

**SENIOR vs. POLANYI ON THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THE
1833 FACTORY ACT: EVIDENCE FROM CONTEMPORARY
OBSERVERS¹**

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ABSTRACT

In the 19th century, the British Parliament passed a series of acts to regulate the employment of children, adolescents and adult women in factories. The 1833 Factory Act, which aimed at improving the working conditions of children in textile factories, is considered the first effective act. Although the general belief was that the factory acts were the result of humanitarian considerations, the underlying motivations of the politicians who supported the 1833 Factory Act have been questioned since then. In a letter he wrote in 1837, Nassau W. Senior argued that operatives pushed for restricting the work hours of children to increase the price of their labor. Putting Senior's argument in the center of their debate, a group of economists argued that they provided a public choice perspective emphasizing the role of pressure on the part of an interest group (operatives in this case) in the legislative process. Karl Polanyi, on the other hand, presented a totally different, if not completely opposite approach. He put forward the idea that the laboring people were hardly effective in this legislative activity which primarily reflected the resistance of the landlords to mill owners whose interests conflicted on the issue of food prices. This paper searches for evidence to support these arguments by rereading four factory guide books written in the twelve-year period following the 1833 Factory Act. To this end, Andrew Ure's *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835), Peter Gaskell's *Artisans and Machinery* (1836), William Cooke Taylor's *Factories and the Factory System* (1844) and Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) are reviewed.

Keywords: *1833 Factory Act, Nassau Senior, Karl Polanyi, Factory Guide Books*

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INTRODUCTION

In the 19th century, British Parliament passed a series of acts to regulate the employment of children, adolescents and adult women. The 1833 Factory Act, which aimed at improving the working conditions of children in textile factories, is considered the first effective act. According to the 1833 Act, no child under nine years of age was to be employed; no child between the ages nine and thirteen was to be employed for more than nine hours (with one hour lunch break) a day; no person under eighteen was to be employed for more than 12 hours a day; two hours schooling was required for children, and for the first time factory inspectors, controlled by the British Home Office², were appointed to enforce the law (Anderson et.al., 1989; Hutchins and Harrison, 1966 [1903]).

The conventional view of economic history puts forward that between 1780 and 1820 Britain experienced an absolute transformation, albeit the term "Industrial Revolution" is a controversial issue.³ The productive power of the British economy increased substantially starting with the 1780s. The engine of this transformation was the textile sector. Hobsbawm (1997 [1962]) states that the cotton industry, which employed almost one and a half million people directly or indirectly in 1833, dominated the movements of the entire economy, with its impressive weight in the foreign trade. Around the middle of the 19th century, technological developments in iron and coal industries took the revolution to a different level. Massive urbanization, change in the nature of work, such as the regularity and discipline of factory work and long hours of labor, decreasing political power of landed class along with the increasing power of capitalists, the emergence of a working class were the fundamental changes resulted from this massive transformation. In this context, factory acts enacted by the British Parliament to regulate and improve working conditions in factories throughout the 19th century reflected the changing power relations in British politics and economic structure. Although they existed prior to the 1850s, trade unions did not constitute a significant pressure group due to severe repression. Large segments of the society denied voting rights as of 1833 and even in 1870 only two in every five Englishmen had the vote. Under such circumstances, humanitarian considerations of some Parliament members

² Ministerial department, formed in 1782, responsible for policing and justice matters.

³ For detailed discussion please refer to Clark (2007), Mokyr (2004), Hartwell (1990) and Temin (1997).

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were the only hope for workers to attain better working conditions. Nevertheless, until the 1860s factory acts targeted mainly textile factories and included child labor regulations.

SENIOR vs. POLANYI

Although the general belief was that the factory acts were the results of humanitarian motives, the underlying motivations of the politicians who supported the 1833 Factory Act have been questioned since then. In a letter he wrote in 1837, Nassau W. Senior argued that operatives pushed for restricting the work hours of children to increase the price of their labour.⁴ He (1966 [1837]) stated that after the implementation of the 1833 Factory Act, parents who had children under thirteen incurred a loss as a result of reduced wages, and the operatives also suffered since they had to employ more assistants above thirteen at higher wages. He (1966 [1837]) continued:

"It may easily be supposed that the operatives are outrageous against this state of things. Their original object was to raise the price of their own labour. For this purpose, the spinners, who form... a very small (about 1-20th) but a powerful body among them, finding that they could not obtain a limitation of the hours of work to ten by combination, tried to effect it through the legislature. They knew that Parliament would not legislate for adults. They got up therefore a frightful, and (as far as we have heard and seen) an utterly unfounded picture of the ill treatment of the children, in the hope that the legislature would restrain all persons under 18 years old to ten hours, which they knew would, in fact, restrict the labour of adults to the same period."

Putting this argument of Senior in the center of their paper, Anderson et.al. (1989) argued that they provided a public choice perspective emphasizing the role of pressure from an interest group (operatives in this case) in the legislative process. To put it more clearly, they (1989) stated that "the interest group elements correctly identified by Senior –factory operatives and particularly the spinners- were key elements in an explanation of the emergence of the Factory Act of 1833." A similar argument to Senior's in terms of operatives' pressure was presented by Hutchins and Harrison (1966 [1903]). According to them the motive of the operatives was to limit the labour of children which was

⁴ Senior was not against the Factory Act or limiting of the working hours of children. He opposed the limiting of adult working hours. For details see Sorenson (1952) and Grampp (1965).

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a substitute for adult male labour⁵, and to limit the hours of adult labour by limiting the hours of children and young persons.⁶

Polanyi, on the other hand, presented a totally different argument, if not the very opposite of public choice argument. According to him, the Factory Act was a part of what he called the double movement. He (1957 [1944]) stated that

“It [the double movement] can be personified as the action of two organizing principles in society, each of them setting itself specific institutional aims, having the support of definite social forces and using its own distinctive methods. The one was the principle of economic liberalism, aiming at the establishment of a self-regulating market, relying on the support of the trading classes, and using largely laissez-faire and free trade as its methods; the other was the principle of social protection aiming at the conservation of man and nature as well as productive organization, relying on the varying support of those most immediately affected by the deleterious action of the market – primarily, but not exclusively, the working and the landed classes – and using protective legislation, restrictive associations, and other instruments of intervention as its methods.”

He (1957 [1944]) put forward the idea that “by interest and inclination it fell to the landlords of England to protect the lives of the common people from the onrush of the Industrial Revolution...Over a critical span of forty years it [Speenhamland Law] retarded economic progress, and when, in 1834, the Reform Parliament abolished Speenhamland, the landlords shifted their resistance to the factory laws. The Church and the manor were now rousing the people against the mill owner whose predominance would make the cry for cheap food irresistible, and thus, indirectly, threaten to sap rents and tithes.” Then Polanyi (1957 [1944]) added “the laboring people themselves were hardly a factor in this great movement the effect of which was, figuratively speaking, to allow them to survive the Middle Passage. They had almost as little to say in the determination of their own fate as the black cargo of Hawkins’ships.” William Nassau Senior and Karl Polanyi do not have much in common in terms of their economic thoughts and political orientations.

⁵ It is commonly argued that technological improvements enabled the factory owners to replace adult male labour with women and children ready to work for lower wages.

⁶ Another interest group pressure argument, mentioned also in Anderson et.al. (1989), is presented by Marvel (1977). Marvel (1977) stated that “the Factory Act of 1833 was intended by the leading textile manufacturers to restrict output, thus raising textile prices and increasing quasi-rents to those manufacturers whose operations were least affected by the bill’s provisions.” According to him, the legislation caused burden for a subset of textile manufacturers.

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Senior was a 19th century Classical political economist who advocated laissez-faire policies. Although he made a number of valuable contributions to political economy, his greatest impact was on policy front. Senior expanded the Ricardian concept of rent and he provided helpful intuitions into the relationship between the balance of payments and relative international wages and prices. He advanced the abstinence theory of profits, describing profit as a reward for abstaining from spending capital (Medema and Samuels, 2003). His Letters on the Factory Act must also be seen as policy recommendations, especially considering his "last hour" thesis. Although Senior was a pro-capitalist political economist promoting laissez-faire economics, he was not pro child labor. According to Sorenson (1952) he "never doubted the expediency of legislating to guard children against the destructive effect of overwork and undereducation." However, as Blaug (1958) states "he never changed his mind about the undesirability of regulating adult labor."

Polanyi, on the other hand, was a 20th century social philosopher, economist and historian whose thinking was largely influenced by the anthropological studies of Bronislaw Malinowski and Richard Thurnwald. As one of his former students puts forward "Polanyi created a general structure within which the dynamic interrelationships between economy, political institutions, social classes, and ideologies could be understood." This structure deeply influenced two distinguished creations of modern economic history, namely Fernand Braudel's Civilization and Capitalism and Immanuel Wallerstein's Modern World System (Fusfeld, 1988). According to Screpanti and Zamagni (2005), Polanyi's criticism of the concept of the market as a neutral entity is his most important contribution to economic theory. For Polanyi market was a set of institutions and it was set up through conscious state intervention. He (1957 [1944]) states that

"There was nothing natural about laissez-faire; free markets could never have come into being merely by allowing things to take their course. Just as cotton manufactures—the leading free trade industry—were created by the help of protective tariffs, export bounties, and indirect wage subsidies, laissez-faire itself was enforced by the state. The thirties and forties saw not only an outburst of legislation repealing restrictive regulations, but also an enormous increase in the administrative functions of the state, which was now being endowed with a central bureaucracy able to fulfill the tasks set by the adherents of liberalism....laissez-faire was not a method to achieve a thing, it was the thing to be achieved."

Yet, factory acts were the products of a concern for common people.

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This paper aims at determining whether there is evidence in support of these two economists' arguments in four factory guide books⁷ written in the twelve-year period which followed the 1833 Factory Act. To this purpose, Andrew Ure's *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835), Peter Gaskell's *Artisans and Machinery* (1836), William Cooke Taylor's *Factories and the Factory System* (1844) and Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) are examined. Among these four writers, Ure and Taylor presented support for the pressure group argument while Gaskell and Engels underscored political intervention as a result of bad working conditions as the motivations behind the 1833 Factory Act.

ANDREW URE and WILLIAM COOKE TAYLOR

The Sadler Report⁸ prepared before the passage of the 1833 Factory Act presented evidence of children suffering from difficult working conditions. Both Ure and Taylor openly rejected the idea that the 1833 Factory Act aimed at improving sanitation, work hours, education and safety conditions of children. The striking point is that neither of them believed that the working conditions of children were inhuman or even unhealthy in the first place.

Of these four writers Ure was the most pro child labor. The term Factory, Ure (1835) argued, "designates the combined operation of many orders of work-people, adult and young, in tending with assiduous skill a system of productive machines continuously impelled by a central power. [Factory] in its strictest sense, involves the idea of a vast automaton, composed of various mechanical and intellectual organs, acting in uninterrupted concert for the production of a common object, all of them being subordinated to a self-regulated moving force." Human beings, he (1835) continued, had to renounce their unmethodical habits of work, and to identify themselves with the uniform regularity of the complex automaton. Children with their watchful eyes, nimble fingers and convertible personalities were the perfect complementaries of this automaton. In this case, it would be futile to expect any negative thoughts from Ure about the employment of children in factories nor any regarding their working conditions. Ure (1835) believed that the constant aim and tendency of every improvement in machinery was to supersede human labour altogether, or to decrease its cost by substituting the labour of men with the labour of women and children. Moreover, Ure (1835) insisted that the children employed in textile factories were healthier and a lot more comfortable than the children employed in other

⁷ A new literary genre, known as "factory guide books" emerged in the middle of the 1830s. These works basically defined and described the production processes of mills (Edwards, 2001).

⁸ The report prepared by Michael Sadler in 1832 which exposed working conditions in textile factories.

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areas, such as sewing, pin-making or coal-mining. Contradicting all the accounts of that period, he (1835) wrote that in the factories that he visited he never saw children in ill-humour. Those children seemed to be always happy and alert "taking pleasure in the light play of their muscles, enjoying the mobility natural to their age." He (1835) went on to say

"the work of these lively elves seemed to resemble a sport, in which habit gave them a pleasing dexterity. Conscious of their skill, they were delighted to show it off to any stranger. As to the exhaustion by the day's work, they evinced no trace of it on emerging from the mill in the evening; for they immediately began to skip about any neighbouring play-ground, and to commence their little amusements with the same alacrity as boys issuing from a school. It is moreover my firm conviction, that if children are not ill-used by bad parents or guardians, but receive food and raiment the full benefit of what they earn, they would thrive better when employed in our modern factories, than if left at home in apartments too often ill-aired, damp, and cold."

Ure was extremely hostile towards the Factory Acts. As Rosenbloom (1964) properly summarizes, since Ure wrote his *The Philosophy of Manufactures* in 1835 he "was obliged to respond to the Sadler Committee's damning evidence on the conditions under which most factory work was performed. He attacked head-on, calling the evidence partial, distorted and fictitious, attacking the character of the key witnesses, laying the source of the evidence to the cotton workers' union, claiming that those abuses which were irrefutable were evidence of specific, not general conditions, and blaming the spinners themselves, not the owners, for the maltreatment of children." In addition, Ure (1835) propounded the violation of the rules of automatic labor as the causes of injuries.

Ure (1835) believed that factory operatives persuaded by artful demagogues, the unionists, were asking for fewer hours hoping that this would increase their wages by decreasing the amount of their products and therefore increasing their prices. He (1835) stated that if the union of operative spinners "had plainly promulgated their views and claims, they well knew that no attention would have been paid to them, but they artfully introduced the tales of cruelty and oppression to children, as resulting from their own protracted labour, and succeeded by this stratagem to gain many well meaning proselytes to their cause."

Ure was a devoted liberal, with unlimited support for the industrialists. He, according to Kumar (1984), was the worthy forerunner of the ideologists of the capitalist class. Ure (1835) stated that "since liberal principles have begun to prevail in the councils of Britain, they have given a wonderful development to the talent, the genius, the enterprize, the capital, the industry of the nation; they have pushed on

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its manufactures with an accelerated impulse among those of rival states, and have placed them on such a vantage-ground, as nothing but moral disorders from want of right education among the people can subvert."

Taylor (1844), in the same line with Ure, argued that the infant labour in factories was a national blessing, and it was an absolute necessity for British industry. For Taylor (1844), the children working in textile mills were better paid and they worked less as compared with the children in the agricultural and mining sectors. He (1844) stated "it is undeniable that the mill is a far better place than the mine, the forge, and the great majority of private workshops; and from personal inquiry we can state, that the children of hand-loom weavers far prefer employment in the factories to working at home for their parents. We have also inquired of those who have tried farm or field work, and have never found an instance in which the mill was not preferred to either." Moreover, according to Taylor (1844), factory owners would employ children only in tasks suitable for their age, because otherwise they would likely lose their inputs.

Taylor (1844) stated that abolishing child labour meant abolishing a means of support for children. The children who lost their jobs as a result of the Factory Acts either had to work in mines, or in other areas equally injurious to health; or they had to turn into vagrants. He argued that there was a 50 percent decline (from 21,977 to 10,627) in the number of children between the ages of nine and thirteen employed in factories in Manchester between May 1835 and February 1839.⁹ The Factory Acts, Taylor stated, "swept away the means of subsistence from 11.000 young persons, and took no further care about their destiny."

Taylor believed that operatives and their unions objected to child labour and supported Factory Acts not because they cared about it, but rather because they saw it as a substitute for adult labour. By limiting child labour, they thought that the demand for adult labour would increase and thus would wages. He (1844) put forward that "the two principles on which they [operatives and their unions] sought Parliamentary interference may be thus stated: --

First, -- That the displacement of juvenile and female labour would create a demand for adult and male operatives, and that this new demand for labour would raise its price in the market.

Second, -- That a Ten Hours' Bill would render it necessary to erect about one-fifth more factories than exist at present, thus creating a new demand for labour, and raising its price in the market." However, Taylor (1844) stated, the operatives were wrong and actually they had deprived their own children of employment, for the manufacturers would not replace the dismissed children with skilled adult labour which was

⁹ The Factory Acts might not be the main reason for this decline. According to Nardinelli (1980), rising real income and technological developments already brought about an increase in the rate of the decline of child labour, while the Factory Acts contributed to this decline.

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expensive. Instead, they would import untrained labourers from Wales, Scotland or Ireland ready to work for children's wages. Worse than this, this new generation of workers would be their competitors soon, causing the level of wages to decline. While explaining the disappointment of operatives, Taylor (1844) refers to Senior's aforementioned letter and clearly indicates that he completely agrees with Senior's arguments.¹⁰

Another reason that Taylor denied that the motivation behind the 1833 Factory Act was concern for working children's welfare was that in other sectors where children were employed, there were no similar arrangements. Taylor (1844) said that a return of all the accidents which had happened in mills in the last five years before the publication of his book, "would show that casualties have been fewer in proportion to the number of persons employed than in any other branch of industry which directly or indirectly threatens danger to life or limb." He (1844) added that they object not to the principles involved in the Factory Acts, but to the exclusiveness of their application. The reason for this exclusiveness, according to Taylor, was the power of landowners and mineowners in the Parliament, thanks to which they could keep their sectors out of the range of legislative sympathy.

PETER GASKELL and FRIEDRICH ENGELS

Peter Gaskell's *Artisans and Machinery* provides us with a detailed account of the problems of an industrializing and urbanizing society. *Artisans and Machinery*, Rose (1971) asserts, was not a mere outburst against the industrial system, but an attempt to look into the lives of the urban working classes and to isolate evils by inquiry and experiment. Gaskell believed that the urban factory system destroyed the ideal and peaceful family form, since family members worked in different factories or in separate parts of the same factory resulting in the downfall of family unity and in a divergence in their interests. The industrial system, according to Gaskell, lacked a moral code and did not generate a just social order. He (1836) stated:

"Why take from their homes and proper occupation women and children, and employ them to the exclusion of their husbands and fathers, and subject them to labour which, in the instance of children, their physical organization was unable to bear, and in that of the women must of necessity lead to the neglect of all the domestic offices – household economy – and conjugal and maternal duties; why throw the active labourer into idleness, and

¹⁰ On this issue, Kirby (2003) states "The Factory Act of 1833, with its limitation upon hours and ages, would almost certainly have been contrary to the wishes of spinners who wished to maximise their own family incomes rather than employing the children of strangers."

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dependence and thus lower immensely his moral importance? and why thus, laying the axe to the root of the social confederacy, pave the way for breaking up the bonds which hold society together, and which are the basis of national and domestic happiness and virtue?"

Gaskell (1836) maintained that the laborer became a subsidiary to the machinery, a part of its mechanism and the workers' importance declined with each improvement in machinery. As a result of the improvements in machinery, infant labor was replacing adult labor¹¹ which he found, unlike Ure, quite inappropriate and undesirable. He (1836) admitted that the work that children performed in factories was generally light in a well-regulated mill and that it was more of a matter of attention than labor. However, at the same time, he explained in great detail the harm that factory work and especially long work hours could cause to children's physical development, although they might look healthy on the outside.

Gaskell (1836) argued that the main reason for the 1833 Factory Act was the strong objection to the working conditions of children, though cases of harsh treatment and over-working were found in the old and small mills, as well as in the flax, woolen and silk factories and they were not common. He was not against the factory legislation but this one was ill-prepared according to Gaskell.

Gaskell (1836) stated that the Bill is an "absurdity", for it was founded on an ignorance of the internal economy of mills. He said that this is an economy which involves a set of operations in which children perform an essential role. He continued that each laborer relies on every other laborer in a system of mutual dependency, and that if the children employed by a spinner are dismissed, his work stops and subsequently the work of the mill ceases; thus, to him, the absurdity of the Bill lies in such "gradations" which result from it. He asked that if perjury and evasion fail to make the act insignificant or hollow, what position is then left to the masters? They must reduce their working hours to the minimum of 8 hours a day, for all of their employees or they must have children working in relays in order to enable them to work full time; or they should dismiss all employees under the age of thirteen. To him, each of these alternatives would involve great loss and annoyance to the master, but would weigh even more heavily on the labourers themselves.

Gaskell found the Factories Regulation Act, therefore, absurd in its details, complicated in its mechanisms, and beyond useless for the purposes it aimed to accomplish. Furthermore, it was not founded on

¹¹ Nardinelli (1980), on the other hand, argues that "child labor was not growing relative to adult labor before the legislation; it was declining." Therefore, it is difficult to assess the validity of Gaskell's observations on the one hand and Nardinelli's statistical data on the other.

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the commissioners' reports, those appointed specifically to gather the information on which the government could proceed, and he (1836) noted that "to crown the absurdity of the entire proceedings," the act was passed seven months before the findings of those reports were completed.

He (1836) stated that the only measures which could be taken that would be beneficial to child labour, as well as beneficial to the overall welfare of the operatives would be the establishment of a well-organized system of national education, with schools for very young children, as well as a prohibition against the employment of children under 12 years old. He added that this is early enough to enable regular labour and that if a child has been correctly taken care of both physically and morally, then subsequent attendance at a Sunday school will provide the child with all of the information it requires. He stated that at this age the labour required of the child will be "innocuous" in a modern and well-regulated factory, though he noted that it would not be favourable to the full development of his physical abilities nor to a "high and robust health." He said that after this period, if an individual will work in the mill at all, he "must become an integral part of the machinery of that mill" and as such must become part of the general economy regulating the whole, and that no interference to the contrary should be attempted. He concluded by saying that any legislation should be focussed on the steam engine, not on the child "who is its passive minister."

In his Condition of the Working Class in England, Engels described in detail how the new industrial system used and abused child labour by substituting it for adult labour, by substituting child flexibility and smallness for adult muscular strength thanks to the new machinery operated by water and steam power. He (2009 [1845]) stated that "...the more the use of the arms, the expenditure of strength, can be transferred to steam or water-power, the fewer men need be employed; and as women and children work more cheaply, and in these branches [spinning and weaving] better than men, they take their places." Therefore, Ure, Gaskell and Engels agreed on the issue of the substitution of the labor of women and children for adult male labor. While Ure depicted it as a necessary development, Gaskell and Engels found it sad and humiliating for men.

Engels admitted that the Factory Acts restrained the actions of factory owners. He (2009 [1845]) noted:

"The bourgeoisie says: 'If we do not employ the children in the mills, they are only left under conditions unfavourable to their development'; and this true on the whole. But what does this mean if it is not a confession that the bourgeoisie first places the children of the working class under unfavourable conditions, and then exploits these bad conditions for its own benefit, appeals to what is as much its own fault as the factory system, excuses the

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sin of today with the sin of yesterday? And if the Factory Act did not in some measure fetter their hands, how this 'humane', this 'benevolent' bourgeoisie, which has built its factories solely for the good of the working class, would take care of the interests of these workers!"

He (1845) employed medical experts' reports and statements to depict the cruel working conditions that children were subjected to and he (1845) stated that the political power intervened several times in order to protect the children from "the money-greed of the bourgeoisie". In that sense, he praised the 1833 Factory Act, and he criticized the factory owners who opposed and disregarded it. Engels (1845) admitted that the fine spinners (who spin fine mule yarn) had a powerful association and that thanks to it their wages were higher than the other operatives. However, he does not present any arguments about the role of the spinners, or any other group of operatives, or their power in the preparation and enactment of the Factory Act.

Engels (1845) drew attention to philanthropic motivations behind the factory acts in general by stating that:

"The ruinous influence of the factory system began at an early day to attract general attention. We have already alluded to the Apprentices' Act of 1802. Later, towards 1817, Robert Owen, then a manufacturer in New Lanark, in Scotland, afterwards founder of English Socialism, began to call the attention of the government, by memorials and petitions, to the necessity of legislative guarantees for the health of the operatives, and especially of children. The late Sir Robert Peel and other philanthropists united with him, and gradually secured the Factory Acts of 1819, 1825, and 1831, of which the first two were never enforced, and the last only here and there."

CONCLUSION

A great deal of literature related to the Industrial Revolution and its many aspects, including the working conditions of children, have been produced during the last two centuries. The aim of this paper was to search for the motivations behind the 1833 Factory Act, and in this process four factory guide books (Andrew Ure's *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835), Peter Gaskell's *Artisans and Machinery* (1836), William Cooke Taylor's *Factories and the Factory System* (1844) and Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845)) were studied with an aim to look for evidence to support two completely different views about these motivations. The first of these is the interest-group pressure argument of Anderson et.al, based on Senior's Letters, and the second of these is the paternalistic state intervention view of

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Polanyi. Unfortunately, there is no agreement among these four factory guide books, and thus four writers, on the motivations behind the factory legislation. Instead, we see that the perceptions of these four writers were totally determined by their perceptions of the capitalist system. Even the accounts depicting the working conditions of children in these four books are quite different, with opposing viewpoints in many cases. However, as has been illustrated, there is evidence partially coinciding with the two key arguments.

Being a devoted supporter of capitalism and the factory system, Ure was absolutely against the Factory Act and insisted that they were damaging to the interests of every group in society including child workers. He maintained that the Act was the result of the acts of workers whose goals were to decrease their work hours and thus the volume of production. Consequently, the price of their products and therefore their wages would rise. Taylor agreed with Ure on all these issues, and he blamed feudal elements in Parliament for the enactment of restricting factory acts in only the textile sector. Gaskell pointed out bad working conditions in the factory but he did not appreciate the Factory Act, suggesting that the Act did not grasp the internal economy of a factory. Finally, Engels presented views supporting Polanyi's argument, i.e. that government intervened to protect children from greedy capitalists and he argued that the factory acts were secured thanks to philanthropists.

As a final word, independent from the factory guide books, we would like to emphasize two points which place the interest group pressure argument on shaky ground. The argument in question was based on Senior's statements in a letter he wrote in 1837, however, in the very same letter Senior explicitly stated that the spinners knew that Parliament would not legislate for adults, and therefore they depicted a misleading picture of the working conditions for children to manipulate the law makers. This statement undermines by itself the pressure group argument, since it shows that the spinners were not politically strong enough to pressure the Parliament members. The second point, which strengthens the first one, is that the Reform Act of 1832 gave the vote in towns only to men who occupied property of a certain value. This clause apparently excluded six adult males out of seven from the voting process.¹² In this situation, it would be implausible to assume that a group without voting power could form a pressure group.

¹²www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle_democracy/getting_vote.htm

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