

## VI. THE REASONABLENESS OF THE TEN-HOUR DAY

Factory inspectors, physicians, and working women are unanimous in advocating the ten-hour day, wherever it has not yet been established. Some indeed consider ten hours too long a period of labor; but as opposed to the unregulated or longer day, there is agreement that ten hours is the maximum number of working hours compatible with health and efficiency.

### A. Opinions of Physicians and Officials

*British Sessional Papers.* DR. LONDON. 1833. Vol. XXI.

From fourteen (years of age) upwards, I would recommend that no individual should, under any circumstances, work more than twelve hours a day; although if practicable, as a physician, I would prefer the limitation of ten hours for all persons who earn their bread by industry. Ten working hours a day are in fact thirteen hours, allowing an hour for dinner, half an hour for breakfast, half an hour for tea-time, half an hour for going, and the same for returning from work. (Page 24.)

*Report of Special Committee to inquire as to the Propriety of reducing the Hours of Labor.* Massachusetts Legislative Document. House, 1865.

This (system of ten hours) is now very generally in use,—the exceptions being in manufacturing towns and corporations,—where they now require . . . women and children to work eleven hours daily—one hour more than in England—a disgrace in our opinion to Massachusetts and an outrage on humanity. (Page 2.)

*Report of the Special Commission on the Hours of Labor.* Massachusetts Legislative Documents. House, 1866, No. 98.

Dr. Tewksbury has been a practising physician eighteen years in Lawrence, and a close observer of the health and morals of

operatives. Thinks long confinement in mills and insufficient time for meals injurious, and that ten hours a day is better than eleven or twelve hours.

Dr. Sargent, many years practising physician in Lawrence: Ten hours a day enough for strong men; too long for delicate women. (Page 63.)

*Massachusetts Legislative Documents.* House, 1867, No. 44.

I recommend, as the result of my investigations, and in view of the expressed wish of the interest of labor in the factories, . . . the enactment of ten hours as a legal standard for a day's labor. (Page 141.)

*Conclusions and Recommendations.* Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, 1872.

1. That the hours of labor are too long [for women], and that the preliminary step to remedy the evil is the enactment of a law restricting labor in all manufacturing and mechanical establishments in the State to *ten hours per day* or to *sixty hours per week*. (Page 96.)

*Report to the Local Governing Board on Proposed Changes in Hours and Ages of Employment in Textile Factories.* By J. H. BRIDGES, M.D., and T. HOLMES. *British Sessional Papers.* Vol. LV. 1873.

7. Q. Do you think that the present day's work (ten and one-half hours) is too long for young persons under twenty or for the grown-up women?

A. Yes. Nine and one-half hours appears sufficiently long for young persons under twenty, but eight hours would, *ceteris paribus*, more greatly conduce to their health.

For women over twenty, nine and one-half hours is a reasonable time so long as they remain unmarried. (Page 40.)

*Factory and Workshops Act Commission, 1875.* *British Sessional Papers, 1876.* Vol. XXIX. Appendix D. 87 c.

One of the evils arising from female labor is the numbers of hours they are allowed to work, being so many hours in excess of

a great deal of male labor. We would suggest that all females, married and single, commence work not earlier than 8 A. M. and not work later than 7 P. M.

(Signed) EDWARD BENNETT.  
SAUL HINGLEY.

*Pennsylvania. Annual Report of Secretary of Internal Affairs.  
Part III. Industrial Statistics, 1880-1881. Vol. IX.*

The agitation of the ten-hour system among the working people of this State began as far back as 1834 and 1835, extending through many years. The custom of working twelve and thirteen hours per day became exceedingly obnoxious to the working classes, and great efforts were made to prevail upon proprietors to reduce the number of hours to ten per day. . . . Injury to health, no time for leisure, recreation, or study, a total deprivation of social and innocent pleasure, by an all-work and bed system, was the great plea of the laborer, while the stereotyped objection of the employer was, that a reduction of the hours would curtail production, and thus render them unable to compete with like establishments in other sections of the country. (Page 100.)

That ten hours per day is fully as much as should be exacted from the employees we think cannot be gainsaid, and such is the spirit of the law, as well as the sentiments of all who take an interest in promoting the welfare of mankind in general and of labor in particular. The justice of both law and sentiment becomes more apparent when we contemplate the class of labor employed in factories and their relation to future generations. To the strong and sturdy male adult the task of being compelled to labor more than ten hours per day might not seem arduous, more especially where the work assigned to him is not of such a character as to be a drain upon his physical constitution; but, while this exception may possibly be granted, its compulsory exaction from the large number of women, girls, and young children employed admits of no excuse. In the returns received by the Bureau, the number of women and girls over fifteen years of age employed are 23,076; boys under sixteen, 4,183, and 3,548 girls under fifteen. . . .

These figures, without special analysis, we presume are sufficient to convince the most sceptical of the wisdom of a systematic enforcement of the ten-hour law by proper legislation, to the end

that youth be protected, the condition of life be ameliorated, and the future of our State be promoted. Nor should the law be confined to factories alone, but extended to all industries where women and children are in any manner apt to be employed to the detriment of life and health. (Page 104.)

*Condition of Female Labor in Toronto. By JEAN THOMPSON SCOTT. 1891.*

The clause in the Act which allows a different apportionment of the hours per day in case of shorter hours on Saturday is an unfortunate one, because it would permit an average of eleven hours a day for five days in the week — far too long a period for women to work. (Page 29.)

*Report of the Maine Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics, 1892.*

In view of all the facts in the case, we were led to accept the ten-hour day, and it has proved a better day for all concerned than the twelve or fourteen hour day. In many industries the workers are employed at piece work, and do not average over eight hours a day, and in this they simply follow natural law and stop work when they feel that a good day's work has been accomplished and feel so tired as to need rest or change. (Page 11.)

*Report of the German Imperial Factory Inspectors, 1895.*

For adult working women, with very few exceptions, the eleven-hour working day is the rule. In Würzburg several establishments have ten hours. In the length of the working day there is no conspicuous difference between factories and workshops (Aschaffenburg).

As to the customary working hours in Hamburg the following summary is enlightening. The working day of women varies from eight to eleven hours.

8 hours and less		in 10 places with		115 women.	
8-8½	"	"	"	18	270
8½-9	"	"	"	44	984
9-9½	"	"	"	70	712
9½-10	"	"	"	77	1493
10½-11	"	"	"	54	802

*Report of the New York Department of Factory Inspection, 1897.*

Any woman employed at manual labor for ten consecutive hours per day, and constantly employed, is performing a task beyond her strength, whether she is just under or over twenty-one years of age. (Page 25.)

*Report of the Commission Supérieure du Travail. Paris, 1897.*

Twelve hours of steady work is an exertion which any young girls or women cannot often repeat except at the expense of health. The result of overtime work in the evening for a woman of any age is physical deterioration when it does not lead to moral deterioration as well. (Page 100.)

*Report of the New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1900.*

From that time (1881) to this, public opinion in Massachusetts has upheld the ten-hour law, and approved the extension of its principles. (Page 53.)

*Industrial Conference National Civic Federation, 1902.*

The most striking fact about this question of hours of labor seems to me its universality. In virtually every country dominated by Western civilization the daily work-time in mechanical industries is being cut down by successive movements that appear to be as inevitable as the tide, and that have the appearance of steps in the path of human progress. . . . (George Gunton, page 190.)

That the time is now ripe for another general reduction in the daily working time is indicated by the testimony of physicians and the mortality statistics of occupations. Medical research shows that a ten-hour day in modern industry calls for an expenditure of either muscular or nervous energy or both — depending upon the nature of the work — that inevitably shortens life. (A. F. Weber, Chief Statistician, New York Department of Labor, page 200.)

*Report of the California Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1904.*

A suggestion is made, which it is hoped will have the serious consideration of the people and of the legislators of the State; and it is, namely, that an amendment be made to the Constitution of California, providing, as is done by the Constitution of Massachu-

setts regarding that State, that our legislature shall, by appropriate legislation, provide for the health and welfare of women wage-earners in this State. (Page 193.)

*The Working Hours of Female Factory-hands. From the Reports of Factory Inspectors, collated in the Imperial Home Office. Published by VOX DECKER. Berlin, 1905.*

The inspector for Breslau says, "The reduction of the working day to ten hours is such a decided step in advance, and is of such marked and wholesome influence on the mental, physical, and moral status of the entire working population, that its introduction should be emphatically urged."

The inspector for Cologne says, "The reduction of the working day for all women over sixteen years must be regarded as a necessity for both moral and hygienic reasons."

The inspector for Hanover says, "The reasons for the reduction of the working day to ten hours —

- (a) The physical organization of woman,
- (b) Her maternal functions,
- (c) The rearing and education of the children,
- (d) The maintenance of the home —

are all so important and so far reaching that the need for such education need hardly be discussed."

Another inspector says, "Considering the detrimental physical defect of factory work, its nerve-exhausting character, its ruinous influence on family life, and the care of children, and, indeed, under all the aspects of the physical, moral, and mental development of the working class, the reduction of the legal working day for women must be regarded as an emphatic demand and a moral obligation, whose introduction must be urged after a careful and conscientious weighing of all the reasons for and against it." (Page 106.)

*Report of the Washington Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1905-1906.*

The present law prohibits the employment of any female worker for a longer period than ten hours in any one calendar day. Splendid results have been obtained through the operation of this law, for much as one may dislike to credit it, there are employers who would insist upon working their female help from twelve to sixteen hours per day did the law not stand in their way.

There is peculiar necessity for protecting through legislative means those classes of female workers who are employed in laundries, factories, and other similar industries. Eight hours of continuous work of that character is as much as should be exacted from any woman, and there is general agreement among those who have investigated the subject that the well-being of the community would be consulted through the adoption of an eight-hour day for all women employed in such occupations. (Page 18.)

*The Case of the Factory Acts. Edited by Mrs. SIDNEY WEBB. London, 1901.*

No one who studies the actual working of the Factory Code can doubt that it will be perfected just in the measure in which all these differences are abolished and an equal adequacy of protection extended to all the places and all the persons who work. The ideal is that the regulations of all places in which manufacturing work for gain is carried on should approximate as closely as possible to those which obtain in the most completely guarded places, namely, the textile factories . . . the textile factory is cursed by no such overtime exception as elsewhere undermines the value of the hours' limitation.

The overtime exception is doomed. Unless some unforeseen change in our industrial conditions revolutionizes the present order of things, the total abolition of overtime for women must follow on that for young persons, which was virtually accomplished by Mr. Asquith in 1895. . . . The case for abolition was as clearly proved as the complete consensus of opinion on the subject of those who work under the exception and those who have to enforce it could prove anything. The opinions of H. M. Inspectors of Factories and the opinions of the organized women workers were all but unanimous against allowing any overtime. These opinions, the expression of which dates back to the Royal Commission of 1875, are based on arguments which carry with them conviction on many grounds. Over and over again the view is stated that with better organization of the business the need for overtime disappears. Cases are quoted to prove that many large dressmaking and millinery firms never avail themselves of this exception, and the great object lesson of the textile trade is given. In all textile factories, and in a great many non-textile factories, to which no exception has been granted, organization and management quite easily cope

with the recurring season pressure, and the trade automatically adapts itself to the law's requirements. In other non-textile factories and workshops, to which the overtime exception has been extended, demands no more urgent are met by the deliberate overtaxing of the workers' health and strength. (Page 153.)

In 1878, when this industry (fruit-preserving (jam-making) factories) was first brought under inspection, the employers protested against any regulation of the hours of labor, or even of sanitation, during the jam-making season, on the plea that the fruit had to be dealt with as it was delivered. The House of Commons, instead of insisting that the employers should exert their brains so as to cope with difficulties inherent in their particular trade, weakly accepted their plea, and exempted them from the Common Rules enforced on other industries. What has been the result? The majority of British jam factories at the beginning of the twentieth century present, during the summer months, scenes of overwork, overcrowding, dirt and disorder, hardly to be equalled by the cotton mills at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Women and young girls are kept continuously at work week-days and Sundays alike; often as much as a hundred hours in the seven days; and sometimes for twenty or even thirty hours at a stretch.

. . . As if on purpose to complete the proof that these shortcomings are not inevitable in the business, and are merely the result of a disastrous exemption from regulation, we have the fact that, here and there, in different parts of the kingdom, a few firms stand out as preferring the "upward way"; scientifically organizing their supplies, providing cold storage, working their operatives only normal hours, and seeing to it that the work-places are clean and healthy. If the "downward way" were barred by law, as it is in cotton-spinning, all jam-making firms would long ago have been forced into the same course. (Page 50.)

### B. Opinions of Employees

*History of Factory Legislation. HUTCHINS and HARRISON.*

In June, 1847, after the Bill became a law the rejoicings throughout the manufacturing districts were such as had never been known before. (Page 96.)

In order to test the general feeling, 10,270 adult male laborers

in ten factories were examined as to their views on the question, and of these seventy per cent declared for a ten-hours day (for women and young persons) even though it might involve a reduction in wages. (Page 99.)

*Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1871.*

I have worked what is called ten hours a day, and the ten-hour system always has a good influence on the work-people. We don't lose one-eleventh of the pay, everybody knows that. I did n't lose a single cent, because I did n't get so much exhausted. . . . (Page 498.)

To prove the soundness of the ten-hour claim, the operatives instance the reduction in the past, from sixteen to fourteen, to thirteen and to twelve, and from twelve to eleven hours. They also point to the twenty-one years' experience in Great Britain, where the reduction was made in 1850 from twelve to ten, a reduction of one-sixth of the working day. (Pages 557-558.)

*Report of the British Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops, 1877.*

"Since the meeting of the Trades Union Congress at Leicester, however, I have made it my business to ascertain, so far as I could, the opinion of women employed in different occupations in London as to the influence of the Factory Acts, and I can say confidently that without a single exception I have found the limitations imposed upon their hours of work most cordially approved of, and the greatest anxiety and positive alarm entertained at the prospect of any relaxation which would expose them to the irregular and uncertain hours of work which prevailed prior to the passing of the Factory Act of 1867. Among what class of working-women of London it can be pretended that the regulations and restrictions imposed by the Factory Acts are unpopular, I confess I am altogether at a loss to understand. All I can say is that notwithstanding most diligent inquiry I have entirely failed to meet with them. . . ."

A—F— states: ". . . I decidedly prefer to work the hours fixed by the Factory Acts. After working as a book-folder for about five years I left, as I found the long and irregular hours made me ill. I have never had any illness since the Factory Act came into operation. The general opinion among the women in the

shop is that they prefer working under the Factory Act, and they grumble much when they are kept later than eight o'clock."

E—B—, a book sewer, says: "I have been six years employed in the sewing department. I am very well satisfied with the Factory Acts as they are, and I think all the sewers are of opinion that it is a good law, as it prevents excessive overwork. I had no experience of the trade before the passing of the Factory Act, but from what I have been told, the state of things must have been dreadful. I have never heard any of the women complain of the Factory Act in any way, nor of its preventing them from getting employment; and as far as I can judge, the number of women employed in the book-binding trade is increasing." (Pages 12, 13.)

*Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1881.*

What is the greatest desire of the factory operatives? We reply, Beyond all question, one of the greatest desires of the factory operatives of America, relative to employment, is for ten hours.

. . . We have examined hundreds, a large part of them overseers, and altogether the greater part of them are in favor of ten hours anyway, let the pay come as it will. (Page 464.)

*Report of Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1888.*

The law forbidding the employment of women and children for more than ten hours per day, or sixty hours per week, has met with general public favor. In a majority of cases the law is conscientiously obeyed: (Page 25.)

*Report of the Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1890.*

. . . The violation of this law is objected to by the most of the working people, on the ground that ten hours out of twenty-four make as long a day as women and children should ever be required to work. (Page 29.)

*Report of the German Imperial Factory Inspectors, 1895.*

In regard to efforts made to abolish female labor in factories, the inspector for the Dresden district remarks: "Among the workers themselves, even married women, there is no emphatic desire to prohibit industrial work for women, *provided that this labor was subject to certain limitations, — did not occur at night or on Sundays, and did not last more than ten hours by day.*" (Page 93.)

*Report of the German Imperial Factory Inspectors, 1895.*

"For the working-women, even for those who suffer loss of wages, the ten-hours day on Saturday, closing at 5.30 is very welcome, as they have stated in numerous cases, and there is no doubt that the law meets the wishes of the workers." (Page 150.)

*Report of the New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1900.*

We have thus seen how industrial efficiency has been improved to such an extent by legislative restrictions upon the hours of labor that the maximum length of the working day for women and minors has been successively reduced until it is nine and one-half in England and virtually the same in Massachusetts (fifty-eight hours a week), and that the extension of such legislation has been, and still is, desired by the operatives themselves, who would naturally be the principal sufferers if such a policy really meant diminished production. (Page 58.)

*Labor Laws for Women in Germany. Dr. Alice Salomon. Published by Women's Industrial Council. London, 1907.*

A chief means to this end, desired not merely by the women of Germany, but by most of her great political parties, is the reduction of the maximum working day to ten hours (to start with), a demand long since ripe for settlement, which has been proved practicable by enquiries of a Government Commission. For this concession working-women have already fought many a hard battle, and it ought no longer to be withheld from them, especially in view of the fact that most firms employing women have already adopted the ten-hours day, so that the legal enforcement of this measure would merely compel backward employers to bring their establishments up to date. (Page 9.)

*C. Opinions of Employers**Report of the German Imperial Factory Inspectors, 1884.*

Report for the Rhine Province, District of Dusseldorf — Dr. Wolf:

The question as to the length of the working day and as to whether it should be regulated by the State has been much discussed.

At a meeting at Gladbach of Textile Manufacturers it was resolved "that the length of the working day can be effectively regulated only by the laws of the country, and that such regulation should be urged." (Page 150.)

*Report of the German Imperial Factory Inspectors, 1888.*

The report for the district of Chemnitz says that the manufacturers of that district have repeatedly expressed a desire for the introduction of the ten-hour day. (Page 114.)

*United States Industrial Commission, 1900.*

We may find that it is desirable in time to do by law what a few persons are doing voluntarily. It is in that way that the original ten-hour law was tried tentatively in England; a few manufacturers tested the matter in their own factories and found that their people could do as much in ten hours as they theretofore had been doing in twelve and thirteen; that made the law seem reasonable. (Page 64.)

*Women in the Printing Trade. Edited by J. R. MacDONALD. London, 1904.*

Some employers, like Mr. Bell, admit candidly enough that legislation enables them to be more humane (and humanity in this respect pays) than they could otherwise afford to be. The Act is "a great relief," such an employer has said. "Legislation is an excellent thing; existing hours are quite long enough. If a person has not done her work by the time they are up, she never will do it." "The Factory Acts are a very good thing," another has said. . . . "Legislation is a very good thing. I don't believe in long hours. Employers are often shortsighted and think that workers are like machines — the longer you work them the more they do; but this is not really the case; if they work from nine to seven they have done as much as they are good for." "The good done by the Factory Acts has quite outweighed any evils or hardships." (Page 82.)