

## SOURCE 17



'The Dinner Hour: Wigan', painted by Eyre Crowe in 1874.

An MP asked Peter Dickinson, a miner from Aspull near Wigan, about the pit brow girls' working clothes: 'It is rather [like] a man's dress that they wear, is it not?' Dickinson agreed:

### activity

**1** Look at sources 5, 9 and 17 and the information in the text. Why do you think William Pickard thought of domestic service and factory work, but not pit brow work, as 'honourable employment'?

**2** Look at sources 16, 18 and 19 and the information in the text on pages 106–108.

**a** How does the information about trades unions help to explain William Pickard's and Peter Dickinson's statements to the Select Committee?

**b** How do the questions they were asked suggest that members of the Select Committee were probably not convinced by their arguments?

### SOURCE 18

*It is rather a man's dress; and I believe, in some cases, it drowns all sense of decency betwixt men and women . . .*

Report from the Select Committee on Mines, 1866

Questioned further, Dickinson agreed it was the most convenient form of dress for the type of work. Then the MP pointed out that 'the entire person is covered, and there is nothing indecent in the dress.' So why, he asked, did Dickinson speak of it as one of the main things that made the girls' work degrading? He answered:

### SOURCE 19

*It clothes the person, but it does not drown the feeling.*

Report from the Select Committee on Mines, 1866

## Final victory

In 1867 the Select Committee decided to take no action against the employment of pit brow girls. It felt there was very little difference between the work they did and that done by many other women working out of doors, for example on farms or in ironworks.