

# Industrialized America and child labour

Spoiler alert: it sucked to be a kid during industrialization



Why are you at school today and not a factory?

What is the origin of child labour laws?

# Today's Lesson

## Overview:

- **Review** the conditions of the period
- Examine **the history of child labour**
  - The long history of child labour
- **Activity:** group primary source analysis
- Look at how the **government responded**
  - child labour laws slowly spread
- **Discuss child labour today**
  - Is it really gone?

## Objectives:

- *Make you grateful to be in class today and not a factory*
- **Understand the history of child labour in America**
- **Analyze** photographs, using historical methods



Young black “nanny”, Texas

## Check your history: when did child labour “start”?

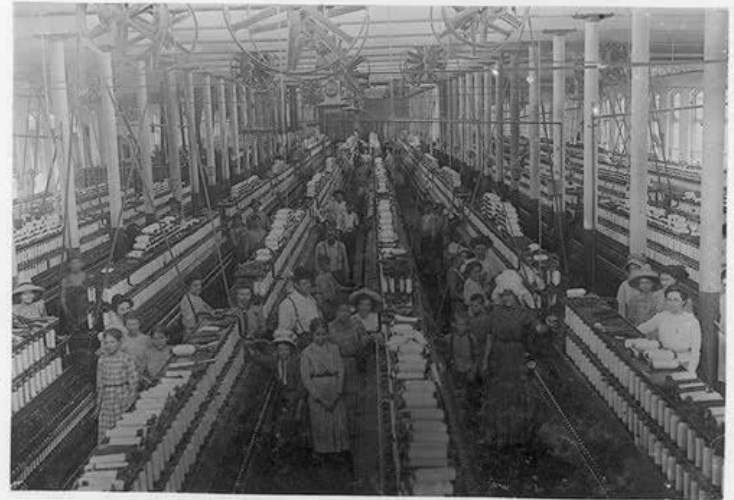
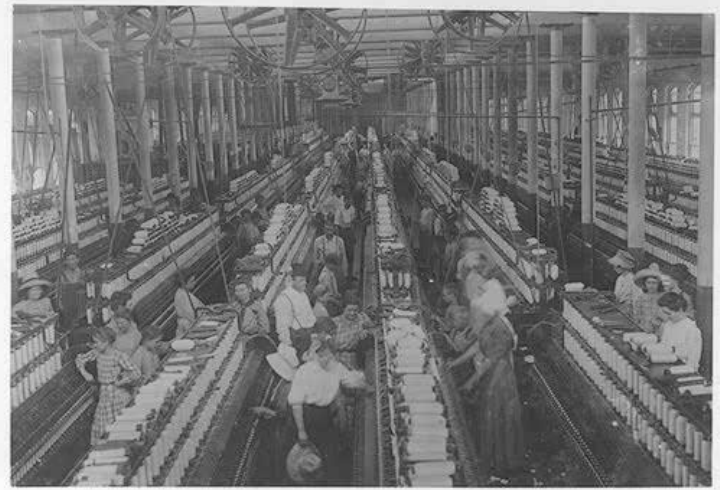
- **No definitive start date**
- **Two forms: indentured servitude and domestic work**
  - Indentured servitude = a contract where you sell your labour for a set time (ex. 2 years)
  - Domestic work = helping with framing, running of the family
- Children were **profitable**:
  - Sellable (as slaves)
  - Extra hands (agriculture, domestic work)

# Child Labour and Industrialization

Industrialization **increased** child labour demand in America. Focus on **increased production** meant more **child labourers**.

EX: **1890** the US Census estimated that roughly **1 million children were working**. By some estimates, **children ages 10-15 made up around 18% of the nation's total labor force**

Why would  
children/family  
choose child  
labour?



- No access to education/people thought working was the best thing for childhood development
- Small hands were good to get into machinery
- You can pay them less
- Families need all the money they can get
- Less like to strike, unionize, stand up for their rights

# Citizen action against child labour: National Child Labour Committee (NCLC)

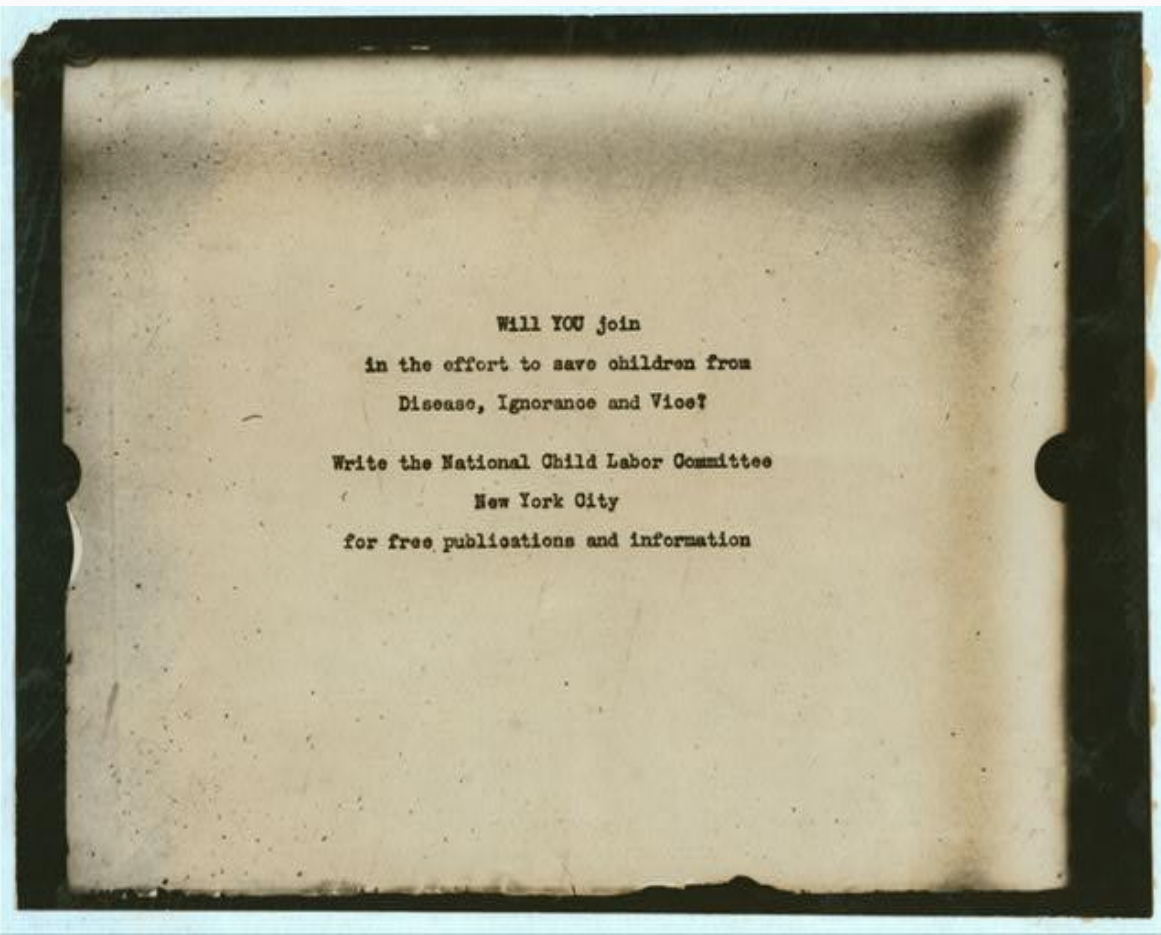
- Labour movements (mostly lead by women) campaigned fiercely, **as early as 1832!**
- **NCLC**, f. 1904
  - Mandate: to end child labour, provide free compulsory education
- **Lewis Hines** joins the NCLC in 1909, starts **photojournalism** campaign







Lewis Hine, 1874 - 1940



Advertisement for the NCLC

# Primary Source Analysis Time!

As a class:

- **Observe**
  - What do you see?
- **Reflect**
  - Why do you think this photo was taken?
- **Question**
  - What do you wonder about?



# ACTIVITY:

## Group Source Analysis

- Groups of 3 max
- Each group gets a random historical photograph
- 20 minutes discuss the following prompts (-->)
- Be prepared to present your findings with the class

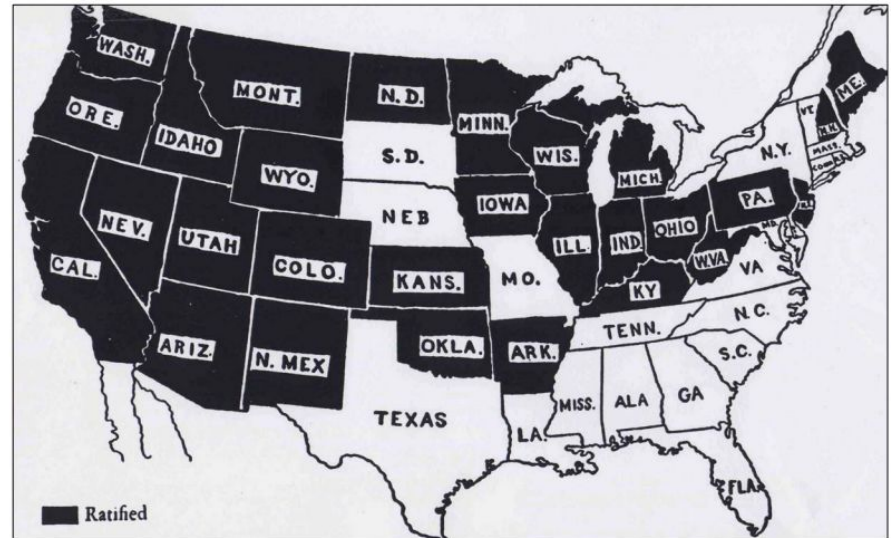
- **Observe**
  - What do you see?
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- **Question**
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## How did government respond?

## Started state by state:

- **1836:** Massachusetts passes **first** child labor law
- **1911-1914: Thirty-nine states** pass child labor laws

### States Ratifying Child Labor Amendment, 1937

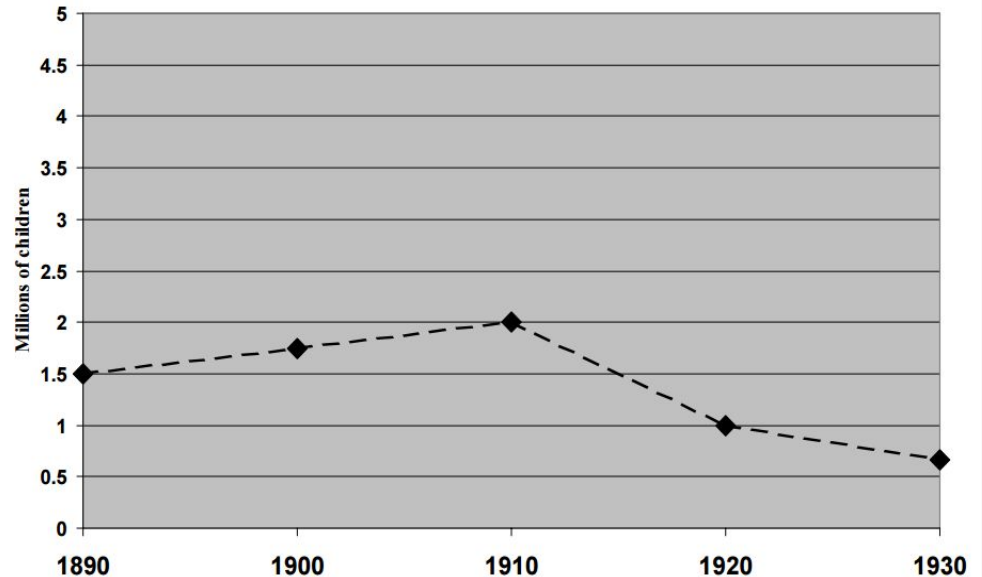


# Turning Point: Fair Labor Standards Act (1938)

## Fair Labor Standards Act (1938):

- Set minimum working age at 14 (18 for hazardous work)
- Set maximum hours for work: 18hr/week during the school year, 40hrs/week on vacation
- Reasonable hours: 7AM - 7PM during school year, 7AM - 9PM otherwise

## In 1910, Child Labor Begins to Decline



Question: is child  
labour gone today?

# If you guessed yes, you're wrong!

It exists, but not in North America

**Factors** that lead to the exportation of child labour:

- 1) Free trade
- 2) Globalization
- 3) IMF and World Bank

# But how does it work exactly?

National child labour laws often include exemptions, examples:

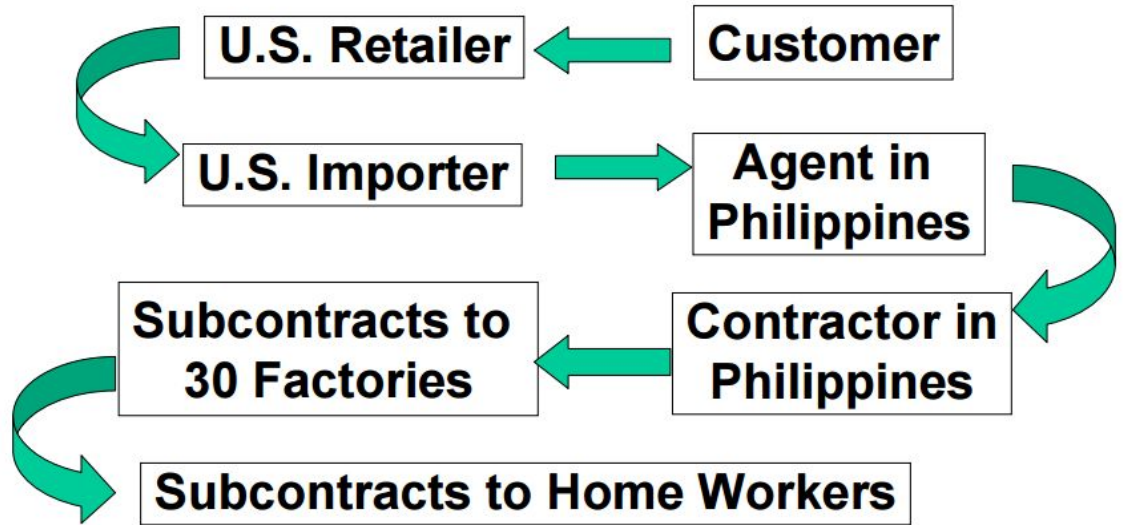
**Nepal:** minimum age of 14 for most work. . . plantations and brick kilns are exempt.

**Kenya:** prohibits children under 16 from industrial work. . . but excludes agriculture.

*Free trade allows the easy flow of these goods into Western markets*

## Subcontracting: Hidden Labor Conditions

*Production chain for one line of infant clothing sold at JCPenney in 1996*



Source: *The Apparel Industry and Codes of Conduct: A Solution to the International Child Labor Problem?* (Dept. of Labor, 1996).



The problem also persists in North America!

## **WAL-MART FINED \$205,650 IN CHILD LABOR CASE**

Published on March 2, 2000 Page: 1A

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**Byline:** JOSHUA L. WEINSTEIN Staff Writer

A warning didn't work, so the state has fined Wal-Mart \$205,650 for breaking child labor laws in every one of its stores in Maine. It is the largest such fine the state has imposed.

What is our responsibility today?  
What did people of the past do?

# Review and Recap

Child labour:

- Been around for a while
- Got worse with industrialization

People's protest:

- Started with labour and women's movement
- Slowly spread across states, until federal legislation

Is it over though?

- Not yet! Exists still, mostly in other parts of the world