

The Impact of Industrialization on the U.S. Working Class

John Spargo Describes Child Labor in Mt. Carbon, West Virginia, John Spargo, The Bitter Cry of the Children, (New York, 1906), pp. 163-165, reprinted in Bailey and Kennedy, The American Spirit, Volume 2, pp. 606-608.

Work in the coal breakers is exceedingly hard and dangerous. Crouched over the chutes, the boys sit hour after hour, picking out the pieces of slate and other refuse from the coal as it rushes past to the washers ... There were boys of ten and twelve years of age doing it for fifty and sixty cents a day. Some of them had never been inside a school; few of them could read a child's primer. True, some of them attended the night schools, but after working ten hours in the breaker the educational results from attending school were practically nil.

- What is childhood like for a "breaker boy?"

Jacob Riis Describes Life on the Lower East Side of New York

Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (1890), pp. 43-44, reprinted in Bailey and Kennedy, The American Spirit, Volume 2, pp. 507-508.

That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against. The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access--and all to be poisoned alike by their summer stenches ... listen! That hack cough, that tiny, helpless wail--what do they mean? The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. Come over here. Step carefully over this baby--it is a baby, in spite of its rags and dirt ... That baby's parents live in the rear tenement here. A hundred thousand people lived in rear tenements in New York last year.

- Why does Jacob Riis think "infant mortality" is so high in Lower East Side tenements?

John Morrison Describes Work as a Mechanic in New York City

John Morrison, Testimony, August 28, 1883, U.S. Senate, Report of the Committee upon the relations between Labor and Capital (Washington, 1885) pp. 755-759. Reprinted in Leon Litwack, editor, The American Labor Movement (Englewood Cliffs, 1962) pp. 11-15.

Q: What is the prospect for a man now working in one of these machine shops, a man who is temperate and economical, to become a boss or a manufacturer of machinery?

A: Well, speaking generally, there is no chance. They have lost all desire to become bosses now. The trade has become demoralized. First they earn so small wages; and next, it takes so much capital to become a boss now that they cannot think of it, because it takes all they can earn to live ... I understand that at the present day you could not start in the machinist's business to compete successfully with any of these large firms with a capital of less than \$20,000 or \$30,000.

- What does John Morrison mean when he says that trade is "demoralized?"