

Student Handout 7 – Document B

As long as the twelve-hour day prevails, attempts to improve health conditions in the mills will be largely nullified. If the best of bathing facilities were installed, although the men today feel their lack, it would probably be the unusual man who would avail himself of them. At the end of twelve hours in the mill most men want the shortest cut out to what remains of the day.

*When the mills are running full the men are chronically tired. The upsetting of all the natural customs of life every second week when the men change to the night shift, is in itself inimical to health. It takes until the end of the week, the men say, to grow sufficiently accustomed to the change to be able to sleep more than four or five hours during the day. And then they change back.**

Oliver, Thomas: Dangerous Trades, p. 141. London, J. Murray, 1902.

The alternation of day and night shifts every fortnight is desired by the men; it gives each man 26 weeks a year of day employment. But the seven-day week and the twelve-hour shifts accentuate the evils inherent in all night work.

By far the greatest menace to health in the steel industry is, in my belief, this twelve-hour day. Beside this, heat and even speeding are unimportant. If the other conditions that I have mentioned are at all unhygienic in their nature, the effect of everyone is intensified by the abnormal work-day. Who can doubt that toward the end of a twelve-hour shift a man's vital energy is sub-normal, and his power of resistance to disease materially lowered? If this is true, it must be trebly so at the end of the twenty-four hour shift, which is experienced fortnightly in Allegheny County by nearly 6,000 blast furnace men.

Source: The Pittsburgh Survey, Chapter VII: Health and Accidents in Steel Making, pp. 62-63.