Factories and Workers

Human Legacy Ch 21.2
Pages 640-645
Production Before Factories

• Earliest production from the home (Cottage Industry)

• Workers dealt directly with merchants
  – Merchants delivered raw material
  – Weavers produced product
  – Merchants came back for finished product and took it to market

• Benefits of Cottage Industry
  – Workers controlled their own schedules
  – Expert weavers produced higher quality cloth
  – Family life revolved around the business (parents still with their children)
  – Workers could make adjustments for illness or Holidays
Problems for Cottage Industries

- Fire and Flood could ruin home, product & equipment
- Slower production
- Space requirements & cost of machines
- Special skill and/or strength needed to operate machines
Factories and Factory Towns

• “A major change from the cottage industry system to the factory system was where employees worked. A factory laborer had to leave his or her home and work in a place built especially for industry. For some workers, a job in a factory was a welcome way to support the family. For many workers however, the factory system caused real hardship.”
  – Human Legacy, p641.
Working in a Factory

• **Division of Labor**
  – Separate easily learned tasks
  – Assembly line process
  – Could use unskilled labor, as each person performed only 1 task

• **Child labor**
  – As young as six years old
  – Could reach into moving machinery to retrieve fallen objects
  – Paid lower wages
  – Easier to coerce

• **Hazards**
  – Noise
  – Lack of ventilation
  – Poor sanitation
  – Inadequate food
  – Fatigue from long hours
  – Dangers of moving machinery
Factory Working Conditions for Children

• Dust & fibers often caused tuberculosis & other diseases as ventilation was poor

• Workers who arrived late were punished, but most families could not afford a clock

• Children often had to scramble under still-running machines & accidents were common
  – One hospital recorded 1000 injuries per year from machinery accidents

• Foremen beat children who worked too slowly

• Workers had to stand for hours and many children gradually became deformed
Life in factory Towns

• Towns changed and moved to be near factories
• Factories provided housing
  – Closely packet
  – Crowded
  – Poorly constructed
• Factory towns near mines
  – After development of Steam power
  – Soot
  – Sulfur gasses poisoned air
  – Poor sanitation
  – 1 toilet per 125 people
  – 6 of 10 children died before the age of Five
  – Disease ridden
Workers in a New Economy

- **Employers & Owners**
  - Capitalists
  - Invested money to build factories & machines
  - Shared little of profits

- **Mid-level Employees**
  - Foremen
  - Supervised day-to-day operations
  - Repaired machines
  - Hired & fired workers

- **Low-Level Employees**
  - Paid wage by hour
  - Often women & children
  - Little incentive to improve quality
Cottage Workers Unrest

• Handmade goods more expensive

• Luddites
  – 1811 attacked a factory in Nottingham, England
  – Opposed machines that replaced human labor
  – Burned factories & smashed machines
  – Spread to other cities in 1812
  – Several Luddites caught & hanged
Changing Labor Conditions

- Government did not want to impede business
  - Laissez-faire theory
  - Bad for national strength
  - Would give workers an incentive to be lazy

- Labor Unions
  - Early 1800s
  - Sought better wages & improved working conditions
  - Conducted strikes & work stoppages

- Public Pressure
  - Factory inquiry Commission of 1832
  - Saddler Report of Factory abuses
  - Laws limiting work hours
  - Minimum age of 9 to work
  - 1871 Labor Unions Legalized
A New Class of Workers

• Growth of Middle Class
  – Managers
  – Accountants
  – Engineers & Mechanics for machines
  – Shippers & shopkeepers

• Not Bourgeoisie, who are factory owners
The Process of Mass Production

- **Mass Production**
  - Large numbers of identical items

- **Interchangeable parts**
  - Make production & repair more efficient
  - Any part may be placed in any completed item
  - No custom made parts

- **Assembly Line**
  - Product moves from worker to worker
  - Each worker performs one step in the manufacturing process
Effects of Mass Production

- Dramatic increase in production
- Production cost lowered
- Repetitious jobs
- Little job satisfaction
- High stress to keep up with assembly line
Effects of the Factory System

Before the factory System

• Goods produced in the home
• Work required a wide range of skills
• Children often did chores at home with the family
• Families worked directly with merchants
• Few people were members of the middle class

After the Factory System

• Goods were produced in factories
• Work required a few easily learned skills
• Children were employed in large numbers in factories
• Workers dealt with managers and sometimes factory owners
• More people joined the middle class