

# *Testimonials on Labor Conditions*

## **Testimony of William Cooper, a witness before the Sadler Commission in 1832:**

*Q:* When did you first begin to work in mills or factories?

*A:* When I was about ten years of age.

*Q:* What were your usual hours of working?

*A:* We began at five o'clock in the morning and got out at nine at night.

*Q:* What intermissions did you have for meal?

*A:* When we began at five, we went on until noon, and then we had forty minutes for dinner.

*Q:* Had you no time for breakfast?

*A:* No, we got it best as we could while we were working.

*Q:* Had you any time for an afternoon refreshment?

*A:* No, when we began at noon, we went on till night; there was only the one forty-minute break.

*Q:* Did you ever work even later than the time you have mentioned?

*A:* I cannot say that I worked later there. I had a sister who worked upstairs, and she worked till eleven at night.

*Q:* At what time in the morning did she begin to work?

*A:* At the same time I did.

*Q:* To keep you at your work for such a length of time, what means were taken to keep you awake and attentive?

*A:* They whipped us at times.

## **Statement of Patience Kershaw, delivered before the Ashley Mines Investigation of 1842:**

*I am Patience Kershaw, I am seventeen years old. My father has been dead about a year. My mother is living and has ten children, five lads and five lassies. All my sisters have been coal carriers but three went to the mill. Alice went because her legs swelled from carrying coal in the cold water of the mine. I never went to school. I go to Sunday-school, but cannot read or write. I go to the [coal] pit at five o'clock in the morning and come out at five in the evening. I get my breakfast of porridge and milk first. I take my dinner with me, a loaf, and eat it as I go. I do not stop or rest any time for that purpose. I get nothing else until I get home, and then have potatoes and meat, not meat every day, though. The bald place upon my head is made by pushing the coal cart. I push the cart a mile and more underground and back; they weigh over 300 pounds; I push 11 a day. I wear a belt and chain to pull the cart out. I am the only girl in the pit. There are about 20 boys and 15 men*