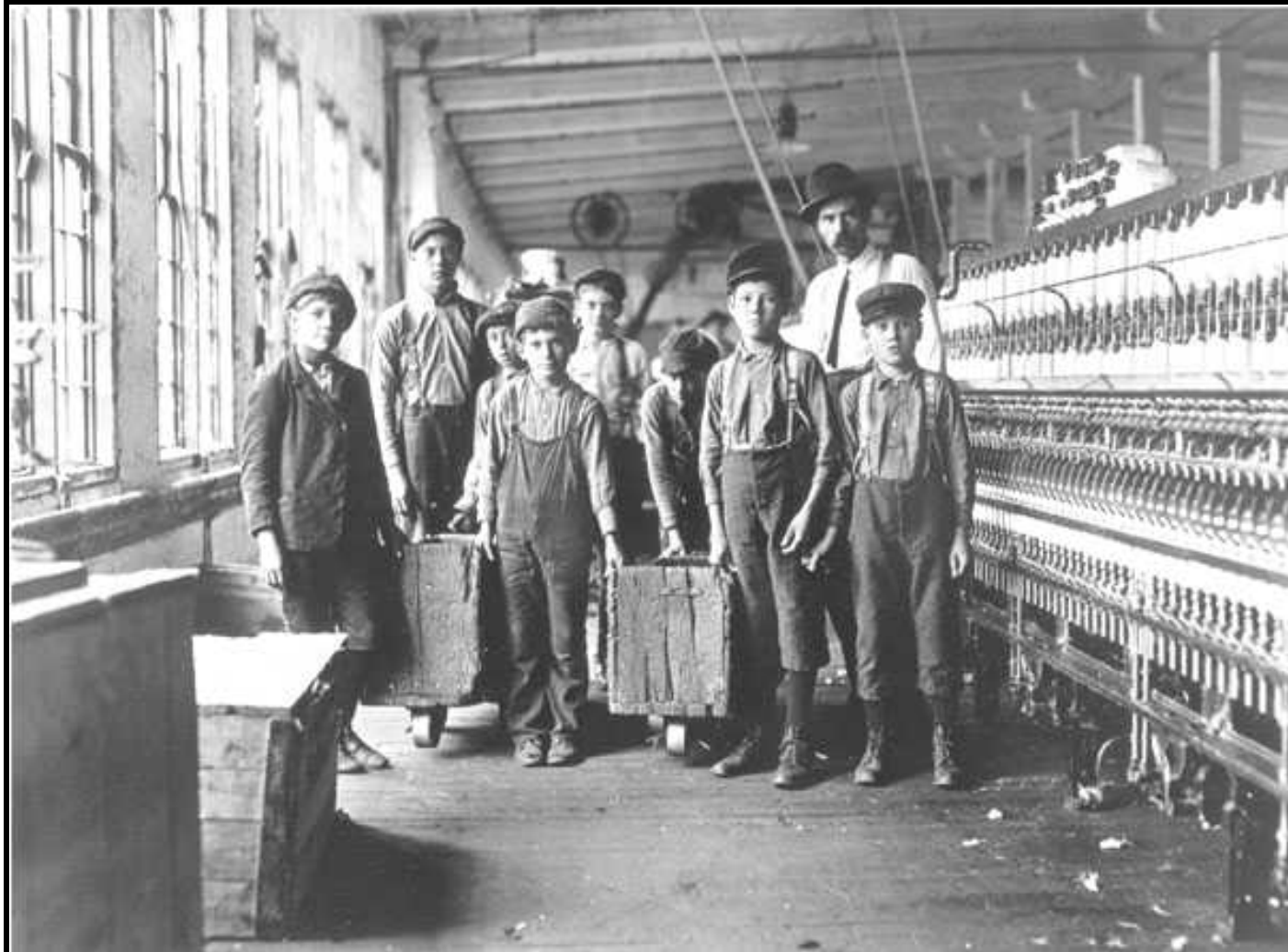


## Northern Factory Workers



<http://www.uni.edu/schneidj/webquests/adayinthelife/factorysystem.html>

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The great prosperity enjoyed by the United States in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century can be attributed to farmers engaged in agriculture and factory workers employed in manufacturing. In 1810, the value of all manufactured goods (according to the official 1860 census) was about \$200 million. In 1860, the factories of the USA produced almost \$2 billion worth of materials. Nearly one million Americans worked in industry and manufacturing rather than agriculture.

After the Revolutionary War, the United States entered a period known as the Industrial Revolution. Bringing together machines and materials in factories, the industrialists increased productivity, minimized costs, and maximized profits. The Industrial Revolution occurred mostly in the northern states.

Thousands of people began moving to cities to find jobs. People left farm work for factory jobs. Recently arrived immigrants took jobs in factories just to get started in America. Men, women, and children worked in dimly lit, dangerous, filthy “sweatshops.” They almost always worked long hours for low pay.

Cities and towns were unprepared for the swift increase in their populations. Housing conditions were poor, sanitation systems nearly non-existent. These urban areas became overcrowded, crime ran rampant, disease spread rapidly, and fire was a constant threat. Over time, of course, city life improved. There were more opportunities to find work in cities; museums, libraries, schools, and theatres eventually appeared.

Hard-working factory employees of the north were as racist as most white Americans. They did not like slavery but did not necessarily want it to go away. Northern factory workers reasoned if four million southern slaves were set free, they would move north and take away jobs from white workers.

Northern factory workers liked the Republican Party platform because it did not openly seek to abolish slavery; Republicans also called for the protection of naturalized citizens (former immigrants) and their rights. They also liked the speeches of Abraham Lincoln when he affirmed the *Declaration's* statement that “all men were created equal.” Lincoln was holding out hope that immigrants could improve their lot in life.