Women: The Effect Of Industrial Revolution Essay, Research Paper

The industrial revolution was a great

time of change for men, the economy, domestic life, and brought the change

in the role of women in society to the forefront. As time evolves, so must

the lifestyles we as a society lead. This was no different during the industrial

revolution in Britain and France. Throughout this paper I will begin to

discuss how the impact of industrialization effected the switch in labor

from domestic to factory, the new role of the mother in an industrialized

family and the issue of education in the lives of ordinary people, as discussed

in the memoirs we have read in class.

One of the main effects of industrialization

was the switch in labor from the women working at home in a domestic environment

to that where her labor brought in wages to the family. Suzanne Voilquin

speaks of this in her memoirs “A Daughter of the People”, “And so,

at the end of the first week, we were very proud to to deposit on our father’s

mantle piece the eighteen francs we earned as wages.”(Voilquin, 112). Throughout

her story, she tells of how through the ability of her and her sister being

able to work, they were able to support the family while her father was

infirm. Without this opportunity, the family may have been put out onto

the streets. It is through these two women’s effort that the family survived.

With the women now being able to earn

wages out of the home, the role of the mother greatly changed within the

home of the industrialized family. Before the revolution, children were

raised on the plantation with the mother, father, and siblings as discussed

in Agricol’s, “Memoirs of a Compagnon”. “[In regards to his father's plantation]

moreover he made good use of his children’s labor. He wanted to make us

hard workers rather than gentlemen and ladies, and in this he did right.”(117).

We have also learned form this era that when women moved to factories,

newborn children no longer had the opportunity to reside with the mother.

Infants were sent off to a wet nurse, so that the women could return to

work as soon as possible after the birth. This provided a new environment

in which children were raised; however the pro’s and con’s of this new

lifestyle varied.

This brings me to my final point of the

issue of education in the industrial revolution. It seems that throughout

the memoirs the common theme is that labor was valued over education. Most

children had no education at all and went to the factory as soon as they

were able, while children who had a little schooling rarely went beyond

the third grade. Jeanne Bouvier speaks of this in “My Memoirs”, “[after

her first communion] ‘It’s a shame you cannot leave her longer. She’s very

gifted. She even works hard when it comes to manual tasks’.”(34). It is

shown here that girls were not inferior to boys and were just as capable

in school. This did nothing for the stigma that was already set on women.

Many times the father was not willing to pay for his daughter’s to go to

school; just the sons were worthy of the cost of education. “My mother?paid

the fees for her daughters with the money she earned?my father paid only

for his sons.”(Perdiguier 119). Obviously, the emphasis was placed on manual

labor during this revolution, for it brought in money that the family may

so desperately need.

The industrial revolution placed the ordinary

worker into a mirade of new, enterprising, and yet sometimes compromising

situations. Workers were faced with new problems, but also with opportunities

that had never been available before. It is through their struggle that

we are the society we know today. It is through the past that we can mold

our future.