some observers felt were the simpler verities of country living and the social cohesiveness which village life seemed to offer (ibid:11). Land enclosures, the Corn Law and a general increase in the population were to exacerbate the problem. Then after two bad harvests the first in 1838 and then again in 1839 the country entered the deepest depression of the century (Thames, 1972:21). The resulting decline in the conditions of employment and the variations of the price and availability of food further impacted on living standards. After surveying the standard of living of the rural poor over this period one leading authority summarised:

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6 The agricultural writer and improver, Arthur Young, commented upon the significance of this 'transport revolution' as early as 1768, river and canal boats as well as coastal shipping played a key part in the opening up the countryside. It was not until the mid 1840's that the development of the railway system began to challenge the pre-eminence of these earlier forms of transportation and to influence not only the movement of goods but the movement of people too.

> For the majority of the working class the historical reality was that they had to endure almost a century of hard toil with little or no advance from a low base before they really began to share in any of the benefits of the economic transformation they had helped to create (Feinstein, 1998:652).

While the wages that children earned from agricultural employment was always seen as a welcome addition to the family economy, it was always, in the main, sporadic and temporary. As a result, when work was not available on the land, the tiny hands of children were turned instead to work in the home or small workshops and as Walvin points out, many of the activities that were regarded as industrial where in fact, were conducted in small units and often in a rural setting (1982:76). The ages at which children were employed[7] in these cottage industries differed little to the ages of agricultural workers, and children as young as three or four could at times, be found working alongside their mother or older siblings. Two of the most common activities were straw plaiting and lace making. Straw plaiting for example, was considered a lifelong occupation and special trade schools[8] were set up where straw plaiting could be taught. To be a good plaiter, it was believed that a child should start young[9] and according to Samuel (1975:119), children of three or four years of age were not considered too young. Education in these schools was abysmal and very few plait schools ever attempted to instruct their pupils beyond that relating to the trade itself. Children were usually set a quota of so many yards of straw and were then frequently required to remain at school

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[7] In one extreme case reported to the Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture in 1843, an infant under two years old was discovered regularly employed in the domestic machine lace industry (Hopkins, 1994:21).

[8] These institutions hardly warranted the name 'school', officially they were established to teach children numeracy and literacy as well as a trade but they varied in quality from the well organised to the makeshift. For the most part they were set up merely to comply with government regulations, i.e. the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act (1802.) and then later, the Factory Acts of 1819,1825,1830,and 1831. However, these Acts were poorly enforced and it was not until 1867 when the Workshop Regulations Act was passed that the situation improved.

[9] Horn maintains that in 1851, more than sixteen per cent of Bedfordshire children aged between five and nine and more than fifty per cent of those aged between ten and twelve were engaged in the straw plaiting industry (1994:18) and in certain plait schools infants as young as two years old were employed, clipping off the loose ends of straw from the plait (1974:106),

until their quota was met. Edwin Grey claimed to have known 'workers whose finger become quite sore and bleeding through working so hard to get the required yards of plait finished' (1935:72). Even so, in Hertfordshire, Grey wrote, 'The cottage industry of straw plaiting played a very important part in village life' (ibid:68-69) and that the earnings of a skilled plaiter — no matter what age – was a significant and welcomed contribution to the family economy'.

The lace making industry was relatively more sophisticated and children would work principally, winding bobbins or threading. Although simple lace finishing needed only a needle dexterity and keen eyesight, the lace makers, like their straw plaiting counterparts, believed that children should begin to learn the craft early consequently five years old – sometimes even younger – would not be unusual. Lace making was also learnt in schools where the hand manufacture of lace was carried out in a similar manner to that of plaiting. Most lace school pupils paid a tuition fee and, according to Horn, this might be as much as a shilling a week dropping to six pence a week, depending on the proficiency of the child and therefore the amount of instruction required. The work was hard, the hours long[10] and discipline was strictly maintained. It was also maintained, that a lace-mistress would also insist that the necks and arms of their pupils be kept bare so that they could be smacked more effectively (1974:99). Lace of course, is an artefact of fashion and with the social and economic changes of the 19th century there was a lessening of the general enthusiasm for lace – it had all but disappeared from men's clothing. By mid-century it came into fashion again in women's clothing. But by this time, machine-made bobbin mesh had almost completely replaced handmade lace mesh. The Leavers machine – invented in 1813 in England by John Leavers – was also in general use for manufacturing

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[10] According to the Children's Employment Commission, children aged from five to six worked up to eight hours a day while twelve to fifteen year olds might work as much as fourteen hours a day – although in most places it was ten hours. Above the age of fifteen children were considered old enough to work at home in their cottages along with other adult lace-makers (Horn, 1974:98).

patterned laces although handmade lace still had more prestige for garments. But despite the mechanisation of lace production large numbers of children were still being employed in subsidiary processes, both in and out of the factory (Hammond & Hammond, 1970:254). By the time the Lace Act was passed in 1861 the industry was already in decline.

Besides the more common activities of straw plaiting and lace making children were employed in woodworking, basket making, and tailoring. In other domestic and workshop industries such as glove-making or metal-working the demand for the finished product was still sufficiently buoyant in the mid-nineteenth century to make the use of child labour worthwhile. Glove-making, for example was in many ways similar to straw plaiting and lace-making, except that it was more common for the children to work at home with their mothers rather than attend a formal glove making school. Girls usually entered this occupation at the age of ten and then often worked twelve hour days for a weekly wage of about two shillings and six pence. Horn, (1974:110) notes that in Somerset, girls would often commence work at the age of seven or eight and sometimes even earlier. Many of the metal working trades were small scale enterprises, operating in poorly equipped, ill-lit, dirty, and poorly ventilated workshops. In the case of nailing, forges were attached to workers' cottages where children as young as five years of age were put to work alongside their parents and older siblings. Without doubt, conditions for children working in these workshops would vary considerably from one work place to another and depending on the type of product being made. But by and large most workshops varied only in the degree of their wretchedness, with some being more or less wretched than others. It was not until the 1860's and the appointment of a second Children's Employment Commission[11] that the conditions of employment

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11 The first Children Employment Commission was established in 1840 to enquire into the condition of children employed in mines and other industries that were outside the scope of the Factory Acts. When their first report appeared in May 1842 it was to shock both the humanity and the delicacy of Victorian Britain by the picture it gave of the social conditions of the coalfields.

of children in trades not already covered by legislation that things began to improve. This Commission sat for five years issuing a series of striking reports, after which legislation was passed to correct the evils of child labour. The most significant was the 1867 Workshops Regulation Act which covered manufacturing units employing fewer than the previous minimum of fifty people.

But despite the outrage and dismay demonstrated by society towards the distressing working conditions of so many children, there was never any commission inquiry into the working conditions of those employed in domestic service – most of whom were both young and female[12]. To do so it seems, would have been inconsistent with Victorian middle-class attitudes towards female duties and also the fact that the number of its servants was a measure of the social position of the household. Any inquiry into this area of employment would, according to Samuel, 'have been viewed as an attack questioning of the accepted pattern of social and sexual differences – inequalities – that were inherent to that society and time, and upon which the entire social order was based (1975:132). By the mid-nineteenth century, domestic service employed more women and girls than any other single occupation and was also, according to Horn, 'the main employment outlet for country girls ...once they had reached the age of eleven or thereabouts' (1974:114). The hours they worked were often long and demanding while the accommodation provided was frequently substandard. Good food however, was often plentiful and probably the one and only real compensation for the miserably low wages, long hours and the isolation from their families that they endured. Workhouse orphans were the most vulnerable group and the Poor Law Authorities were only too happy to place girls in service and get them off their hands. According to Rose, in 1860 there were an estimated forty-thousand single-servant households,

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[12] Boys also went into service; although not in the same numbers as did girls. They were usually employed in the larger homes as gardeners, or pageboys to carry coal, clean boots and a host of other menial tasks.

many of whose employees came from the workhouse (Rose, 1991:42). Walvin offers similar evidence, citing the 1851 census which showed one in every nine females over the age of ten worked as servant (1982:70). However, despite the reality of their situation these young girls often viewed the prospect of service with a certain fatalism or simply as a hated inevitability (ibid:45).

Another, although somewhat less significant, outlet for child labour lay in the form of an apprenticeship[13] in one of the rural crafts. Starting at the age thirteen or fourteen, it was in the major crafts of smithing, wheel-wrighting, saddle-making, tailoring, and shoemaking where most boys were normally apprenticed. The premiums required to enter a trade varied greatly and were normally far too high for most agricultural labourers[14], and therefore most apprentices were the sons of artisans and tradespeople. Apprentices were usually paid a small wage that would increase as the boy gained experience but for the first year or so it was far often not enough or too small to support them. Horn cites one example where a fourteen year old boy – who did not live in – was paid five shillings a week in the first year as an apprentice. Previously, when he was only twelve, he had been paid as much as six shillings a week by a local farmer simply to scare birds, spread muck or pick up stones. Clearly then, 'the benefits which would accrue to the craftsman were, essentially long term ones' (Horn, 1974:124-25).

On the more ominous side however, there were the parish apprentices who were often bound out to farmers from the age of eight.

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13 The system of apprenticeship had its origins in the medieval craft guilds and had industrial, vocational and disciplinary characteristics. In its ideal form a master of a trade contracted to teach the apprentice the techniques of the particular skill, and to see to his moral and physical welfare, in return for a premium and the obedience and labour of the youth. Whatever the gap between ideal and reality in earlier ages – and this was probably large – the enshrinement of economic liberalism and the coming of industrialisation saw a widespread abandonment of this method of trade teaching.

14 Through a policy that dated back to the sixteenth century charitable funds were available in certain parishes to help poor families secure an apprenticeships for their children and when this was not available then the poor law guardians, were on occasion, also able to help.

Under a law enacted in the late seventeenth century pauper and workhouse children could be separated from their parents by parish overseers without consultation and then apprenticed to farmers until their twenty-first birthday – or in the case of girls until they married, if under twenty-one. It was in this way the parish authorities were able to rid themselves of the burden of maintaining them[15], while simultaneously supplying cheap and amenable workers to the farmer. It was mostly due to the fact that the employer owned the child's labour for the full term of apprenticeship that instances of exploitation and abuse occurred. Hopkins is of the opinion that poor law apprentices were essentially in a degraded position who were, according to a 1843 Commissioners report, looked down upon even by the hired servants and 'treated by everybody in a manner corresponding to his situation' (1994:15).

It was partly to remedy this situation that the Health and Morals and Apprentices Act was passed in 1802 and whilst this Act was not specifically aimed at agriculture it has often been incorrectly heralded as the first piece of child labour legislation[16] ever passed in Britain. And although this Act was mainly concerned with parish apprentices, it was also the first piece of legislation to recognise childhood as a special state in which healthy, physical and moral growth depended upon a healthy environment without which the whole of society would suffer. New attitudes towards the apprenticing of pauper children then became more noticeable especially when the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act reduced parish relief payments to the needy. The old locally administered system undoubtedly did have its flaws and at times could be cruel but as Horrell,

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15 The English system of relief prior to 1834 was unique in terms of its funding, open-handedness and certainty. Under a law that had been in existence since the reign of Elizabeth I, each parish was required to levy rates on all occupiers of property in order to care for its poor.

16 The first piece of child labour legislation ever passed in Britain was The Better Regulation of Chimney Sweepers and their Apprentices Act in 1788. This Act barred the use of children under the age of eight and required every climbing boy to be washed at least once a week and not be compelled to climb a chimney on fire. Although without any measures in place to enforce its conditions it mostly ignored both the employers and the general public.

Humphries and Vorth recently pointed out, it was able to provide a lifeline back to the world of work and respectability[17] (2001:363). The Hammonds wrote of the history of the Poor Law between 1834 and 1847 as being 'the history of an experiment of centralised administration' (Hammond & Hammond, 1934:97). Nonetheless the Act was a turning point in the management of poor relief and for pauper children its fundamental policy seems to have been to keep them in workhouse schools rather than apprentice them to local farmers.

But undoubtedly, it was enclosure that dealt the greatest blow to the lower orders of English society, – the small farmer, the cottager, and the squatter. Because, along with their right to keep even the tiniest piece of property, enclosure destroyed their interest in industry and self respect (Hammond & Hammond, 1978:46). 'To all these three classes their common rights had been worth more than anything they received in return' (ibid:58). In his first volume of *Das Kapital,* Karl Marx drew together the writings of many opponents of enclosure to produce a powerful indictment of agrarian change. In it Marx argued that:

> The spoilation of the Church's property, the fraudulent alienation of the state domains, the theft of the common lands ... all these were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalist agriculture, incorporated the soil into capital, and created for the urban industries the free and rightless proletarians (Marx, 1930).

But the labouring poor lost more than the right to graze their livestock on common land. They also lost the right; to collect fuel from the commons, wastes, and woods; to cut wood for housing, fences and implements; to fish or kill wild fowl; to cut hay in a common meadow and – in many areas – they also lost their right to glean the fields after the harvest. As a direct result of the process of enclosure, many families lost

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[17] On the whole, it was the size of the problem that was of the most concern to the reformers. By 1838 almost half the workhouse population were juveniles, most of them without parents or close relatives. Immigration was also considered as a possible solution to child destitution but despite several attempts to promote it this solution was eventually abandoned.

all the opportunities that they once had for self-sufficiency[18]. The effect of these changes on the rural poor was, as one would expect, disastrous, and there can be little doubt that many families were displaced. To compensate for this loss, the poor – men women and children – were forced to seek waged employment in order to supplement the families' meagre income

Of course other authors have taken quite a different view, and in the language of economic theory maintained that what losses were suffered by the rural poor were more than compensated by increased employment (Howkins, 1993:35). In his celebrated article *Enclosure and Labour Supply in the Agrarian Revolution,* J. D. Chambers wrote, 'One important factor which contributed to the stability of the agrarian population during enclosure was the high level of employment which was maintained ... [and he continued] the cottage owning population seems actually to have increased after enclosure' (1953:319-20). Certainly, the increased acreage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries[19] created an increased demand for agricultural workers but the crucial question here is not that there was an increase in waged labour, but whether or not it was sufficient to compensate the poor for what they had lost through enclosure.

One major loss worth mentioning here, especially because it effected children, was the keeping of their own livestock especially cows – which most of the rural poor did – since the milk they produced provided a valuable supplement to a diet that consisted mainly of bread (Snell,

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[18] Gleaning was an ancient custom that gave labouring families the right to collect the ears of corn that had been missed during harvesting. In the days when farm equipment was crude and inefficient, gleaning could provide a poor family with a valuable quantity of grain that would, in some cases, be enough to supply them with bread for a whole year so providing a vital contribution to the family budget. The Hammonds were able to calculate that that the loss of these rights would have represented to something like six or seven weeks of a labourers' wages (Hammond & Hammond, 1978:67).

[19] The improved farming methods were still labour intensive in the first half of the nineteenth century, steam driven traction engines, for example, were not used in agriculture until 1839.

1985:177-78). Arthur Young estimated that a cow could be worth as much as the wages of a fully employed labourer, and that in the keeping of livestock the poor were able to avoid a dependence on poor relief (Young, 1801; cited in Snell, 1985:177). Greater, albeit less tangible, aspects of this were the loss of self-respect and independence, as these also implied a certain individualism, initiative, and financial security. Nonetheless, one must be careful not to overstate the negative aspects of enclosure. Much of course depended on local conditions, customs and circumstances[20], and these differed, not only from county to county but also from parish to parish along with the supply and demand for labour and the type of agriculture being practiced. Some, of course, being more labour intensive than others. Nor was enclosure the only cause for this change[21], and as Chambers and Mingay have suggested, in some instances, 'enclosure came as the last act of a long-drawn-out drama of rural change, and merely put the *finis* [their emphasis] to the story. In others it introduced, but more often accelerated, a similar story of change' (1968:104).

The one fundamental question that remains to be answered is, did the working conditions of rural children improve or worsen during the first half of the nineteenth century? The general consensus seems to be that, with the two notable exceptions of the gang system and pauper apprenticeship, there was little change either way, at least as far as agricultural children were concerned. Despite the fact that enclosure and the subsequent development of a new English agrarian society changed the way in which many thousands of rural workers lived, children still worked, and still worked from an early age – just as they had done for centuries. The crucial difference here being in the way in which they worked. The effects of technological change and the enclosure of

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20 Even before enclosure many of the rural poor had no rights of common. Only the owners of open-field holdings or certain cottages had the rights to use common land. Most people who made use of common land did so not by right but by custom.

21 The huge population increase of the late eighteenth century flowed on and expanded the labour force in the nineteenth century at a rate faster than agriculture could absorb.

common lands had serious implications on living standards of the rural poor and was to be a key factor in the intensified need for children's wages. The need for a child's income led children to practicing a craft such as straw plaiting and lace making and to leave home early to take up an apprenticeship in one of the rural crafts or as domestic servants. Even those who had combined work on a small plot of land with the pursuit of a trade or craft were increasingly being driven to rely on their trade alone. The parental dependence on the waged labour of their children was to become even more crucial with the decline in family incomes when the New Poor Law was introduced in 1834[22]. Because large families were – as would be expected – more vulnerable they suffered most during this period. Snell cites several examples of this, one being, Edward Pullen, a labourer of Kidford with ten children who earned fifteen shillings a week prior to 1835, this then dropped to just eleven and a half shillings under the new law (1985:126). Many families responded to these changed times by migrating to the urban centres where alternative employment could be found in the mines or manufacturing industries. Despite the shortage of accommodation and high prices in the towns most of these families never returned to their villages. Between 1851 and 1871 the number of agricultural workers fell by more than a quarter of a million, or twenty-two per cent[23] (Chambers & Mingay, 1966:187). But for poor children this simply meant the transfer of their labour from one revolution to another, that is from the agrarian to the industrial.

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22 One of the prime causes of the increase in the gang system was the New Poor Law. Prior to this Act, if any able-bodied man could not maintain his family, the parish assisted him, whereas the new system required that all that could work should support themselves.

23 This reduction in the labour forced many farmers to rely on gangs of women and children. In addition the did more to keep the men on the land by offering them higher wages, better cottages, more allotments and other benefits.

7

The Urban Working Child

This chapter examines what is often thought to be the very essence of the revolutionary change in British industry from about the mid-eighteenth century. In the course of the following hundred years the children, who worked in the textile factories, coal mines and as chimney sweeps gained the unenviable reputation as being the most exploited of all working children. So much so that that its evils are familiar to all even today. This familiarity can make for a false historical perspective, and the erroneous impression that prior to the passing of the factory acts most of the nations children were working, either, in a factory, down a mine or up a chimney. In fact these children formed only a small proportion of the sum total of all children at work (Thompson, 1988:23-25). The significance in their story is not in their numbers but in the particularly harmful nature of their work, in the reform movement that sprung up on their behalf, and in the repercussions this had on other forms child labour.

Britain in the mid-eighteenth century saw the civil engineer emerge as the harbinger of innovation, slayer of tradition and the status quo. And yet while there were many individuals who stood in awe at the new enclaves of mechanisation, few ever wrote at length about the

consequences for the working children. Regardless as to whether or not it was in the workshops of Birmingham or the coal-rich hills of Derbyshire, the longer canals, deeper mines, and stronger machines were all made possible by applied mechanics. The eighteenth-century British civil engineers had therefore become the new priests of industry, and the salvation they offered was dramatically visible everywhere. It was difficult for people to believe that anyone would resist such progress (Appleby et al, 1994:25). But as the techniques of British engineers proliferated and people continued to marvel at this new industrial age, it also became apparent that the division of labour imposed among workers left only the industrialist with full knowledge of the entire manufacturing process. This rationalisation that had been encouraged by science had brought with it, many new forms of power and in the course of the eighteenth century, science made its way from the gentry to the capitalists and the appliers; its universality was further guaranteed by its accessibility to lesser, if diligent, mortals (ibid:25).

The Industrial Revolution brought great social changes to Britain, the most noteworthy being the redeployment of labour away from agriculture. Accordingly large portions of the population relocated from the countryside to the urban centres where the new manufacturing centres were being established. But it was the speed of this transformation that, above all else, brought about much of the social tension. In 1780 for example, between forty and forty-five per cent of the labour force was engaged in agriculture and then by 1801 it had fallen to thirty-five percent. This population drift continued throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, falling to twenty-four per cent in 1831 and then to just twenty-one per cent in 1851. While the proportion of people employed in manufacturing, building and mining increased from twenty-five percent to forty-two per cent over the same period. These new towns, according to the Hammonds, symbolised the absolute dependence and helplessness of the mass of people living in them. 'They were not so much towns as barracks; not the refuge of a civilisation but the barracks of industry'

(1966:50). Toynby wrote of a great social revolution, and of a new class of capitalist employers and how the old relations between masters and men disappeared. The personal relationships of industry, he stressed, had been destroyed and the 'cash nexus' had been substituted for the 'human tie'. 'We all know,' he concludes, 'the horrors that ensued in Britain before it was finally restrained by legislation and combination' (1884:93). For these and other writers, there seems to be little doubt that, at least up until the mid nineteenth century, English history was more renowned for its social costs than economic gains.

But perhaps the most recognised social outcome of the Industrial Revolution was the employment of many thousands of children in the cotton and woollen mills. In fact so much attention has been paid to the treatment of these children that it is frequently overlooked that the majority of child workers did not work in factories but were mostly employed in small workshops. What the factories did however, was to spotlight the problem in an age when the number of children in the population was increasing rapidly. In conjunction with the issue of child labour there was also the issue of the age at which children started work. The public anger did not occur because child labour was a new phenomenon but because, in the factory, it had suddenly became much more visible and therefore more readily observable than it had ever been before in the obscurity of the cottages and fields in the countryside (Pinchbeck & Hewitt, 1973:404). After all, in rural areas very young children had been put to work for long hours and in atrocious conditions long before the advent of factory production.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that this phenomenon was not by any means universal and the level of child employment could vary enormously from one region to another. The mechanisation of industry was a very complex and uneven process, many sectors changed gradually and even in the most rapidly transforming areas there were still many surviving legacies. Old technologies and traditional modes of

production continued to persist and the manufacture of many products was not mechanised until the 1830's (Field, 1985:378-401). The employment of children in the textile mills factory districts was, during the earlier part of the nineteenth century at least, exceptional and in stark contrast to the deepening underemployment of those in the rural southeast (Horrell & Humphries, 1995:511). However the most significance feature with regard to young factory workers was not to be found in the numbers of children employed but in the harmful conditions and the long hours of their work. These conditions were often so severe that they eventually encouraged the establishment of a reform movement that would also have repercussions in many other forms of child labour.

The employment of children in textile manufacture was a tradition that predated the Industrial Revolution. The children of domestic spinners and weavers for instance were expected to help their parents with carding and spinning just as soon as they were able to walk[1] and according to Smelser, seemed to have reached a high point in the years preceding the Industrial Revolution (1959:75). As the textile industry moved from domestic to factory production in the late eighteenth century it was natural that children should move with it. The first mills were located in sparsely populated districts beside the swift flowing streams needed to power the machinery. The forced remoteness of these locations meant that labour had to be imported from the more heavily populated areas. Manufacturers quickly saw the advantages of employing child labour because their small size and the nimbleness of their fingers[2] made them better suitable to working with the new machinery. In 1835 Andrew Ure published *The Philosophy of Manufactures* in which he wrote:

It is, in fact, the constant aim and tendency of every improvement in

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1 Defoe, is said to have rejoiced to see that in the busy homes of the Yorkshire clothiers 'scarce anything above four years old, but its hands were sufficient for its own support' (Hammond & Hammond, 1925:197).

2 The particular nature of industry made the utilisation of children most useful in cotton spinning. Specifically, the piecing together of broken threads was an important job that could efficiently be performed by children.

> machinery to supersede human labour altogether, or to diminish its cost, by substituting the industry of women and children for that of men; or that of ordinary labourers, for trained artisans. ...The effect of substituting the self-acting mule for the common mule, is to discharge the greater part of the men spinners, and to retain adolescents and children. The proprietor of a factory near Stockport states, in evidence to the commissioners, that by such substitution, he would save fifty pounds a week in wages, in consequence of dispensing with nearly forty male spinners, at about twenty-five shillings of wages each. This tendency to employ merely children with watchful eyes and nimble fingers, instead of journeymen of long experience, shows how the scholastic dogma of the division of labour into degrees of skill has been exploded by our enlightened manufacturers (Ure,1967 [1835]:23).

In addition to the economics, hiring children was a further benefit to the employer because children were more submissive than adults so could easily be coerced into a state of passive obedience (Briggs, 1959:61, Mantoux, 1935:420).

There was a social revolution that came with the factory system and with it came a new society. One that demanded new forms of behaviour and attitudes to work. The seasonal, irregular work, which many had been accustomed, now had to give way to the disciplined work of the factory. Children as young as three or four were employed to pick up cotton waste from spaces under machines that were too small for larger persons to get to and older children would work up to fifteen hours a day under conditions which were often enforced by fear and brutality (Pinchbeck & Hewitt, 1973:354). Time and the relentless demands of the machines imposed a new less natural routine on the workers. It deprived them of their individuality, so that eventually, to use Horn's words, 'they became "hands" to be summoned and dismissed by the ringing of the factory bell' (1994:30). Richard Oastler, a fervent critic of the factory system was once in the company of a West Indian slave-master and three Bradford spinners. When the slave master heard what the children's hours were he declared:

> I have always thought myself disgraced by being the owner of slaves, but we never in the West Indies thought it possible for any human being to be so cruel as to require a child of nine years old to work twelve and a half hours a day (Hammond & Hammond, 1966:161).

But the isolated, rural locations of most of the early mills made recruiting enough young workers from the immediate neighbourhood difficult. This was resolved by recruiting pauper apprentices[3] supplied by the parish authorities. The parishes in their turn were only too anxious to rid themselves of their charges. To the parish authorities encumbered with great masses of unwanted children, the new cotton mills in Lancashire, Derby, and Nottinghamshire were a godsend (Hammond & Hammond, 1966:147). London was an important source because since the passing of the Hanway's Act in 1767 the child population in the workhouses increased enormously[4]. Between 1790 and 1820 Robert Peel, a factory owner and father of the Tory British Prime Minister of the same name, had over a thousand pauper apprentices employed in his mills at any one time. The early years of the spinning mills were so profitable, he acknowledged, that the machinery was operated twenty-four hours a day with the pauper children working two shifts, sleeping turn and turn about in the same beds. Most pauper children were consigned to their employer at the age of seven where, bound by indentures of apprenticeship, they would remain until they were twenty-one. Any concern over the management of large numbers of parish children, along with their attendant problems of discipline and maintenance – food, accommodation clothing etc – was more than offset in the use of fixed working capital (Horn, 1994:32). Rose (1989) also draws attention to the fact that because there were very few jobs for adult males during the early part of the Industrial Revolution, parish children had the added advantage

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3 The old apprentice system with an indenture period of seven years or more was still remained officially intact with the master presumably providing food, clothing and accommodation, and a certain amount of religious and educational training (Smelser, 1959:103-4).

4 Jonas Hanway (1712-86) was a philanthropist who strived to help abandoned and destitute children. By the Act generally called by his name, passed in consequence of his persistent efforts, all London parish children under six years of age were boarded out, not less than three miles from the Metropolis, at not less than two shillings and six pence a week. An additional bonus of ten shillings per child a year was given to each successful nurse. Before this Act very few parish infants survived to trouble the authorities. Hanway himself estimated the annual deathrate as sixty to seventy per cent. The Act, according to Howlett, caused 'a deficiency of 2,100 burials a year' (Eden, 1971:62-63).

of being unencumbered with families for whom jobs would also have to be found). Mantoux described factory discipline as 'indescribable brutality' and cites numerous cases[5] where the unrestrained power of the millowner left pauper children to endure the ruthless servitude imposed by their masters (1935:423-24). Of course not all factories were as indescribably bad as Mantoux suggests. There was a great diversity in the conditions[6] under which pauper apprentices laboured and such accusations were far from being applicable to all factories and masters. Besides which, much of the brutality dispensed in the factory was possibly no less than the standards of the time permitted them to practice on their wives and children at home (Pinchbeck & Hewitt, 1973:410).

By the early nineteenth century the growing use of steam power led to the establishment of new mills[7] in the more populated urban areas. Factories now no longer needed to be located in the isolated valleys beside the rapid flowing streams necessary to drive the their machinery. Located close to an almost limitless supply of children living at home with parents or guardians – free child labour – there was little need to use workhouse children. Child labour still remained central to the factory system and according to the Hammonds, the usual age at which free

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5 In one of the more extreme cases Mantoux describes the experiences of Robert Blincoe who, in 1799, was one of about eighty boys and girls sent to a mill at Lowdham. There, children would be punched kicked and struck with a riding whip by their employer, one Robert Needham. This he did not only as a punishment but also to stimulate industry and to keep them from falling asleep. One of his greatest pleasures, it was reported, was to pinch the ears of his charges until his nails met through the flesh. Blincoe was also hanged by his wrists over a machine, made to wear heavy weights on his shoulders and forced to work almost naked in winter. He was so knocked about that his scalp was sore all over and to cure his condition his hair was torn out with a cap of pitch. The account of his wretched childhood was published in 1828 in *The Lion* and then later in *The Poor Man's Advocate* in 1832 (1935:424).

6 The children's conditions were varied and not all mill owners were tyrants, some were benevolent men. Samuel Greg for example employed about eighty apprentices at Styal in1790. He provided classes, games, baths, a library, a band, a bed for every two children and new clothes every two years. While at Hollywell, the Smalley's sons had three hundred children who lived in whitewashed rooms, slept three to a bed and in addition were provided with a surgeon and a Sunday school (Ward, 1962:17).

7 The first steam driven spinning mill was set up in 1785 but it took almost ten years before it gained a general acceptance within the industry. By the turn of the century, Watt's steam engine was everywhere and beginning to replace hydraulic power (Mantoux, 1935:342).

children began working in the mill was six or seven, although one observer stated that many were employed under that age, at four or five (1966:158). Others like Fay for example, suggest that the usual starting age was seven or eight with six not being uncommon (1957:353). Hard statistical evidence is difficult to acquire in this regard and would, no doubt, depend a great deal on the circumstances from one mill to another. However notwithstanding these variants by contemporary standards at least, the age children began work was very young.

4. Children working in a cotton mill, an illustration from Frances Trollope's Michael Armstrong, *The Factory Boy*, 1839 (Mansell Collection)

In the past most weavers were able to employ their own children but now they were forced to send the children to work for the very institution that had deprived them of their livelihood. The child's working conditions in the home would have varied according to the disposition of their parents and to some extent tasks would have been allocated to their ability. But in the mill, it was the machine that determined the

environment, discipline, pace and regularity of work and working hours, for the delicate and the strong alike (Thompson, 1968:370). All the same, it is important to bear in mind that the reason why children went to work was to supplement their parents' meagre incomes. Children's wages early on in the nineteenth century ranged – depending on their age – from two shillings to almost five shillings a week (Hopkins, 1994:35) and for many families the mill often represented the only prospect of their children earning a regular income. For the handloom weavers the situation had become desperate and even little children could earn more money in the factory than the father could earn on the loom. By 1824 a weaver and his wife together could only earn ten or eleven shillings a week but, according to Smesler, a child of fifteen years could earn seven shillings in the factory, and one of ten years could earn six shillings, which together would exceed their parents' earnings'(1959:206).

Industrialisation, urbanisation and the rapid population growth also created a more extensive demand for construction materials. Bricks were not only needed for the construction of houses and factories, but also in the sinking of mines and the building of canals and bridges. The working life for children in the brickyards seems, according to Hopkins, to have varied from place to place, depending on the kind of brick manufactured (1994:63). The main feature of child employment in the brickyards was not the physical ill-treatment of the children but the nature of their employment and the excessive length of the working day. The brickyards employed mostly women and girls and it was the girls' task to carry the tempered wet clay to the women moulders who then fashioned the bricks on large moulding tables. With their clothes often saturated from the water dripping clay they then carried the moulded bricks to the furnace for firing. When one considers that they worked for twelve hours a day and that they carried six bricks at a time, – each weighing four kilograms when wet – it is understandable that some employers would not take on any girl under twelve. However, conditions in red-brickmaking appear to have been somewhat different and employment seems to have started as early

as the age of four (ibid:64). It was therefore, these manufacturers that attracted the most attention from the factory inspectors[8]. It seems likely that it was the conditions rather than any cruel treatment of children – particularly those working in the red-brick yards – that eventually prompted reform in this line of child employment. First the larger brickyards, those with more than fifty workpeople, were brought within the scope of the Factory Acts by the Factory Act of 1867, this was followed in 1871, by an Act that prohibited the employment of females under the age of sixteen.

5. Children working in a brickworks (Radio Times Hulton Picture Library).

Even worse than the lives of children in cotton mills or brickyards were the lives of children employed in the coalmines where both boys and girls were employed for twelve to fourteen hours a day. Coalmining was well established in Britain although at the beginning of the nineteenth

[8] In 1865 factory inspectors commented about the appearance of both girls and women: 'sparsely clad, up to the bare knees in clay splashes, and evidently without a vestige of womanly delicacy'. Clearly, these sub-commissioners were unimpressed by the children's attire and shocked by the sight of so many bare female legs.

century[9] most were still quite primitive undertakings. The children that suffered the most were the pauper apprentices who were often bound to an employer for twelve years from the age of eight or nine. Large numbers of them were predominantly employed in in the mines of South Straffordshire, Lancashire and the West Riding. They were as a rule most likely to be employed by the less profitable mines operated by small contractors or 'butties'. By their very nature these mines were the most unpleasant of places. They generally had very thin seams which meant that the underground passageways were sometimes no more than eighteen inches high (Hammond & Hammond, 1923:71 & 1966:174) too small for a grown man perhaps but not for an eight-year-old child. Some of these places were so bad that the colliers would refuse to allow their own children to work in them. The parents of 'free' children were in many cases quite indifferent about the affects that mine work had on their children (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:402) instead welcoming the contribution that the relatively high incomes of their children made to the family income. The starting age according to Hopkins, seems to have been around six or seven although this did vary from one mine to another (1994:52). The youngest children – both boys and girls – would spend their days in solitude and darkness as 'trappers', opening and closing the doors that controlled the ventilation of the mine. While the older and stronger ones, were employed as 'putters' or 'hurriers' filling the skips and carriages with the coal, before dragging them from coalface, along the darkened passageways to the bottom of the pit shaft – some passages being so small that crawling on hands and knees was necessary. It wasn't until 1842 when the Children's Employment Commission published its first report – which included numerous illustrations (see illustration below) – that the condition of children was exposed to the public. Its revelations took Britain by storm, wounding both the humanity and

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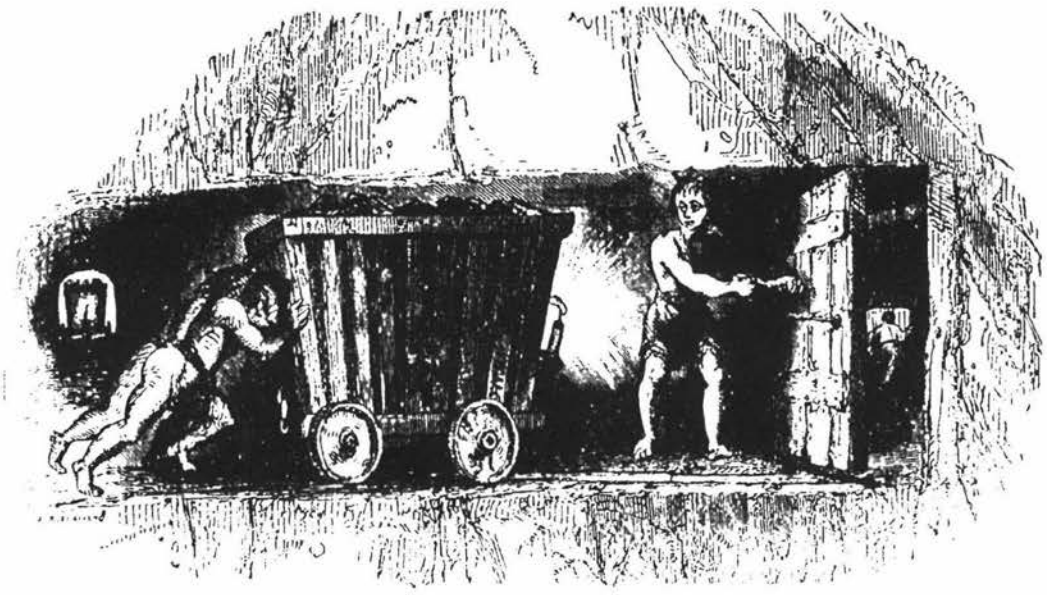
[9] Coalmining began in the Tudor period but by the turn of the eighteenth century it was still no more than a part-time occupation. The Industrial Revolution greatly increased the demand for coal especially after the introduction of steam. The rapid growth in population together with urbanisation also created a huge increase in demand for the domestic use of coal for heating and cooking.

delicacy of the Victorian middle classes. Even so, the greatest obstacle that remained to be overcome by those seeking to improve the conditions of children in the mines was the indifference, bred from a long familiarity of both the parents and the mining community.



6. Children working in a mine: two hurriers are shown here pushing a skip while a trapper operates the door (Mansell Collection).

But of all the hazardous occupations carried out by children in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the most notorious was that of the climbing boys – child chimney sweeps. The Hammonds describe these boys as the children that nobody wanted (Hammond & Hammond, 1966:178). Most of these children began their work as climbing boys was usually between six and eight years of age although occasionally they could start as young as four. Many were young paupers apprenticed by the parish authorities while others were sold to the sweeps by a parent or relative for just a few pounds. A few were even kidnapped or enticed away. The smallest children were of course most preferred because they could more easily climb the labyrinth of sooty narrow flues that were common during the period. Undeniably it was the ubiquity and visibility of these tiny individuals that led to its unsavoury reputation in the child labour debate as their occupation would require them to enter the homes and businesses of the more privileged classes, as well as being seen on the streets. The figure of the little chimney sweep has stood clearly in the

public imagination to this very day and has inspired more sentimental literature[10] than any other single type of child worker (Rose, 1991:54-55). As Cunningham points out, 'no one could be unaware of their existence' (1991:51).

Even though the number of climbing boys was always small[11] they and their fate have been documented by many observers in great detail. It was Jonas Hanway who first protested against the employment of young children as chimney sweeps, which even as early as 1783, could have just as easily been cleaned by machines[12] (Pinchbeck & Hewitt, 1973:355). From 1767 Hanway, a tireless campaigner, began to publish details of the appalling life they had to endure. They were forced up chimneys till their bleeding sores hardened into calluses and their legs and pelvis became deformed. Often, the ingrained soot led to 'sooty cancer' of the scrotum or mouth. Some boys would fall to their deaths from damaged chimney pots while others were suffocated or burnt alive (Fulford, 2002:37). Boys would frequently get stuck and when they did the methods used to extricate them would include pouring water down the chimney, attaching a rope to a leg – if it was exposed – and as a last resort a bricklayer would be called to break open the chimney (see illustration below). Not only were boys sent up chimneys to clean them, they were also sent up them to extinguish fires that often occurred in them. It was all part of the callous indifference shown not only by their masters but also by society in

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10 The publication of Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* in 1863 with its depiction of the pathetic boy sweep Tom at the mercy of his master Grimes is perhaps the most famous and helped a great deal to jolt public consciousness. While William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* launched the little sweep in verse and prose as a tragic folk figure.

11 One estimate suggests that there were about 400 apprentices and climbers employed in London and no more than three or four thousand nation wide in the mid-1780s (Phillips, 1949:3).

12 There was a definite resistance by the master sweeps to the use of machines. It had been thoroughly demonstrated that all but a few difficult chimneys could be swept, and swept better by machinery. It was these difficult chimneys that were also the most difficult and dangerous for boys. The modifications required for these chimneys to be safe for boys would also make them workable for machinery. These machines would also leave no more mess than the boy's. But it is said, the master sweep when using a machine would delicately spill soot over the furniture in order to prejudice house owner or his servants against them (Hammond & Hammond, 1923:216, 1966:185).

general who thought of it as simply just part of the trade.

7. The lifeless body of boy is illustrated here being extracted from chimney while another boy who was removed earlier lies dead on the floor. Picture drawn depicting a real incident that took place at a Lothbury bakery (source unknown).

It took more than a century before any sincere and noticeable change in public conscience was to take place. The campaign to protect the climbing-boys, in which Hanway[13] took a part, first reached the statute books with little opposition in 1788. The Act for the Better Regulation of Chimney Sweepers and their Apprentices barred the use of children under the age of eight and required every climbing boy to be washed at least once a week, sent to church on Sundays and not be compelled to climb a chimney on fire. But with the lack of an enforcement agency and its exclusion of any requirements to register apprentices or license master sweeps it was almost totally disregarded by the public. Later in 1817, another Parliamentary inquiry catalogued the same horrors and abuses

13 Hanway died before the Bill was passed and it was left to a Mr David Porter to persuade a government committee to investigate the state of the climbing boys. Potter was a benevolent master chimney sweep that had first alerted Hanway to the condition of the young climbing boys (Hammomd & Hammond, 1966:180).

brought to light almost three decades earlier in the 1788 inquiry. Two more Bills were presented in 1818 and 1819 were both passed in the House of Commons but were rejected in the House of Lords, for no other reason, it seems, than 'if boys had been dispensed with, their Lordships might have had to make alterations to their chimneys' (Thompson, 1986:376).

Renewed attempts to secure legislative protection took a new turn in 1834 when a new Act introduced regulations on all new flue installations – although this had no effect on existing flues – as well as making ten the minimum age for apprenticeship. This was followed in 1840 by yet another Act banning the apprenticeship of boys under sixteen and prohibited those under the age of twenty-one from climbing chimneys. Once again these requirements were generally ignored by both the sweeps and the householders, the latter fearing that their chimneys would catch fire if they were not swept by boys (Horn, 1994:28). In 1863 the Children's Employment Commission recommended the compulsory modification of flues to make them amenable to brushes, the licensing of sweeps, and stiffer penalties for the illegal employment of children (Rose, 1991:57). The following year Lord Shaftsbury sponsored a Bill intended to strengthen the 1840 Act, incorporating many of the Commissions recommendations. The Bill was passed in the House of Commons with few objections but was again met with tremendous resistance in the House of Lords. In 1875, new legislation was passed requiring all practicing sweeps and their employees to be licensed and that the duty of enforcing the 1840 and 1864 Acts be expressly imposed on the police. It was only after this Act, combined with changes to flue design to allow the safe and easy sweeping of chimneys with brushes rather than by boys that this brutal form of child employment finally ended.

The fate of the factory children was, in comparison with that of the chimney sweeps, far more straightforward. Public attention was first drawn to these children as early as 1784 when an epidemic fever broke

out among the apprenticed workforce in an overcrowded cotton mill at Radcliffe. As a result, and on the recommendation of a public spirited Manchester doctor, local magistrates refused to sanction indentures of parish apprentices to cotton mills where they would be worked at night or more than ten hours a day. But despite this the problem persisted and the epidemics in the cotton factories continued unchecked until 1802 when Sir Robert Peel – himself a mill owner[14] – introduced a Bill on the subject. As a result of Peel's attention the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act was passed limiting work hours to just twelve a day and prohibiting any work between nine and six at night. But this Act was really too late to be of any great advantage to the parish apprentices and as some cynics suggested was only passed when the demand for them had already waned (Horn, 1994:37). Another Act, also introduced by Peel, in 1819 limited the employment of both apprenticed and free children in cotton mills, to those over the age of nine and fixed the maximum hours that they could work in any one day to no more than twelve until they were sixteen. However, the lack of any effective enforcement rendered this and two subsequent Acts, one in 1825 reducing the maximum hours of work on Saturdays from twelve to nine and another in 1831 prohibiting night work to all persons under twenty-one, completely meaningless.

The passage of the 1832 Reform Act and the installation of a reformed Parliament was an important high point in the struggle to improve the working conditions for children. The Act, as Marshall points out changed both the business and the tone of the House, the reason she suggests was the 'realisation that society itself was changing and producing new problems'[15] (1982:182). It was in 1833 that the first really

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[14] Peel had become rich through many of the abuses that he was to later take a leading role in rectifying. His mills were notorious for their scandals in the late eighteenth century and yet, as the Hammonds point out, 'under the shadow of this record Peel dared to turn reformer ... disown[ing] the illusion with which most millowners satisfied their consciences, that the victims of the system were really the gainers of it' (Hammond & Hammond 1966:151-52).

[15] Many contemporary writers maintain that Britain was going through an age of transition. But the sudden impulse to legislate between 1832 and 1867 was not a consequence of the

effective act was passed. This Act set the minimum age of employment in textile mills to nine and limited the hours that children under twelve could work up to nine hours a day or forty-eight hours per week. It also required the children to attend school for two hours a day. But more importantly and for the first time four government inspectors were appointed to enforce the Act. This represented some genuine progress because the main reason why all previous legislation was so ineffective was the fact that the local inspectors were all too often under the influence of the millowner (Hopkins, 1994:77). The institution of Factory Inspectors by the 1833 Act was, as the Hammonds suggest, an important stage in the development of a new kind of civil service (1925:256)[16] that unlike the local Justice of the Peace had both specialised training and independence.

Seven years later, in 1844, a further Factory Act established the half time system whereby children in textile mills worked for a half day and then attended school for a half day although it also lowered the minimum age of employment to eight. Another Act, passed in 1847, reduced the working hours a day to ten for all women and children. Then in 1853 an Act prohibiting children from being employed before six in the morning or after six at night on weekdays or after two in the afternoon on Saturdays was passed. The effectiveness of this and the 1844 and the 1847 Acts was made evident by the fact that they were to remain virtually unchallenged until 1867 when a further Factory Act brought all places of work employing more than fifty people within the scope of existing factory legislation.

The reform of child labour in the mines was a far less complicated

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enfranchisement of the middle classes but was because poverty was overwhelming the countryside and the new towns were an ever growing hazard to health (Marshall, 1982:183).

16 For centuries the administration of English Law had been in the hands of a ruling class who had applied its indiscriminate and irrational methods to problems that were ever becoming more novel and complex.. And while the public spirit of this class was to a large degree honourable, this spiritedness would, on occasion break down – as in the case of the chimney sweeps – when its prejudices and its self interests were compromised.

affair than it was for the sweeps or mill children. Once the Children's Employment Commission had published its first report in 1842 it became clear that industry had little regard for the lives of the children it employed. 'Nobody', maintained the Hammonds, 'could pretend that [such] an industry ... was conducted with any regard to life, health humanity, or civilised habit (Hammond & Hammond, 1923:72). The report brought about so much righteous anger from the general public that Lord Ashley introduced a Bill almost immediately. The 1842 Mines Act excluded all females and boys under ten from working below ground and yet put no restriction on those working on the surface. Just as it was with the chimney sweeps the Bill was passed with little opposition in the Commons but it took much longer to pass the House of Lords as some mine owning members[17] fought a long and increasingly desperate battle against it (Hopkins, 1994:66). Nothing much more was done until the Coal Mines Regulation Act was passed in 1872. This Act raised the minimum for boys working underground to twelve and set the maximum working week of fifty-four hours for all boys under the age of twelve.

Without doubt, the Factory and Mining Acts were responsible for improving and changing the lives of many thousands of children that it was intended for, especially from 1833 onwards. This, as Hopkins points out, also had important consequences for working children in other areas of industry as well (1994:90). The huge number of reports of the Children's Commissions of 1840 and 1862 prompted reformers to further question the conventional attitudes towards child labour. The 1833 Factory Act excluded silk mills but in 1861 a special Act was introduced, bringing them in line with the other textile factories. The bleach and dye works had been regulated a year earlier, and then the 1867 Factories Act completed the job by extending the regulations beyond the textile factories

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17 Lord Londonderry, a mine owner himself, even alleged that some coal seams could only be worked with the help of children. Having failed with this argument he then proceeded to attack the integrity of the commissioners. However he did succeed in having the minimum age reduced from twelve to ten (Hopkins, 1994:66).

to all places employing more than fifty people. The Workshops Act of the same year also imposed restrictions on children's employment in domestic industry.

And yet despite the number of children protected against exploitation by the passage of labour laws there were many still many occupations that remained outside any legal protection. There were countless numbers of children who roamed the streets of the cities taking whatever casual employment they could find as errand boys, street traders, messengers, crossing sweepers and so forth.

7. Crossing sweeper (Mary Evans Picture Library).

However, one important result of the factory reform was that young children now had more time to go to school, and by the Acts of 1876 and 1880 attendance at school became compulsory. The factory reform therefore, had a profound effect on the lives of working children in the nineteenth century. Firstly it progressively removed them from the work place – not all at once, and at first, to a limited degree; the progress was

slow, but irreversible. On the other hand, it sent children to school, an equally important and even revolutionary development (Hopkins, 1994:90-91).

From this brief summary it would appear that child labour in the first half of the nineteenth century was one of exploitation crying out for reform. And when reform finally did appear it seemed to be nothing more than a mishmash of ineffectual legislation. Why, for example, did it take more than a hundred years to bring an end to the practice of using young children to clean chimneys? Why did it take more than ten Acts of Parliament to finally remove children from exploitive factory employment? Why were children working in the mines ignored for forty years before the legislators took up their case? And finally, why were some industries regulated or partially regulated while others were not? As one would expect, part of the answer lay with their masters whose own self-interest blinded them to the welfare of the children they employed. But what is more important – and was more disastrous for the children concerned – was the paucity of upper class conscience, the only individuals who had the authority and the traditional duty to protect the poor. Nothing, according to Hopkins 'more confirms this atrophy, and the profound moral alienation of classes, than the manner of the real awakening when it came. Scores of gentlemen and professional men who gave some support to humanitarian causes in the 1830s and 1840s, appear to have been living in the 1820s in the midst of populous manufacturing districts, oblivious to the abuses being committed only a few hundred yards from their gates' (Hopkins, 1994:377).

One further point that should be noted is that many of the more important and effective changes came at a time of political unrest, which culminated in the passage of the 1832 Reform Act and the abolition of slavery in 1833 (Horn, 1994:51). The parliamentary investigations of the 1830s and 1840s were certainly evidence of the growing humanitarianism and the fact that Victorian society was finally beginning to accept that the

State had a responsibility to prescribe minimum conditions of existence for the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

8

Summary

If one was to single out the most important change that has occurred in the lives of children over the last two centuries it would undoubtedly be that children now have rights that were, in an earlier age, utterly unthinkable. Ever since the early nineteenth century children have been progressively liberated from the doctrine that they were an identifiable and undifferentiated social grouping, small adults 'without the characteristics distinctive of particular stages of [adult] physical and psychological development' (Hopkins, 1994:1). Furthermore, much of the rhetoric regarding this liberation has often traded on the vagueness of the understanding of childhood (Archard, 1993:50) and where the arbitrariness of their age was constantly at odds with the predicability of their competence. Neither were necessarily mutually exclusive alternatives (ibid:61-63). The basis of these children's rights was inevitably integrated in a series of legislative Acts governing the child that aimed to protect children from abuse and exploitation.

However, it was not that adults had suddenly begun to think of children in a different light. It was simply that it happened to come about at a time when humanitarian attitudes in Britain were regaining the ground

lost in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In many cases these changes were not even directed – either inclusively or exclusively – towards children. It was during the early Victorian era that a new 'civilised' sensibility emerged, a sensibility that deplored and sought to end the many forms of human behaviour which had previously been quite acceptable – cruelty to animals, blood sports, public executions, transportation, exploitation in employment and callousness towards children. For that reason, British society was, by the end of the nineteenth century, less cruel and, more disciplined and predictable. Forms of behaviour – both social and personal – that had once been acceptable were now viewed by both the public and the state as contrary to good social order. The new laws that followed this rejuvenated humanitarian sentiment were, to a greater degree, a reflection of this new 'civilised' sensibility. One would think it exceedingly unlikely that the law-makers would have come to the aid of children had it not been for the growing consensus that children were in need of legal protection and a complex legal structure was required to safeguard their interests (Walvin, 1982:198-99).

The intensification of child labour between the 1780s and 1830s was not, as many commentators suggest, due to a direct outcome of the industrial and agrarian revolutions, but was, as Thompson suggests, 'a result of specialisation itself, the increasing differentiation of economic roles, and the break-up of the family economy' (1980:369). Recent research seems to suggest that this intensification took place at a far slower pace than was previously assumed; hence, the pace of social change was also likely to have been less dramatic and less revolutionary than was thought earlier. Much of the abuse and exploitation of working children was a consequence of the breakdown of humanitarian values late in the eighteenth-century. Early in the eighteenth century, for instance, any proposition suggesting that one should extend the hand of compassion to these working children would have been fiercely resisted by the employing classes who were steadfastly committed to *laissez-faire*

and the status-quo. To a significant degree, much of this aversion was brought about by the fact that Britain was going through a period of unprecedented change that produced a sense of insecurity that in turn cast doubt upon the appropriateness of many old and established values. The concerns associated with a rapid growth in population were intensified by the fact that, as a result of the migration from the rural areas, - mostly due to enclosure – more people were living in the towns than ever before.

Consequently, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries children under the age of fifteen formed a substantial proportion of the total population – 39.6 per cent in 1826, according to one estimate – many of whom lived in the towns. At about the same time Britain, after its experience in America between 1775-1783, was – or at least those of the upper classes were – becoming almost paranoiacally obsessed with their fear of social revolution and the need for social control over the lower orders. The Napoleonic Wars between 1797 and 1815 only helped exacerbate and protract the situation. Hanway's campaign to protect the climbing-boys, for example, reached the statute books against little opposition in 1788 but later attempts to secure further legislative protection for them in 1818 and 1819 failed to get the approval in the House of Lords. Between 1788 and 1831 only five pieces of legislation affecting the lives of working children were passed by parliament – the Act for the Better Regulation of Chimney Sweepers and their Apprentices (1788), the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act (1802), and the Factory Acts (1819), (1825) and (1831), none of which were effectively enforced and were, in any case more, concerned with the moral and religious depravation of the young workers than their physical well-being. The interests of working children were clearly of low priority at this point in time not least of which was the plight of rural children who like their urban counterparts also still had an existence and also constituted a problem. From 1832 to the end of the nineteenth century, the pace of change quickened as further twenty-eight Acts were passed by Parliament

specifically aimed at improving the conditions of working children.

This new awakening of conscience that took place in the early 1830's was, as Thomson suggests, more like a volcanic eruption (1980:376) and was initiated by several important events, all occurring more or less at the same time. Firstly, much of the industrial strife that was endemic in the first part of the nineteenth century had all but come to an end – the last major uprising being the Swing Riots in January 1831. This together with the fact that there was no longer any threat to England's sovereignty from France made the ruling classes somewhat more amenable to change. Secondly, the doctrines of Smith, Malthus and *laissez-faire* were beginning to lose their credibility amongst the new industrial middle classes. The broaching of the Malthusian ceilings meant that economic growth had become self-sustaining inasmuch as the population grew unrestrained, and economic growth followed naturally in its wake (Komlos, 2000:239). Britain, despite its burgeoning population had by the 1830s overcome the constraints imposed by diminishing returns to labour in the agricultural sector and was still able to feed its ever-increasing population, therefore escaping the Malthusian trap[1]. Finally, and probably more importantly, as a result of the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 there was a transfer of political power from the land owning aristocrats to the middle classes. There had always been an abundance of goodwill among the middle classes towards working children, but now, with the subordination of the House of Lords to the popular will, the middle-classes had the power to take effective steps towards reform. The combination of these three events – the end of industrial strife, the demise of *laissez-faire* and the passing of the Reform Act – marked a major turning point in the struggle for the rights of children easing the way for the growth in humanitarian reform.

To those of a more pensive disposition there was also a sense that

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[1] For further reading on this subject see: Lewis (1955), Hartwell (1971), Cipolla (1980), Crouzet (1982).

the issue of child labour was bound up in the very future of Britain and the Empire. Critics concerned at the puny physique of working class children anticipated the arguments that the eugenicists were to put forward at the end of the century. If the bodies of children were to be ruined in the fields and factories of Britain then it would soon become difficult to find enough able-bodied men to serve and protect the Empire. The states future lay in lives of its children, and no responsible state could ignore its own future. Subjective arguments like this would have undoubtedly appealed to the imperialistic sentiments of the ruling classes, helping push the issue of child labour further up the political agenda.

Nonetheless even by the mid-nineteenth century children aged between ten and thirteen were still an important part of the factory labour force and although their numbers there were waning, there were still those who feared that any restrictions on their hours and conditions of children would permeate through to the adult workforce and so placing their own prosperity at jeopardy. Shaftsbury played a key role in displacing these fears with his conciliatory speeches that made it easier for the opponents of factory reform to change their minds. It took time to enforce the factory and workshop legislation, which initially was patchy and ineffective, but it did happen. Still concerned with the idleness of the poor and its consequences of dissoluteness and immorality, many were reluctant to remove children from the horridness of the workplace. Ultimately the solution was found by sending them to school.

By mid century childhood was slowly being transformed from a limited period in the home, followed by starting work, to a life based in the home but after the age of five – or earlier – dominated by attendance at school (Hopkins, 1994:124). For over two centuries many commentators have produced theories to account for these disparaging attitudes towards working-class children, but since the working classes rarely were literate and therefore unable to record their childhood experiences we will never really know how they felt about their experiences. Certainly, we can make

educated guesses as to what they thought but this will inevitably be tainted with our own twenty-first century values and experiences. While we can all claim to have experienced childhood no one still living can lay claim to the experience of a nineteenth century childhood, let alone a childhood spent working in a textile factory or coal mine, although common sense would tell us that it would not have been a pleasant experience.

But as Hutchins & Harrison propose, 'the more we look into the matter, the more clear it becomes that the factory system and machinery merely took what it found' (1911:13). The path that the Industrial Revolution – or the agrarian revolution for that matter – took, cannot be explained simply by the progress of material civilisation alone. And while some researchers may feel obligated, even in cases in which positive benefits accrued to working children as a result of the reforms, to call attention to the self-interest and righteousness of many of the reformers, one also needs to bear in mind that self-interest and righteousness are found in all classes and were as common among opponents as advocates of the reforms. More specifically, it was the general disregard of childlife, the greed of child-labour, and the mal-administration of the poor law, during the preceding centuries that had set the stage for what was to follow.

In concluding this thesis one thing remains abundantly clear. When it comes to understanding and evaluating child labour, childhood and adulthood are interdependent and the ways in which children are treated are in turn a reflection of the values and priorities of adult society. Furthermore the inequality amongst adults has implications for the treatment of their children. Poor adults raise poor children and it is this poverty that handicaps children, restricting their opportunities to develop both cognitively and physically. The debate about child labour in eighteenth century England cannot be settled in this brief summary. But one thing above all else is apparent, child labour reform and the

restoration of childhood was not a single event, but was part of a much wider movement of reform and liberalisation. Child labour in nineteenth century England was the product of a complex set of factors and reducing child labour required an equally complex set of policies with both economic and social obstacles to overcome. Nor can it be said that the sufferings of children were the sole responsibility of greedy manufacturers and landowners. The evils and horrors of the Industrial Revolution was a transition stage brought about by the development of technology. This, when combined with the indifference of parents and the community, and when nourished with the arid dogmatisms of class inexorably led, what was then the world's greatest political and economic power into a social disaster.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Principal Child Labour Legislation 1788-1901

Child labour reform in the nineteenth century was a slow and complicated process, requiring countless pieces of legislation before complete reform was achieved. Each Act of Parliament was to become an important landmark on the long and irreversible path towards the final removal of children from the work place.

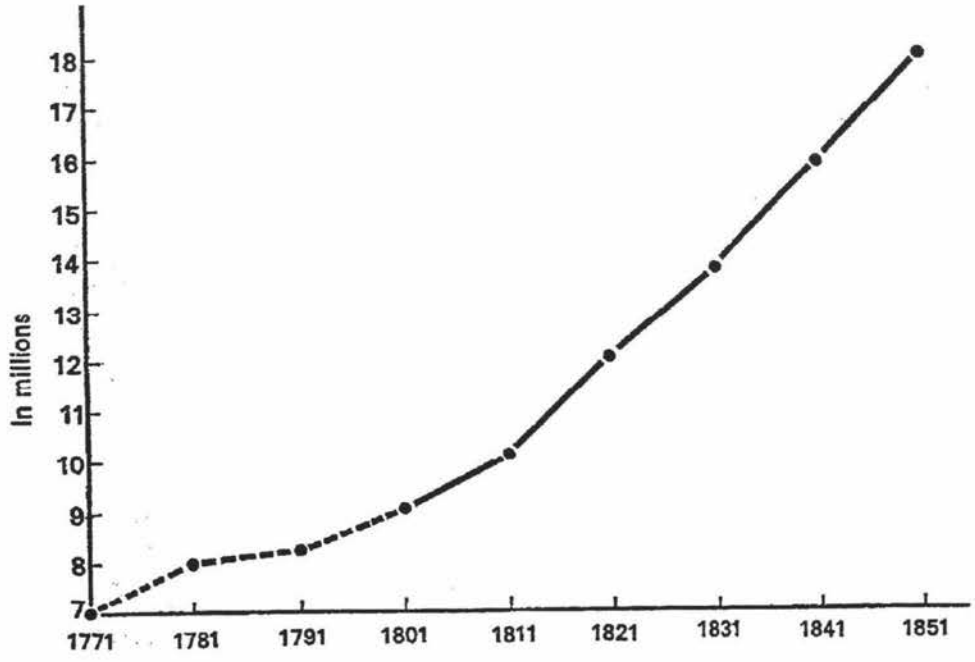
Date	Legislation	Main Features	Limitations and Failings
1788	Act for the Better Regulation of Chimney Sweepers and their Apprentices	Barred the use of children under the age of eight and required every climbing boy to be washed at least once a week, sent to church on Sundays and not be compelled to climb a chimney on fire.	No an enforcement agency or any requirement to register apprentices or license master sweeps.
1802	Health and Morals of Apprentices Act	Limited the working day for apprentices to 12 hours and prohibited night .	Enforcement by local officials.
1819	Factory Act	Limited the age of all children working in cotton mills to 9 years and above and hours of work to no more than 12 per day until they are 16.	Poorly enforced.
1825	Factory Act	Amendment of 1819 Act	Ineffective
1831	Factory Act	Amendment of 1819 & 1925 Acts	Ineffective

1833	Factory Act	Applied to all textile mills (except silk mills) and factories and restricted the hours of work to 8 for children between the ages of 8 and 12 and to 12 for those between 13 and 18. All children were to have 2 hours education a day and night work was prohibited for all children under 18. Furthermore government inspectors were to enforce the Act.	This Act failed to accomplish in its main objective to establish a maximum 10-hour working day.
1834	Chimney Sweeps Act	Made 10 the minimum age for apprenticeship and introduced regulations on all new flue installations.	Requirements were ignored by sweeps and
1840	Chimney Sweeps Act	Banned the apprenticeship of boys under 12 and prohibited those under the age of 21 from climbing chimneys.	Requirements continued to be ignored
1842	Mines and Collieries Act	Prohibited all females and boys under 10 working below ground. Government inspectors were also appointed.	
1844	Factory Act	Amended law relating to all textile mills and factories. Restricting the working hours of 8 to 12 year-olds to 6½ and all females and males under 18 to 12 hours a day. In addition all dangerous machinery had to be fenced.	This Act also tried but failed to establish a 10-hour working day but failed.
1845	Print Works Act	Required child workers to attend school for 30 days a year.	
1847	Factory Act (Ten Hours Act)	Fixed the maximum of 10 hours for all women and young persons working in factories.	
1850	Factories Act (Greys	Amended the 1847 Act to prevent children being worked in shifts.	
1853	Factory Act	Maximum working day increased to 10½ hours and the working day fixed to between 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.	
1860	Mines Act	Included ironstone mines into the 1842 legislation that had banned all females and boys under 10 working below ground. In addition the Act required that all boys under 14 have a certificate of literacy from a schoolmaster as a condition of employment. Otherwise the mine owner had to provide part-time schooling.	
1860	Bleach and Dye Works Act	Incorporated in the regulations for the hours of work in the fabric industry.	
1861	Lace Act	Incorporated in the regulations for the hours of work in the fabric industry.	
1864	The Factories Act's Extension Act	Pottery, match making and 4 other industries were encompassed within existing factory legislation. Employers were also required to comply with rules of cleanliness and ventilation.	
1864	Chimney Sweeps Act	Required all sweeps to be licensed and all flues to be modified to make them amenable to brushes. Stiffer penalties were to be imposed for the illegal employment of children.	

1867	Factory Act	All places employing more than 50 people were brought within the scope of factory legislation. Only part time and no night work were permitted to children below the age of 12.	
1867	Agricultural Gangs Act	Prohibited the employment of any child under the age of 8 in a public agricultural gang. The gang master also had to be licensed by a local magistrate. Gangs employing both male and female workers were prohibited and women and girls were to be supervised by a gang mistress.	This Act did not apply when farmers employed their own gangs.
1867	The Factories Act Extension Act	Defined a workshop as a place of work employing no more than 50 people. No child could be employed below the age of 8, full time work was prohibited for all those between 8 and 12 and all females and males under 18 were not allowed to work more than 12 hours a day.	Inspection was administered locally.
1870	Education Act (Forsters Act)	Local school boards empowered to make education compulsory in their districts all children between the ages 5 and 12 with partial or full exemption from the age of 10 dependent on their attendance and educational	
1871	Factory Act	Refined the existing law barring boys under 10 and girls under 16 from working in brickyards.	
1872	Coal Mines Regulation Act	Increased the minimum age for boys working underground from 10 to 12 with a maximum week of 54 hours for all boys under 16. The Act also banned children under12 from working in metalliferous mines.	
1873	Agricultural Children's Act	No child could be employed under the age of 8 while those between 8 and 10 were first required to make a minimum of 250 school attendances. While 10 to 12 year olds required 150 school attendances.	It was ineffective due to poor enforcement and because it did not apply if the child was employed by a parent or guardian
1874	Factory Act	Minimum age of employment in textile factories was raised from 8 to 10, the hours of work reduced from 10½ to 10 and from 7½ to 6½ on Saturdays. Children under 14 could only work part-time or 13 if a certain academic level had been reached.	
1875	Chimney Sweeps Act	Police required to enforce 1840 and 1864 Acts requiring all practicing sweeps and their employees to be licensed.	
1876	Education Act (Sanderson Act)	School attendance committees established in all areas without school boards with the same authority as school boards to compel attendance for children under 10.	
1878	Factory and Workshop Act	Consolidated and amended the law relating to all factories and workshops. Children from 10 to 14 (13 if they met certain educational requirements) could only work as part-timers.	

1880	Education Act	School attendance was made compulsory for all children between the ages 5 and 12 with partial or full exemption from the age of 10 dependent on their attendance record and academic attainment	
1891	Factory and Workshop	Amended the 1878 Act raising the minimum age for work from 10 to 11.	
1895	Factory and Workshop	An Act to amend and extend the law relating to factories and workshops	
1900	Mines Act	Prohibition of Child Labour Underground.	
1901	Factory and Workshop Act	The minimum age for work raised from 11 to 12.	

Appendix 2 Population Growth of England and Wales 1771-1851



There are no official statistics before the census of 1801 and therefore estimates for the preceding decades are liable to a margin of error, though this is unlikely to be sufficiently large to alter the general appearance of the curve.
(On the graph the unofficial curve is marked - - - - - - and the official decades based on the census ————).

Appendix 3 Principle Occupations of Children Under Fifteen in Britain, 1851

Occupation	Boys (000s)	Boys (%)	Girls (000s)	Girls (%)	Total (000s)	Total (%)
Agriculture	120	28.4	17	7.2	137	20.8
Textiles	82	19.4	98	41.4	180	27.3
Navigation & Docks	46	10.9	4	1.7	50	7.6
Mines	37	8.7			37	5.6
Metalwork	26	6.1	4	1.7	30	4.5
Earthenware	6	1.4	3	1.3	9	1.4
Dress	23	5.4	32	13.5	55	8.3
General Labour	15	3.5			15	2.3
Dealing	12	2.8	2	0.8	14	2.1
Building	11	2.6			11	1.7
Domestic Service	9	2.1	71	30.0	80	12.1
Miscellaneous	36	8.5	6	2.5	42	6.4
	423		237		660	

Appendix 4 Parliamentary Papers

4.1

First Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture, Parliamentary Papers, 1867-68, Vol. XVII. (Evidence collected by the Rev. J. Fraser, Assistant Commissioner).

> ALBERT MERRITT, of Almondsbury (Thornbury Union) in Gloucestershire, aged 10 the 21st of June. Has been working for farmer Carter; earned 3s. a week; drove plough; liked school better; found himself tired with his day's work; got so much walking. Would leave home at 5 or 5.30 a.m.; go to farm, help to clean out his stable and get the horses ready. Then got his breakfast, which he had brought with him, bread and cheese, and half a pint of cider, allowed by his master. Went with the horses on the land, at work till noon; then got a quarter of an hour for dinner, bread and cheese and cider. Kept on ploughing till three, then took the horses home, that would perhaps occupy half an hour. When they got home to farm, the ploughman went in to get his dinner in the house while he looked after the horses, fed them; helped to

cut the chaff. Did not get home till 7 o'clock; had his supper potatoes and bacon, with nothing to drink. Goes to bed at 8 o'clock.

4.2

First Report of the Employment of Children. Young Persons and Women in Agriculture, Parliamentary Papers, 1867-68, Vol. XVII. 1.

4.2.1

Evidence attached to Mr Culley's Report on Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire; No. 98-Copy of Memorandum by Rev. Joseph Simpson, Tilsworth, dated 22nd April, 1868.

'The children begin straw plaiting at 4 years old; if they do not begin young they never make good plaiters. It is the general practice for parents to keep their children indoors all the day at straw plaiting. Children are at straw plaiting schools about seven hours in the day, and are generally employed at home about three or four hours besides, if they have not done the number of yards set by their parents. At some plait schools each child gives to book learning three or four minutes each day, or as much time as is taken up in reading five or six verses of the New Testament; but at most plait schools there is no reading whatever. The position of the body adopted by straw plaiters for convenience and expediting their work cannot be conducive to health. A bundle of straw is placed under the left armpit from which three of four straws are taken, and placed in the mouth to be moistened by the saliva; the fingers being all the time engaged in plaiting, the head is bent forward each time a new straw is required, which recurs constantly as the straws are only a few inches in length, thus a stooping habit is acquired from the constant bending of the head and cramped position of the left arm, to say nothing of the injury done by the constant habit of holding dyed straws in the mouth. The children often have sore lips, and they no doubt suffer from the abstraction of saliva sufficient to moisten many yards of plait per day. It was formerly the custom to moisten the straw with water, but the saliva is considered by the dealers to give it a better appearance, and hence the present filthy custom. Straw plait carried out in moderation is a great source of benefit to the district, inasmuch as it keeps away poverty, but as at present conducted in the case of children sadly needs restriction.'

4.2.2

Evidence No. 119.

'Mrs Hart, Thurleigh, used to have a lace school of 15 and will have again in summer. Girls between 8 and 16 all pay 3d. per week. School hours from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., with one hour for dinner.

'They hadn't ought to begin while they're 9 years old, but their parents can't afford to keep 'em and pay their schooling; I have a little one in her

8 (i.e. 7 years old). I can't send her to school, and she's been learning at her pillow two years; my girl of 13 works from 7 till 7, with an hour for dinner.'

'Mrs Hart has two girls of 16 and 13, neither of whom can write, and were never at school, except Sunday school, after they were 6 years old.'

4.3

Second Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture, Parliamentary Papers, 1868-69, Vol. XIII. (Extract from the Report by Mr F. H. Norman on the counties of Surrey, Wiltshire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire)

The age at which children are first employed varies so much that it is impossible to state accurately what that age is ... but few are employed under 10 years of age. The result of the evidence upon this point may, I think be fairly stated to be that the age at which boys commence to work regularly in farm labour is about 11 or 12 in Surrey and Herefordshire, about 10 or 11 in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, and about 9 or 10 in Wiltshire. This is a very general statement, and is subject to many exceptions. These ages refer only to the times when continuous employment first commences. There are, however, many other operations to be done on a farm which occupy only a portion of the year, and for which boys younger than the ages given above are employed.

Girls are not generally employed under the age of 14 or 15 years. At that age they accompany their mothers and assist at whatever work their mothers may be engaged. In Wiltshire they work rather younger. I have met with a few instances of little girls being employed in the same light work of the farm as that in which the younger boys are engaged in, but these instances are quite exceptional.

The great majority of farmers think that 10 is the youngest age at which boys should ever be employed. It is thought that the work which boys under that age can do on a farm is of little or no value, and that they have ample opportunity of learning the business to which their lives are to be devoted if they begin at 10. Some few maintain that unless they commence at 8 or 9 they never become really useful; but quite as many farmers of the greatest experience think that the age of commencing to work might be advantageously postponed until 11 or 12. I feel sure that an impartial perusal of the evidence I have collected will lead to the conclusion that 10 is the very youngest age at which they are wanted in any of the counties I have visited, and that the inconvenience to which farmers would be exposed would not be serious if they were not employed until somewhat older than that.

The ordinary farm operations in which the youngest children are employed are bird-minding, planting potatoes and beans, minding cows, sheep, and pigs, picking and gathering potatoes, and collecting acorns; they are also occasionally sent out to weed, but as a general rule the weeding is done by men and women. The special occupations in which

they are engaged are hop-picking, at which children of all ages are employed in every district in which hops are grown; apple-picking, i.e. collecting the apples and pears which have fallen from the trees. In the fruit gardens round Evesham and Pershore, in Worcestershire, children are extensively employed from the ages of 7 and 8 upwards. Their work consists in bird-minding and weeding, tying up radishes, onions, &c., and picking currants, and gooseberries, and vegetables. In fruit picking young children under 10 years of age are of but little use, as they are likely to crush the fruit and thus render it unmarketable; but as a general rule there is work to be done by children in the gardens, of one sort or another, throughout the whole summer, and education in this neighbourhood suffers in consequence.

It is important to observe in which of the above kinds. of labour the children are employed by the farmers, and in which they work independently of them. In the operations of planting beans and potatoes, and in gathering potatoes, the farmer cannot, strictly speaking, be said to be the employer of the children. In these operations the work is done by contract, and the man who takes the contract generally brings his own children to assist him, and in picking acorns children work on their own account, and sell the acorns they collect to the farmers...

Boys are generally hired by the week; the old practice of hiring by the year and boarding boys in farm houses is gradually dying out, although it is still practised to a considerable extent in Herefordshire and Wiltshire. The discontinuance of this practice is the necessary result of the improvement which has taken place in agriculture; the farmer who now occupies 500 acres of land is quite a different person from the farmer who formerly occupied 100, his feelings and his mode of life are different, and he will not tolerate the inconvenience caused by a troop of noisy farm boys living in his house. In consequence of this change the farm houses which are now being built are not generally provided with the accommodation necessary for boarding labourers, and however much the science of agriculture may have advanced while this change has been going on, the friends of labourers must, I think, regret the abandonment of a system which supplied farm lads with good food, and subjected them, in many cases, to wholesome control at a time when they particularly required it, and relieved the overcrowded cottages in the villages of some portion of their inhabitants.

Little boys, when employed at scaring birds, minding pigs, &c., receive from Is 6d. to 2s. 6d. a week; when they begin to drive plough they have from 2s. to 3s a week, and their wages are gradually raised as their strength and efficiency increases.

Boys who are boarded in farm houses commence at about 30s. a year, besides their food.

Appendix 5 Apprenticeships

5.1

Indenture preserved at Buckinghamshire County Record Office, A. R. 30/50. (Dated 1853)

This Indenture Witnesseth That Robert Frederick Miller of the age of fifteen years son of Maria Miller Schoolmistress at the Eton Union Workhouse of his own free will and with the consent of his said mother testified by her executing these presents doth put himself Apprentice to Henry Graveney and James Graveney of Slough in the parish of Upton cum Chalvey in the County of Bucks Whitesmiths Locksmiths and Bell hangers Coparties to learn the Arts and with them after the Manner of an Apprentice to serve from the twentieth day of April now last past unto the full End and Term of Six Years from thence next following to be fully complete and ended.

DURING which Term the said Apprentice his Masters faithfully shall serve their secrets keep their lawful commands every where gladly do he shall do no damage to his said Masters nor see to be done of others but to his Power shall tell or forthwith give warning to his said Masters of the same He shall not waste the Goods of his said Masters nor lend them unlawfully to any he shall not commit fornication nor contract Matrimony within the said Term shall not play at Cards or Dice Tables or any other unlawful Games whereby his said Masters may have any loss with their own goods or others during the said Term without Licence of his said Masters he shall neither buy nor sell he shall not haunt-Taverns or Playhouses nor absent himself from his said Masters service day or night unlawfully. But in all things as a faithful Apprentice he shall behave himself towards his said Masters and all theirs during the said term

AND the said Henry Graveney and James Graveney on consideration of the sum of ten pounds sterling to them in hand paid by the said Maria Miller on the execution hereof the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged do hereby covenant and agree with the said Maria Miller that they the said Henry Graveney and James Graveney their said Apprentice in the arts of Whitesmith Locksmith and Bellhanger which they use by the best means that they can shall teach and Instruct or cause to be taught and instructed Finding unto the said Apprentice sufficient Meat Drink Medical assistance Working tools Lodging and all other Necessaries during the said Term save and except Wearing apparel and the washing and mending thereof which are to be found and provided for the said Apprentice during the said term by the said Maria Miller

AND for the true performance of all and every the said Covenants and Agreements either of the said Parties severally bind themselves unto the other by these Presents IN WITNESS where of the Parties above named to this Indenture have put their Hands and Seals the twenty-first day of December and in the seventeenth Year of the Reign of our Soveriegn

Lady Victoria by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland QUEEN Defender of the Faith and in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and fifty three.

Signed Sealed and delivered
in the presence of Mr G. Chack
Clerk to Mr Barrett,
Solicitor Eton.

SIGNED: Robert Frederick Miller
Maria Miller
Henry Graveney
James Graveney

5.2

Indenture preserved at Oxfordshire County Record Office, Misc. Gr. II. (Dated 1858).

This Indenture Witnesseth That Thomas Edward Grimes of Milton in Parish of Adderbury in the County of Oxford by and with the consent of Charles Grimes of the same place, Weaver, his Father, testified by his execution of these presents doth put himself Apprentice to William Franklin of Adderbury West in the said Parish of Adderbury, Builder, Carpenter, Joiner and Wheelwright to learn his Art and with him after the Manner of an Apprentice to serve from the day of the date hereof until the full End and Term of six Years from thence next following to be fully complete and ended DURING which Term the said Apprentice his Master faithfully shall serve his secrets keep his lawful commands every where gladly do he shall do no damage to his said Master nor seek to be done of others but to his Power shall tell or forthwith give warning to his said Master of the same he shall not waste the Goods of his said Master nor lend them unlawfully to any he shall not commit fornication nor contract Matrimony within the said Term he shall not play at Cards or Dice Tables or any other unlawful Games whereby his said Master may have any loss with his own goods or others during the said Term without Licence of his said Master, he shall neither buy nor sell he shall not haunt Taverns or Playhouses nor absent himself from his said Master's service day or night unlawfully. But in all things as a faithful Apprentice he shall behave himself towards his said Master and all his during the said Term.

AND the said William Franklin in consideration of the services of the said Thomas Edward Grimes covenants with the said Charles Grimes, the father, to pay the said Thomas Edward Grimes, his apprentice, three shillings per week during the fourth year, four shillings per week during the fifth year and five shillings per week during the six and last year of his said apprenticeship.

AND the said William Franklin also covenants with the said Charles Grimes his said Apprentice in the Art of a Builder, Carpenter, Joiner and Wheelwright which he useth by the best means that he can shall teach and Instruct or cause to be taught and instructed Finding unto the said Apprentice sufficient Tools and all other Necessaries for learning his trade during the said Term.

And the said Charles Grimes hereby covenants to and with the said William Franklin that he will find and provide unto and for the said

Apprentice during the said term sufficient Meat, Drink, Clothing, Washing, Mending, Medicine and medical attendance, in case of sickness or Accident and all other Necessaries during the said term.

AND for the true performance of all and every the said Covenants and Agreements either of the said Parties bindeth himself unto the other by these Presents.

IN WITNESS whereof the Parties above named to these Indentures interchangeably have put their Hands and Seals the seventeenth day of August and in the twenty second Year of the Reign of .our Soveriegn Lady Victoria by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom .of Great Britain and Ireland QUEEN Defender of the Faith and in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and fifty eight.

Signed sealed and delivered by the above named parties in the presence of Henry Churchill, Solicitor, Deddington.

SIGNED: Thomas E. Grimes
Charles Grimes
William Franklin

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