

Educational materials developed through the Baltimore County History Labs Program, a partnership between Baltimore County Public Schools and the UMBC Center for History Education.

#### **RS#14: Testimony from the Factory Investigation Commission**

Abram Elkus, chief counsel, Factory Investigating Commission of New York State, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1911. Abram was actively involved in creating legislation dealing with child labor, working hours for women, fire protection, and similar safeguards for factory workers. The following excerpt is from the leader of the Factory Investigation Commission six months after the fire.

A man may be killed by a tenement house as truly as by a club or gun. A man may be killed by a factory and the unsanitary conditions in it as surely as can may be killed by a fire.

It is not less true that the slaughter of men and women workers by the slow process of unsanitary and unhealthful conditions is not immoral and anti-social, but the state is beginning to declare that it is legally indefensible and therefore must, through carefully considered legislation, be made virtually impossible...

The so-called unavoidable or unpreventable accidents which, it is said, were once believed to be the result of the inscrutable decrees of Divine Providence [acts of God] are now seen to be the result in many cases of unscrupulous greed or human improvidence.

McClellan, Jim R. *Changing Interpretations of America's Past*. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. McGraw Hill, 2000.