

## Unit 3: Video 1 Transcript

### Introduction:

A: I'm Craig Heron; I teach history at York University. My particular interests are in Canadian social and cultural history, particularly relating to the experience of working people in Canada. I've published a number of things in that area that have dealt with the work experience of workers, their time off the job, particularly when they wandered into taverns and drank. In fact, I have a big new book coming out in a matter of days on working class life in Hamilton, Ontario which I've been working on for quite a long time. It covers a very wide range of the kinds of experiences workers had in different aspects of their lives.

### Q2: What are the origins of the Industrial Revolution in Canada?

A: Well, it's an interesting question to start with when someone says where did the Industrial Revolution come from? And it's mainly what is an industrial revolution. 'Cause for a very long time people assumed that it was this great climactic moment and also you woke on New Year's Day in 1850 and there it was all around you, factories and trains and whatnot. And then a great new period of historical scholarship in other countries started to say, well, in actual fact, if we look back in time before that, we'll see all sorts of indications that the beginnings were happening. And then also that some very antiquated things continued on past it. So maybe there was no revolution at all. I continued to use the term because I think it gets to a point-- there gets to be a point in the evolution of industrial society and industrializing society where things are really dramatically different than they used to be. And there was a Hamilton politician and businessman, guy named Buchanan who in 1872 said we're passing through an industrial revolution. So it meant something to people in Canada in the 1870's. And I think what I want people to think about when we use that term is not simply the factories and the machines and the steam engines and all those things that are usually associated with it. That's very important. The Industrial Revolution meant new technology, new power sources, no question. But it more importantly

meant new social organization. That work had previously been done in workshops, in people's homes. There wasn't much concentration of work. There were few places in preindustrial society where you'd find workers gathered together, maybe to build ships or make iron or something along those lines. But basically the social organization of work was very decentralized and largely in family groups. But what the Industrial Revolution does is bring people together. Employers have decided there are investment opportunities, there are profit-making possibilities and so they start to gather people together under the same roof to work for them. And to reorganize the way in which work is done to get the most work out of them. So in that process, they use technology where they can but generally I try and get people to think that, in fact, it's the social organization of that that's way more important. Especially in the first Industrial Revolution which is roughly from 1840 to 1890 when machinery is there in some industries but in many cases not at all. Historians like to call this combined and uneven development where some industries have moved a long way and others are still lagging way behind. But in actual fact the combination of those has created a new kind of industrial environment, a new kind of economy and it's new largely because of the way in which it's organized. So that you find considerable numbers of workers who used to work on their own, in their own craft shops, now working under the roof of one employer doing similar things to what they did before with similar tools. But he's calling the shots. He's paying them a wage to do that work as opposed to their old patterns of being on their own. And along with that, of course, comes social organization of labour that gets quite controversial because women are drawn into some of those jobs in ways that are quite unexpected in the sense that they're doing some heavy industrial labour that isn't the sort of work that in polite society they would think women should be doing. But even more controversial, of course, is that kids are drawn in; children become part of the industrial process in a number of locations. In mines, in some of the factories like textile factories, in places where they need light labour to move things around. 'Cause there are no conveyor belts in the first Industrial Revolution, everything's lifted and carried around. So kids are used that way. They're used as messengers to run through the streets 'cause they don't have telephones yet. So there are a whole variety of ways in which juvenile labour is really important to that first

phase. And so by 1890 we've got a different kind of world. A different kind of organization of industry. We've got lots of older industries that are still organized, and newer ones that are still organized in a small-scale basis, but we've got a big factory like the one that makes agricultural implements in Toronto, the Massey factory which is the biggest in the British Empire. We've got huge cotton mills in Montreal. We've got quite substantial lumber mills that are operating in many parts of the country that are only seasonal but are really big and technologically important, technologically advanced for their time. And on and on, a number of quite substantial changes. And people began to think about this as a different kind of world. They used industrial more often to describe their society.