

The Gilded Age: Power and Privilege

Directions:

I: For your assigned group (this packet), identify:

1. Who are you? _____

2. Where do you live? _____

II. HOMEWORK

Annolight your packet marking/writing notes that would help to fill in part III below (you will do this in class tomorrow with your group)

III: Classwork (to do with your group in class)

1. How much power does your historical character have during the time? Put a percentage # on the spectrum below.

Amount of Power: 0%-----100%

Provide **four** examples of WHY you put your number where you did.

2. How much agency (power to change their lives) does your historical figure have?

Amount of Agency: 0%-----100%

Provide **four** examples of WHY you put your number where you did.

3. Does your historical figure represent individualism or collectivism?

0%-----100%

Provide four examples of WHY you put your number where you did.

IV: The Gilded Age

gilded – based on pretense; deceptively pleasing

gild

tr.v. gild ed or gilt (glt), gild ing, gilds

1. To cover with or as if with a thin layer of gold.
2. To give an often deceptively attractive or improved appearance to.
3. Archaic: To smear with blood.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/gilded> 12/4/2006

Read the definition of the Gilded Age above. Does your historical figure or person represent the gold layer or the grittiness underneath?

Provide four examples for your answer.

V: Prepare a group motto for your group based on the **amount of power and privilege** you have. Prepare **three** pieces of evidence to share that prove your motto.

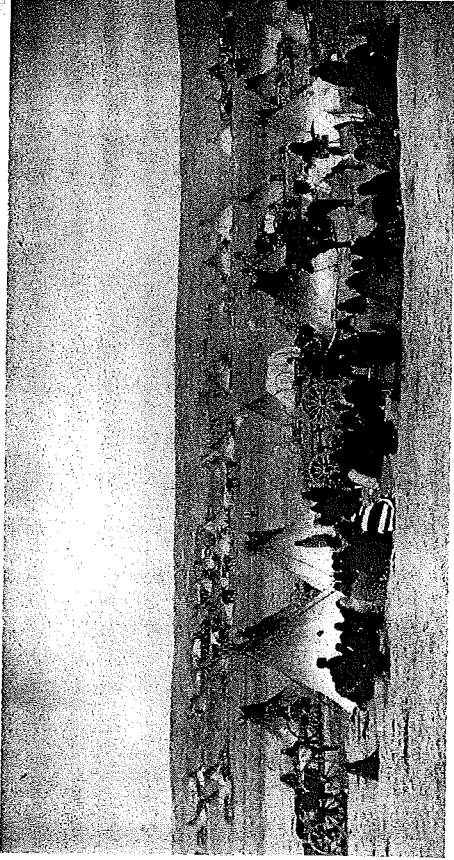
VI: As your classmates present, take notes on the amount of power and privilege they have. Get specific details.

- a) Elite
- b) People living in the West
- c) Union Member
- d) Poor
- e) Chinese Immigrant
- f) Captain of Industry/Robber Barons
- g) European Immigrant
- h) Government Official
- i) Farmer
- j) Women and Child Labor (marginalized laborers)

VI: As your classmates present, take notes on the amount of power and privilege they have. Get specific details.

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People living in the
West



Issue Day. Native Americans confined to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota could no longer hunt for themselves and had to wait for government-issued food rations.

practice that dated from colonial Virginia. Partly humanitarian in motive, this policy also saved money: it cost less to house and feed Indians on reservations than it did to fight them.

Well-intentioned reformers sought to "Americanize" the Indians by dealing with them as individuals rather than as tribes. The fruition of reform efforts came in the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Sponsored by Senator Henry M. Dawes of Massachusetts, the act permitted the president to divide the lands of any tribe and grant 160 acres to each head of family and lesser amounts to others. To protect the Indian's property, the government held it in trust for twenty-five years, after which the owner won full title and became a citizen. Under the Burke Act of 1906, Indians who took up life apart from their tribes became citizens immediately. Members of the tribes granted land titles were subject to state and federal laws like all other persons. In 1901 citizenship was extended to the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma, and in 1924 to all Indians.

But the more it changed, the more Indian policy remained the same. Despite the best of intentions, the Dawes Act created opportunities for more plundering of Indian land, and it disrupted what remained of the traditional cultures. The Dawes Act broke up reservations and often led to the loss of Indian lands to whites. Those lands not distributed to In-

dian families were sold, while others were lost to land sharks because of the Indians' inexperience with private ownership, or simply their weakness in the face of fraud. Between 1887 and 1934, they lost an estimated 86 million of their 130 million acres. Most of what remained was unsuited to agriculture.

CATTLE AND COWBOYS While the West was being taken from the Indians, cattle entered the grasslands where the buffalo had roamed. The cowboy enjoyed his brief heyday, fading then into the folklore of the Wild West. From colonial times, especially in the South, cattle raising had been a common enterprise just beyond the fringe of settlement. In many cases the early slaves took care of the livestock. Later, in the West, African-American cowboys were a common sight, although they were lost from view in the novels and "horse operas" that pictured a lily-white frontier. Much of the romance of the open-range cattle industry derived from its Mexican roots. The Texas longhorns and the cowboys' horses had in large part descended from stock brought over by the Spaniards, and many of the industry's trappings had been worked out in Mexico first: the cowboy's saddle, chaps (*chaparejos*) to protect the legs, spurs, and lariat.

For many years wild cattle competed with the buffalo in the Spanish borderlands. Natural selection and contact with "Anglo" scrub cattle produced the Texas longhorns: lean and rangy, they were noted more for speed and endurance than for providing a choice steak. They had little value, moreover, because the largest markets for beef were too far away. Occasionally they were driven to market in Austin, Galveston, or New Orleans, and some even to the gold fields of California, Arizona, and Colorado. At the end of the Civil War, perhaps as many as 5 million roamed the grasslands of Texas, still neglected—but not for long. In the upper Mississippi Valley, where herds had been depleted by the war, cattle were in great demand, and the Texas cattle could be had just for the effort of rounding them up.

So the cattle drives began anew after the Civil War, but on a scale far greater than before. In 1866 a large Texas herd set out for Sedalia, Missouri, the western terminus of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. But that route proved unsuitable because it was subject to raids by postwar bushwhackers (bandits), obstructed by woodlands, and opposed by Arkansas and Missouri farmers. New opportunities arose as railroads



Roundup on the Sherman Ranch, Genesee, Kansas, 1902.

pushed farther west where cattle could be driven through relatively vacant lands.

Joseph G. McCoy, the youngest of three brothers already in the livestock business near Springfield, Illinois, recognized the possibilities for moving the cattle trade west. He turned Abilene into the first successful Kansas cowtown. Located on the Kansas-Pacific Railroad at the northern end of a trail laid out through Indian Territory by the part-Cherokee Jesse Chisholm, Abilene was a "small, dead place, consisting of about one dozen log huts" when McCoy arrived in early 1867.

McCoy bought up 250 acres for a stockyard, laid plans for a barn, an office building, livestock scales, a hotel, and a bank—and sent an agent into Indian Territory to cultivate owners of herds bound north. Over the next few years Abilene developed into a flourishing town. But, as the railroads moved west, so did the cowtowns and the trails: Ellsworth, Wichita, Caldwell, and Dodge City, all in Kansas; and farther north Ogallala, Nebraska; Cheyenne, Wyoming; and Miles City, Montana.

The cattle industry spurred rapid growth. The population of Kansas rose from 107,000 in 1860 to 365,000 ten years later and reached almost a million by 1880. Nebraska witnessed similar increases. During

the 1860s, the cattle would be delivered to rail depots, loaded onto freight cars, and shipped east. By the time they arrived in New York or Massachusetts, some would be dead or dying and all would have lost significant weight. The secret to higher profits for the cattle industry was to devise a way to slaughter the cattle in the Midwest and ship the dressed carcasses east and west. That required refrigeration to keep the meat from spoiling. In 1869 G. H. Hammond, a Chicago meat packer, shipped the first refrigerated beef in an air-cooled car from Chicago to Boston. Eight years later, Gustavus Swift developed a more efficient system of mechanical refrigeration, an innovation that earned him a fortune and provided a major stimulus to the growth of the cattle industry.

But it was one thing to develop the processes to produce refrigerated meat; it was another to convince people to eat it. This required a major marketing campaign. Consumers balked at eating beef that had been butchered a thousand miles away. "The idea of eating meat a week or more after it had been killed," Swift's son noted, "met with a nasty-nice horror." What gradually changed public taste was the fact that dressed meat was significantly cheaper than fresh beef. In addition, Swift introduced the practice of displaying various cuts of dressed beef in butcher shops. He urged his agents in eastern cities to cut up the meat "and scatter the pieces," for "the more you cut, the more you sell." The combination of shrewd marketing and low prices soon convinced customers to prefer dressed meat.

During the twenty years after the Civil War, some 40,000 cowboys roamed the Great Plains. They were young—the average age was twenty-four—and from diverse backgrounds. Thirty percent were either Mexican or African American, and hundreds were Indians. Many others were Civil War veterans from North and South who now rode side by side, and a number had come from Europe. The life of a cowboy, for the most part, was rarely as exciting as motion pictures and television shows have depicted. Being a ranchhand involved grueling, dirty, wage labor interspersed with drudgery and boredom.

The flush times of the cowtown soon passed, and the long cattle drives played out too, because they were economically unsound. The dangers of the trail, the wear and tear on men and cattle, the charges levied on drives across Indian Territory, and the advance of farms across the trails combined to persuade cattlemen that they could best function near the railroads. As railroads spread out into Texas and the Plains, the

cattle business spread with them over the High Plains as far as Montana and on into Canada.

In the absence of laws governing the range, the cattlemen at first worked out a code of action largely dictated by circumstances. As cattle often wandered onto other people's claims, cowboys would "ride the line" to keep the cattle off the next ranch as well as conducting spring roundups to separate the mixed herds. Each rancher's cattle would be distinguished by distinctive brands. But this changed in 1873 when Joseph Glidden, an Illinois farmer, invented the first effective barbed wire, which ranchers used to fence off their claims at relatively low cost. More often than not these were parts of the public domain to which they had no valid title. In that same year an eastern promoter, John W. "Bet-a-Million" Gates, one of the early agents for Glidden, gave a persuasive demonstration of the barbed wire in San Antonio. Skeptical cattlemen discovered that their meanest longhorns shied away from the fence which, as Gates put it, was light as air, stronger than whiskey, and cheaper than dirt. Orders poured in, and Gates eventually put together a virtual monopoly in the American Steel and Wire Company.

The greatest boom in the range-cattle trade came in the early 1880s, when eastern and European investors began to pour money into the "Beef Bonanza." Cattle growing, like mining, entered a season of wild speculation, and then evolved from a romantic adventure into a prosaic business, often a corporate business.

END OF THE OPEN RANGE A combination of factors conspired to end the open range. Farmers kept crowding in and laying out homesteads on the open range, waging "barbed-wire wars" with cattlemen by either cutting the cattlemen's fences or policing their own. The boundless range was beginning to be overstocked by 1883, and expenses mounted as stock breeders formed associations to keep intruders out of overstocked ranges, to establish and protect land titles, to deal with railroads and buyers, to fight prairie fires, and to cope with rustlers and predatory beasts. The rise of sheep herding by 1880 caused still another conflict with the cattlemen. A final blow to the open-range industry came with two unusually severe winters in 1886 and 1887, followed by ten long years of drought.

For those who survived all the hazards of the range, the response to these problems was to establish legal title and fence in the lands, re-

strict the herds to a reasonable size, and provide shelter and hay against the rigors of winter. Moreover, as the long cattle drives ended with the advent of more rail lines and refrigerated cars, the cowboy settled into a more sedentary existence. Within merely two decades, 1866–1886, the era of the cowboy had come and gone.

RANGE WARS The growth of the cattle industry placed a premium upon land, and conflicting claims over land and water rights ignited violent disputes between ranchers and farmers. Ranchers often tried to drive off neighboring farmers, and farmers in turn tried to sabotage the cattle barons, cutting their fences and spooking their herds. The cattle ranchers also clashed with sheepherders over access to grasslands. A strain of ethnic and religious prejudice heightened the tension between ranchers and herders. In the Southwest, shepherds were usually Mexican Americans; in Idaho and Nevada they were Basques or Mormons. Many Anglo-American cattle ranchers and cowboys viewed these ethnic and religious groups as un-American and inferior. This attitude helped them rationalize the use of violence against the sheepherders. Warfare between defenders of the bovine and ovine species gradually faded, however, as the sheep for the most part found refuge in the high pastures of the mountains, leaving the grasslands of the Plains to the cattlemen.

There also developed a perennial tension over grassland use between large and small cattle ranchers. The large ranchers fenced in huge tracts of public lands, leaving the smaller ranchers with too little pasture. To survive, the smaller ranchers cut the fences. In central Texas this practice sparked the Fence-Cutters' War of 1883–1884. Several ranchers were killed and dozens wounded before the state ended the conflict by passing legislation outlawing fence cutting. An even more violent confrontation between large and small ranchers occurred in Wyoming when members of the Wyoming Stock Association organized an assault against small ranchers, who they charged were rustling their stock. In Johnson County, Wyoming, in 1889, the cattle barons lynched James Averell, a small rancher, and Ella Watson, a prostitute embroiled in the dispute. The vigilantes were brought to trial, but the case was dismissed when the four witnesses to the hanging refused to testify.

Two years later, in 1891, the large ranchers organized a "lynching bee" to eliminate rustlers in Johnson County, and hired gunmen from

You have forgotten the ways of the fathers; therefore great distress is upon you. You must throw away all that the white man has brought you. Return to the dress of the fathers. You must use the sacred colors, red and white, and the sacred grass, and in the spring, when the willows are green, the change will come. . . .

Then he taught us the song and the dance which white people call the ghost dance, and we danced all together, and while we danced near him he sat with bowed head. No one dared to speak to him. The firelight shone on him. Suddenly he disappeared. No one saw him go. Then we were sorrowful, for we wished him to remain with us. . . .

At last we reached home, and I called a big dance, and at the dance I told the people what I had seen, and they were very glad. "Teach us the dance," they cried to me. . . .

Then they did as I bid, and when the moon was round as a shield, we beat the drum and called the people to dance. . . .

The agent came to see us dance, but we did not care. He was a good man, and we felt sorry for him, for he must also vanish with the other white people. He listened to our crying, and looked long, and his interpreter told him we prayed to the great Spirits to destroy the white man and bring back the buffalo. Then he called me with his hand, and because he was a good man I went to him. He asked me what the dance meant, and I told him, and he said, "It must stop." "I cannot stop it," I said. "The Great Spirits have said it. It must go on." . . .

On the fourth night, while we danced, soldiers came riding down the hills, and their chiefs, in shining white hats, came to watch us. All night we prayed and danced. We prayed in our songs.

But the agent smiled, and the soldiers of the white chiefs sat not far off, their guns in their hands, and the moon passed by, and the east grew light, and we were very weary, and my heart was heavy. I looked to see the red come in the east. "When the sun looks over the hills, then it will be," I said to my friends. "The white man will become as smoke. The wind will sweep him away."

As the sun came near we all danced hard. My voice was almost gone. My feet were numb, my legs were weak, but my heart was big. . . .

But the sun came up, the soldiers fired a big gun, and the soldier chiefs laughed. Then the agent called to me, "Your Great Spirit can do nothing. Your Messiah lied." . . .

All day I lay there with my head covered. I did not want to see the light of the sun. I heard the drum stop and the singing die away. Night came, and then on the hills I heard the wailing of my people. Their hearts were gone. Their bones were weary.

When I rose, it was morning. I flung off my blankets, and looked down on the valley where the tepees of the white soldiers stood. I heard their drums and their music. I had made up my mind. The white man's trail was wide and dusty by reason of many feet passing thereon, but it was long. The trail of my people was ended.

LIFE ON THE PRAIRIE FARMS (1893)

The Homestead Act of 1862 and its promise of 160 acres of free land if it were improved for five consecutive years enticed people to settle the Great Plains. This vast grassland, once considered "desert" and uninhabitable, was passed over by earlier westward migrants. But new agricultural techniques (dry farming, the chilled iron plow, drought- and disease-resistant wheat) helped transform the region into America's breadbasket. Despite these changes, many settlers found that economic survival was difficult: Their homestead did not contain enough land to grow wheat or corn profitably as overproduction drove prices down. Responses to the plight of the farmer were frequently politically or economically motivated, but journalist E. V. Smalley, author of the excerpt below, focused on the social aspect of agriculture. His depiction of life on prairie farms gave readers of the respected Atlantic Monthly a sense of the solitude facing families on the Great Plains.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. According to E. V. Smalley, what helped establish the farm isolation on the Great Plains?
2. What were the living conditions for many families on the Great Plains?
3. What perpetuates the lack of social events on the Great Plains?
4. Why does Smalley believe the solitude will eventually end?

Every homesteader must live upon his claim for five years to perfect his title and get his patent; so that if there were not the universal American custom of isolated farm life to stand in the way, no farm villages would be possible in the first occupancy of a new region in the West without a change in our land laws. If the country were so thickly settled that every quarter section of land (160 acres) had a family upon it, each family would be half a mile from any neighbor, supposing the houses to stand in the center of the farms; and in any case the average distance between them could not be less. But many settlers own 320 acres, and a few have a square mile of land, 640 acres. Then there are school sections, belonging to the state, and not occupied at all; and everywhere you find vacant tracts owned by Eastern speculators or by mortgage companies, to which former settlers have abandoned their claims, going to newer regions and leaving their debts and their land behind. Thus the average space separating the farmsteads is, in fact, always more than a half a mile, and many settlers must go a mile or two to

reach a neighbor's house. This condition obtains not on the frontiers alone but in fairly well-peopled agricultural districts.

If there be any region in the world where the natural gregarious instinct of mankind should assert itself, that region is our Northwestern prairies, where a short, hot summer is followed by a long, cold winter and where there is little in the aspect of nature to furnish food for thought. On every hand the treeless plain stretches away to the horizon line. In summer, it is checkered with grain fields or carpeted with grass and flowers, and it is inspiring in its color and vastness; but one mile of it is almost exactly like another, save where some watercourse nurtures a fringe of willows and cottonwoods. When the snow covers the ground, the prospect is bleak and dispiriting. No brooks babble under icy armor. There is no bird life after the wild geese and ducks have passed on their way south. The silence of death rests on the vast landscape, save when it is swept by cruel winds that search out every chink and cranny of the buildings and drive through each unguarded aperture the dry powdery snow.

In such a region, you would expect the dwellings to be of substantial construction, but they are not. The new settler is too poor to build of brick or stone. He hauls a few loads of lumber from the nearest railway station and puts up a frail little house of two, three, or four rooms that looks as though the prairie winds would blow it away. Were it not for the invention of tarred building paper, the flimsy walls would not keep out the wind and snow. With this paper the walls are sheathed under the weatherboards. The barn is often a nondescript affair of sod walls and straw roof. Lumber is much too dear to be used for dooryard fences, and there is no enclosure about the house....

In this cramped abode, from the windows of which there is nothing more cheerful in sight than the distant houses of other settlers, just as ugly and lonely, and stacks of straw and unthreshed grain, the farmer's family must live. In the summer there is a school for the children, one, two, or three miles away; but in winter the distances across the snow-covered plains are too great for them to travel in severe weather; the schoolhouse is closed, and there is nothing for them to do but to house themselves and long for spring. Each family must live mainly to itself, and life, shut up in the little wooden farmhouses, cannot well be very cheerful.

A drive to the nearest town is almost the only diversion. There the farmers and their wives gather in the stores and manage to enjoy a little sociability. The big coal stove gives out a grateful warmth, and there is a pleasant odor of dried codfish, groceries, and ready-made clothing. The women look at the display of thick cloths and garments and wish the crop had been better so that they could buy some of the things of which they are badly in need. The men smoke corncob pipes and talk politics. It is a cold drive home across the windswept prairies, but at least they have had a glimpse of a little broader and more comfortable life than that of the isolated farm.

of the long distances which separate the farmhouses and because, too, of the lack of homogeneity of the people. They have no common past to talk about. They were strangers to one another when they arrived in this new land, and their work and ways have not thrown them much together.

Often the strangeness is intensified by differences of national origin. There are Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, French Canadians, and perhaps even such peculiar people as Finns and Icelanders, among the settlers, and the Americans come from many different states. It is hard to establish any social bond in such a mixed population, yet one and all need social intercourse, as the thing most essential to pleasant living, after food, shelter, and clothing....

The plains of the West extend from the Gulf of Mexico to the valley of the Saskatchewan in the British territory. A belt about 300 miles wide on the eastern side of this vast region receives sufficient rainfall for farming. This belt is the granary of the continent, and even with its present sparse settlement it produces an enormous yearly surplus of wheat and corn. Its cultivators have thus far been engaged in a hard struggle to establish themselves on the soil, procure the necessities of existence, and pay off their mortgages. They are getting ahead year by year; and in the older settled districts good houses are taking the places of the pioneer shanties, and the towns show thrift and progress. Before long these prairie people will begin to grapple with the problems of a higher civilization....



THE EXPANSION OF BIG BUSINESS

The market revolution which transformed America before the Civil War brought about even greater changes after the war. This postwar industrial revolution included the spread of many prewar economic developments as well as the emergence of new technologies which expanded economic production. In particular, the railroads would help create a national market for American goods with inexpensive transportation costs; mass production of items through increased mechanization and commercial applications of inventions like electricity, the telephone, and steel production helped fuel the economic growth. The economic transformation of the late nineteenth century occurred in an environment where government policy was "laissez-faire" and business followed the creed of "survival of the fittest." The following selections describe some of the new technologies and chronicle the attitudes of those who benefited from the new economic realities.

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A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE ON AMERICAN RAILROADS (1865)

By 1860, the United States was the world's leader in railroad construction, having built more miles of track than any other country. Yet the United States still needed additional tracks, particularly in the West, and British investors were eager to help finance the expansion. British railroad entrepreneur Samuel Morton Peto toured the country in 1865 to examine the existing railroad "system" and assess future investment opportunities in American railroads. Peto took an active role in railroad construction in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, France, and Germany, so his evaluation was both authoritative and influential. His book, The Resources and Prospects of America, published after his tour and excerpted below, is an excellent commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of American railroads.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. According to Peto, who invests in the railroads, and for what purpose?

2. What does Peto believe are the problems with American railroads?
3. What is his overall assessment of American railroads for potential British investors?
4. What can be concluded about the state of American railroads from his description?

The system . . . on which railroads have been permitted to be constructed in America has been one of great simplicity. . . . In America . . . every one in the country has, felt from the first . . . that the construction of a railroad through his property, or to the city, town, or village he inhabited, was a source of prosperity and wealth, not only to the district in which he resided, but to himself personally. . . .

As a rule, nothing has been easier than to obtain from the legislative authority of a State in America a concession, or as it is there styled, a "charter," to lay down a road. The land in many cases, especially where it belonged to the public, has been freely given the line; in other cases, where landed proprietors were affected, comparatively small compensation have sufficed to satisfy their claims. The citizens residing in the towns and populous places of the different districts, have hailed the approach of a railroad as a blessing. Under certain regulations, lines have been permitted to be laid down in the main streets and thoroughfares of the cities, so that the trains may traverse them at prescribed speeds, and so that goods may be put upon trucks at the very doors of the warehouses and shops.

The influence of railroads on the value of real estates along their lines, and in the cities in which they terminate, is so well understood in America, as to have afforded important financial facilities to their construction. It is not the public who are invited in America to take railway shares; they are subscribed for in a wholly different manner. In order to promote the construction of a line, not only does the State which it traverses frequently afford it facilities with respect to land, but pecuniary facilities are often given by the cities and towns giving securities for certain amounts on their Municipal Bonds. The cities in which it is to have its termini also agree to subscribe for portions of its share capital, and so do the inhabitants of the towns and villages through which it is to pass. This is a very important feature of the American railway system, inasmuch as it gives the inhabitants of each district which a railway traverses, a direct local and individual interest in the promotion and well-working of the line. Every one, in fact, is interested in contributing to his own railway.

Not only the whole cost of maintaining the roads, but a very considerable proportion of the cost of their construction, has, in the case of the majority of the lines in America, been thrown upon revenue. I am afraid that the consequence of this has been injurious to public confidence in the American railways as commercial securities. Where lines are imperfectly constructed in the first instance—where they have to bear all the effects of climate and of

wear and tear, whilst in indifferent condition, it is quite obvious that the cost of reparations, even in the very early stages of their working, must be a serious burden. And where all this is thrown, at once, on revenue, adequate dividends cannot be expected. . . .

Most of the American lines were originally made in short lengths, as lines of communication between different towns in the same State; and without regard to any general system of communication for the nation. It follows, that even in the cases of lines which are now united and brought under a single management, much diversity of construction, and a great want of unity of system is observable. One of the great deficiencies of the American railroad system is, in fact, the absence of a general policy of management. Scarcely any attempts are made to render the working of lines convenient to travellers, by working the trains of one company in conjunction with another; and this gives rise to complaints on the part of the public, which may some day or other, be made to afford a ground of excuse for governmental interference. Nothing can be more desirable for the success of American railroad enterprises than well-considered general arrangements for the working and interchange of traffic.

Remarkable as has been the rapidity with which the American railroads have been constructed, and great as is the total mileage already made, the railroad accommodation of the United States is not to be regarded as by any means meeting the requirements of the country. The rapid growth of the system has only been co-equal with the rapid growth of the population: the extent of mileage is attributable to the vast extent of territory settled, and the great distances between the seats of population.

In many parts of the States, indeed, the existing railways are quite insufficient. In the South, the system is very imperfectly developed. Whilst slaves existed, there was a determined hostility in the Southern States to the expansion of any general railway system, arising from the apprehension that it would be used for the escape of slaves. . . .

From West to East, also, the present railways are quite insufficient for the growing traffic. The lines of communication from the West by canal, &c., which existed previously to railways, have not been affected by their construction. The produce of the Western States has, in fact, increased faster than the means of transport, and additional facilities for the conveyance of goods are urgently required. It is of the utmost importance to the development of the West that no time should be lost in making this additional provision.

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THE IMPACT OF MECHANIZATION (1889)

The rapid adaptation of machinery for mass production created significant transformations in the American economy in the post-Civil War period. The author of the

ing Phoenix; Dying Thunderbird

he challenge of "binding up its wounds" offered opportunities for vision
vation and large measures of idealism, the nation that emerged owed
acter largely to earlier patterns of economic development and territorial
Opportunities in the West—for sod farmers and "cowboys" as well as
eneurs—attracted thousands in the years following the Civil War. Farm-
l cowboys increasingly shrunk the landscape of the Native Americans'
nd restricted the lifestyle and freedoms they deemed fundamental to
rival. There were those like Standing Bear who faced the dilemma of
to white-imposed structures and rules, rules often based on conflicting
nd policies or, as illustrated by the Dawes Severalty Act, alternating be-
leals of preserving a limited degree of Native culture and transforming
letely into a variation of the dominant Anglo-American world.

Anglo-American governments and individuals in the West were sorting
cies regarding one group of nonwhites who shared the continent, simi-
es arose regarding African Americans in the South and eventually
both in the United States and in Asia. Ida B. Wells devoted her life to ex-
the explicit and at times subtle ways the southern racial system was
cted and maintained. Certainly part of the process required constructing
logy that could mediate and blend inconsistencies and illogical and
al belief systems. Southerners saw little contradiction between thinking
selves as law-abiding citizens reverently committed to the preservation
nd order and condoning, perhaps encouraging, the frequent activity of
obs to achieve those goals. At the same time, racial concerns of west-
es led to the adoption of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that sought
ely limit, if not eliminate, the immigration of Chinese to America.
n the first settlements in the New World, Anglo-Americans had been
r pushed, to the "West," a directional imperative endemic to their his-
' culture. The experience in America was no different. It should come as
rise that, in the nearly worldwide, turn-of-the-century, feeding frenzy of

imperialism, the United States would continue its westward orientation in the
form of Asian imperialism. For some thirty years after the Civil War, within the
context of racist values and policies within the United States, American sol-
diers were expected to fight a surprisingly tenacious foe in the Philippines—a
foe that merely desired the same independence and self-determination that
the former American colonies had achieved a century before. The rules of war
would again become an important issue; and the application of General Order
100 seemed to ensure humane and civilized conduct by American officers and
enlisted men. But did it? More importantly, did the system of justice to deal
with wrongdoing and preserve national honor work any better in these in-
stances than it did regarding the lives, liberties, and pursuits of happiness of
African Americans or Native Americans within the continental United States?

DOCUMENT 18.1

Letter from Uriah W. Oblinger to Matie V. Oblinger and Ella Oblinger

Fillmore Co Neb
Sabbath Feb 9th 1873

Dear Wife & Baby

I have just been looking over all or nearly all the letters received since we sepa-
rated and it seems as though today we ought to be together talking instead of us-
ing the silent but ever faithful pen but so it is Ma we are apart and the pen will
ever do its faithful work whether to record blessings or curses but thank high
Heaven ours does not record anything but love and blessings for one another, and
may it never be otherwise. . . . Ma I would love to be with you and baby and go to
church today but our lot is cast otherwise. It seems as though we are destined to
help make (what was once called the great american desert) blossom as the rose.

Within the memory of men now living, all this vast extent of land from the
Missouri river to the foot of the Rocky Mountains was covered with nothing but
what is called buffalo grass and inhabited by nothing but wild beasts and
wilder men. But now for nearly 200 miles west of the Missouri River the occa-
sional spot of buffalo grass is pointed out by the pioneer as the waymark of a
vegetation that but a few years ago flourished luxuriantly but now is being re-
placed by that more useful prairie grass called bluejoint which is the pioneers
hay & fodder. And the wild animals and wild men that but a few years ago
reigned supreme all over this beautiful extent of country are fast passing away
before the approaching civilization of the 'pale face' . . . and in a few years will
be numbered among the things that were. And what was once known as the
great 'American desert' will blossom as the rose. Surely the hand of Providence

Source: Handwritten text in collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.
Collection RG 1346. Transcription edited from Library of Congress, American Memory website mem-
ory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/nbhihtml/pshome.html.

must be in this, as it seems this desert as it has been termed so long has been specially reserved for the poor of our land to find a place to dwell in and where they can find a home for themselves and families and where they can enjoy the companionship of their loved ones undisturbed by those that have heretofore held them under their almost exclusive control. But enough of this and we will now set about answering some of the questions I can remember of your asking in your previous letters. . . .

DOCUMENT 18.2

Life in the Saddle

Frank Collinson

My First Trail Trip

When I recall that first long cattle drive to the Northwest and think of the hardships we experienced, I wonder if there was really much glamour or adventure to the trip. It was 98 per cent hard work, but I am glad I had the experience, and we helped make cattle history on that drive. We beat out a trail over sections of the country that had not been traveled before, and over which thousands of cattle would later be driven to the ranges in Montana, North and South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado.

I started working for Lytle in December, 1873, and during January and February we rounded up 2,500 big steers, most of them being bought in small bunches from various ranchmen. Most of those steers had been branded before, as they ranged in age from four to ten years. A few of the older animals had been branded as far back as the Civil War, but the majority had been marked in the late sixties. . . .

The work was rough, and it took rough men to handle those brush steers. Our work was mostly holding and driving in. We started early each morning. We would work the country and round up a bunch, then drive to the herd that was already being held. Then we'd work back to the corral, pen the ones we wanted to keep, and let the others go. Some of us usually stood guard around the corral. After a day or two, when we had a herd gathered, we would drive five or ten miles to another corral. Several hundred steers would be gathered in a week's time, and we'd work back to the pasture and spend a day road-mending. We would crowd a rough pole chute full of those steers and commence to brand. A 7D, branded lengthwise on the left loin, was Lytle's road and. After the cattle were branded they were turned into pasture, and we'd start out the next day in another direction to begin rounding up another herd.

I expected the cattle to be wilder than they really were, but they were accustomed to seeing men on horses and were fairly easily handled. Some of the steers were hard to hold. They would run together and make a beeline for

Source: Excerpted from Frank Collinson *Life in the Saddle* (Norman, 1911).

the brush. This problem was solved by driving the holding herd to where these wild steers would be likely to run out. When they were back in the herd again they usually cooled down. One or two real outlaws had to be roped and held until the herd was driven to them before they were turned loose again. A steer that was run and roped and jerked around was called a "windsucker." The wildest steers usually settled down upon finding themselves back with the herd after their first run.

We had several Indian scares when gathering those steers, but luckily no one was killed. Once Willie Lytle, a nephew of John T. Lytle, and I were making a trip from our camp to the Lytle ranch. Deer were thick and he shot a fat yearling doe with his Colt. After cleaning the animal, we tied it behind my saddle and rode on. A small bunch of Indians suddenly broke out of the brush and started after us, yelling at the top of their voices. "Cut that deer loose and let it go," Lytle said. This I did, and the fresh venison fell to the ground as we dashed on. When the Indians reached the meat they stopped. They must have been hungry. That was the last we saw of them. . . .

Our greatest trouble with the herd was stampedes, and it always took several days for them to settle down afterward. They seemed to stampede more on the drive from Fort Griffin to Camp Supply than anywhere along the trail. Maybe it was the atmosphere. Sometimes on a clear night the cattle would be bedded down, when the air would suddenly become warm and still. Then distant thunder could be heard and phosphorous would shine on the long horns of the cattle and on the horses' ears. Then we knew a storm was brewing. Suddenly like a streak of lightning every steer jumped to its feet and was away on the run. The entire herd seemed to move like one huge animal.

In such instances the cowboys tried to keep in the lead so that the steers could eventually be turned in a circle. If the lightning and thunder and rain continued, the frightened animals would keep running for several miles.

Finally when they were herded there was water standing everywhere, and it was difficult or impossible to bed them again. Then the cowboys, cold and miserable, and often wet to the skin, stood guard the remainder of the night. Maybe one or two broke into song, but it took a brave lad to sing under such conditions. . . .

We were all glad to be at the trail's end, and pitched camp on the Niobrara River. Lytle soon rode over to talk to General George Custer, then in command at Fort Robinson, about receiving the cattle.

In the entire distance from Medina County, Texas—1,500 miles—we had not experienced too many difficulties. We had not seen an Indian, had enjoyed buffalo meat from Griffin to Dodge, and before that, after leaving Mason, Texas, had killed antelope whenever we wanted fresh meat. The antelope were curious animals. They often came right up to our herd and sometimes ran into it. They were easy to kill.

General Custer and the quartermaster rode out the next day to look over the herd, and they were real pleased with the stock and commented on their

Captains of Industry

In addition to this
packet, please also
annolight pgs 15-16,
19-20 in your reader

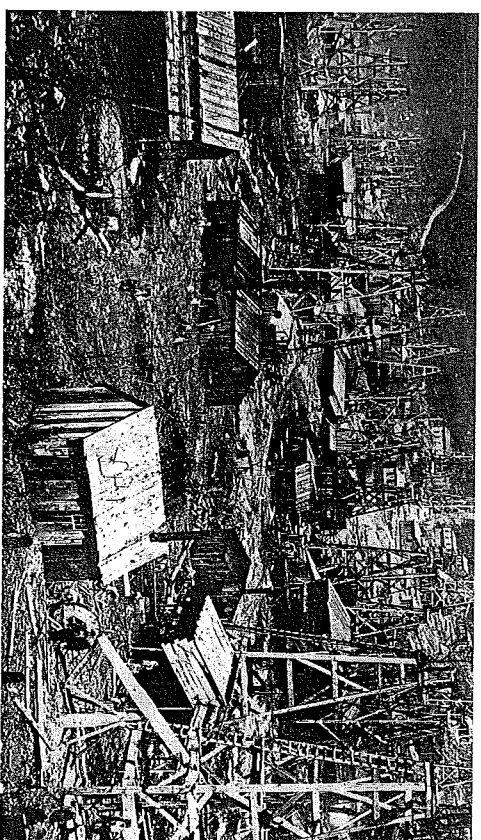
ENTREPRENEURS

Edison and Westinghouse were rare examples of inventors with the luck and foresight to get rich from the industries they created. The great captains of commerce were more often pure entrepreneurs, men skilled mainly in organizing and promoting industry. Several post-Civil War entrepreneurs stand out both for their achievements and for their special contributions: John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie, for their innovations in organization; J. Pierpont Morgan, for his development of investment banking; and Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck, pioneers of mail-order retailing.

ROCKEFELLER AND THE OIL TRUST Born in New York State, the son of a flamboyant, adulterous con man and a frugal, devout Baptist mother, Rockefeller moved as a youth to Cleveland. Soon thereafter, his father abandoned his family and started a new life under an assumed name with a second wife. Raised by his mother, John Rockefeller developed a passion for systematic organization and self-discipline. He was obsessed with precision, order, and tidiness. And early on, he decided to bring order and rationality to the chaotic oil industry.

Cleveland's railroad and ship connections made it a strategic location for servicing the oil fields of western Pennsylvania. The first oil well was struck in 1859 in Titusville, Pennsylvania, and led to the Pennsylvania oil rush of the 1860s. As oil could be refined into kerosene, which could be used in lighting, heating, and cooking, the economic importance of the oil rush soon came to outweigh that of the California gold rush of just ten years before. If it duplicated many of the earlier scenes of disorder, it ended by yielding more wealth. Well before the end of the Civil War, derricks checkered the area, and refineries sprang up in Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

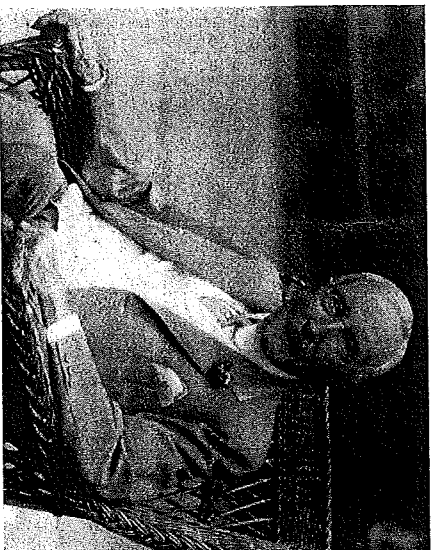
Young Rockefeller, blessed with icy efficiency and tenacious daring, recognized the potential profits in refining oil and backed a refinery in Cleveland started by his friend Samuel Andrews. He then formed a partnership with Andrews, and in 1867 added H. M. Flagler to create the firm of Rockefeller, Andrews, and Flagler. In 1870 Rockefeller incorporated his various interests as the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, capitalized at \$1 million.



Wooden derricks crowd the John Benninghoff farm on Oil Creek, Pennsylvania, 1860s.

Although Rockefeller was the largest refiner, he decided to weed out the competition, which he perceived as flooding the market with too much refined oil, which brought down prices and reduced profits. To bring order out of the chaos, in 1872 Rockefeller created the South Improvement Company, which he made the marketing agent for a large percentage of his oil shipments. By controlling this traffic, he gained clout with the railroads, which gave him large rebates (secret discounts) on the standard freight rates in order to keep his high-volume business. In some cases he forced the railroads to provide information on competitors' shipments. Rockefeller then approached his Cleveland competitors and offered to buy them out at his own price. Most of them saw the wisdom of this course. As Rockefeller put it, "the conditions were so chaotic [that is, competitive] that most of the refiners were very desirous to get out of the business." Those who resisted were forced out. As one competitor recalled, we were told that "if we did not sell out, we should be crushed out." In less than six weeks, Rockefeller took over twenty-two of his twenty-six competitors. By 1879 Standard Oil controlled 90 to 95 percent of the oil refining in the country.

Much of Rockefeller's success was based on his determination to "pay nobody a profit." Instead of depending on the products or services of other firms, known as "middlemen," Standard undertook to make its own barrels, cans, staves, and whatever else it needed. In economic



John D. Rockefeller, whose Standard Oil Company dominated the oil business.

terms this is called vertical integration. The company also kept large amounts of cash reserves to make it independent of banks in case of a crisis. In line with this policy, Rockefeller set out also to control his transportation needs. With Standard owning most of the pipelines leading to railroads, plus the tank cars and the oil-storage facilities, it was able to dissuade the railroads from servicing eastern competitors. Those rivals who insisted on holding out then faced a giant marketing organization capable of driving them to the wall with price wars.

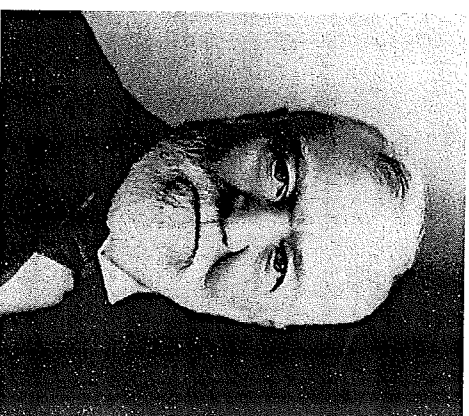
Eventually, in order to consolidate scattered business interests under more efficient control, Rockefeller and his friends resorted to a new legal device: the trust. Long established in law to enable one or more people to manage property belonging to others, such as children or the mentally incompetent, the trust now was used for another purpose—centralized control of business. Since Standard Oil of Ohio was not permitted to hold property out of state, it began in 1872 to place properties or companies acquired elsewhere in trust, usually with the company secretary. This was impractical, however, since the death of the trustee would endanger the trust. To solve this problem, in 1882 he organized the Standard Oil Trust. All thirty-seven stockholders in various Standard Oil enterprises would convey their stock to nine trustees, receiving “trust certificates” in return. The nine trustees would thus be empowered to give central direction to all the Standard companies.

The original plan, never fully carried out, was to organize a Standard Oil Company in each state in which the trust did business. But the

trust device, widely copied in the 1880s, proved legally vulnerable to prosecution under state laws against monopoly or restraint of trade. In 1892 the supreme court of Ohio ordered the Standard Oil Trust dissolved. For a while the company managed to unify control by the simple device of interlocking directorates, through which the board of directors of one company was made identical or nearly so to the boards of the others. Gradually, however, Rockefeller took to the idea of the holding company: a company that controlled other companies by holding all or at least a majority of their stock. He was convinced that big business was a natural result of capitalism at work. “It is too late,” he declared in 1899, “to argue about the advantages of industrial combinations. They are a necessity.” That same year Rockefeller brought his empire under the direction of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, a holding company. Though less vulnerable to prosecution under state law, some holding companies proved vulnerable to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 (see Chapter 22). Meanwhile the term “trust” had become so fixed in the public mind that it was used to describe large combinations under holding companies as well.

CARNEGIE AND THE STEEL INDUSTRY Andrew Carnegie, like Rockefeller, experienced the untypical rise from poverty to riches that came to be known in those days as “the typical American success story.” Born in Scotland, he migrated in 1848 with his family to Allegheny,

Andrew Carnegie.



consolidation of his enterprise, Rockefeller came to control about 90 percent of the petroleum industry. In 1900, Standard Oil's net profit was \$55.5 million. Naturally, the success of the Standard Oil Trust led other businessmen to use the trust to create monopolies within certain industries (sugar, tobacco, for example), and the term "trust" became synonymous with monopoly. Alarmed at the growth and economic influence of trusts, Congress formed the Industrial Commission in 1888 to investigate. While many businessmen testified before this body, Rockefeller's business tactics and Standard Oil were particularly scrutinized. Excerpted below is part of Rockefeller's response to questions about Standard Oil's success.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. According to John D. Rockefeller, how did Standard Oil become successful?
2. How did the rebate policy of the railroads help Standard Oil?
3. Why does Rockefeller believe "combinations" are a necessity for American business prosperity?
4. What does Rockefeller's testimony reveal about business activity during the Gilded Age?

3. Q. Did the Standard Oil Company or other affiliated interests at any time before 1887 receive from the railroads rebates on freight shipped, or other special advantages?

A. The Standard Oil Company of Ohio, of which I was president, did receive rebates from the railroads prior to 1880, but received no special advantages for which it did not give full compensation. The reason for rebates was that such was the railroad's method of business. A public rate was made and collected by the railway companies, but so far as my knowledge extends, was never really retained in full, a portion of it was repaid to the shippers as a rebate. By this method the real rate of freight which any shipper paid was not known by his competitors nor by the other railway companies, the amount being in all cases a matter of bargain with the carrying company. Each shipper made the best bargain he could, but whether he was doing better than his competitor was only a matter of conjecture. Much depended upon whether the shipper had the advantage of competition of carriers. The Standard Oil Company of Ohio, being situated at Cleveland, had the advantage of different carrying lines, as well as water transportation in the summer, and taking advantage of those facilities made the best bargains possible for its freights. All other companies did the same, their success depending largely upon whether they had the choice of more than one route. The Standard sought also to offer advantages to the railways of the purpose of lessening rates of freight. It offered

freights in large quantity carloads and trainloads. It furnished loading facilities and discharging facilities. It exempted railways from liability for fire. For these services it obtained contracts for special allowances on freights. These never exceeded, to the best of my present recollections, 10 per cent. But in almost every instance it was discovered subsequently that our competitors had been obtaining as good, and, in some instances, better rates of freight than ourselves. . . .

9. Q. To what advantages, or favors, or methods of management do you ascribe chiefly the success of the Standard Oil Company?

A. I ascribe the success of the Standard to its consistent policy to make the volume of its business large through the merits and cheapness of its products. It has spared no expense in finding, securing, and utilizing the best and cheapest methods of manufacture. It has sought for the best superintendents and workmen and paid the best wages. It has not hesitated to sacrifice old machinery and old plants for new and better ones. It has placed its manufactories at the points where they could supply markets at the least expense. It has not only sought markets for its principal products, but for all possible by-products, sparing no expense in introducing them to the public. It has not hesitated to invest millions of dollars in methods for cheapening the gathering and distribution of oils by pipe lines, special cars, tank steamers, and tank wagons. It has erected tank stations at every important railroad station to cheapen the storage and delivery of its products. It has spared no expense in forcing its products into the markets of the world among people civilized and uncivilized. It has had faith in American oil, and has brought together millions of money for the purpose of making it what it is, and holding its market against the competition of Russia and all the many countries which are producers of oil and competitors against American oil. . . .

It is too late to argue about advantages of industrial combinations. They are a necessity. And if Americans are to have the privilege of extending their business in all the States of the Union, and into foreign countries as well, they are a necessity on a large scale, and require the agency of more than one corporation. . . .

I speak from my experience in the business with which I have been intimately connected for about 40 years. Our first combination was a partnership and afterwards a corporation in Ohio. That was sufficient for a local refining business. But dependent solely upon local business we should have failed long ago. We were forced to extend our markets and to seek for export trade. This latter made the seaboard cities a necessary place of business, and we soon discovered that manufacturing for export could be more economically carried on at the seaboard, hence refineries at Brooklyn, at Bayonne, at Philadelphia, and necessary corporations in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

We soon discovered as the business grew that the primary method of transporting oil in barrels could not last. The package often cost more than

the necessary material for an extended length of time, hence we devoted attention to other methods of transportation, adopted the pipe-line system, and found capital for pipe-line construction equal to the necessities of the business.

To operate pipe-lines required franchises from the States in which they were located and consequently corporations in those States, just as railroads running through different States are forced to operate under separate State charters. To perfect the pipe-line system of transportation required in the neighborhood of fifty millions of capital. This could not be obtained or maintained without industrial combination. The entire oil business is dependent upon this pipe-line system. Without it every well would shut down and every foreign market would be closed to us. . . .

I have given a picture rather than a detail of the growth of one industrial combination. It is a pioneer, and its work has been of incalculable value. There are other American products besides oil for which the markets of the world can be opened, and legislators will be blind to our best industrial interests if they unduly hinder by legislation the combination of persons and capital requisite for the attainment of so desirable an end.

11. Q. What are the chief disadvantages or dangers to the public arising from them?

A. The dangers are that the power conferred by combination may be abused, that combinations may be formed for speculation in stocks rather than for conducting business, and that for this purpose prices may be temporarily raised instead of being lowered. These abuses are possible to a greater or less extent in all combinations, large or small, but this fact is no more of an argument against combinations than the fact that steam may explode is an argument against steam. Steam is necessary and can be used comparatively safe. Combination is necessary and its abuses can be minimized, otherwise our legislators must acknowledge their incapacity to deal with the most important instrument of industry. Hitherto most legislative attempts have been an effort not to control but to destroy; hence their futility.

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THE GOSPEL OF WEALTH (1889)

A new intellectual tenet—Social Darwinism—helped justify the position of wealthy businessmen while simultaneously explaining poverty, misery, and unemployment. Social Darwinists, led by Englishman Herbert Spencer, who coined the term "survival of the fittest," broadened the theory of evolution to include all phenomena.

THE GOSPEL OF WEALTH (1889)

He was the price modern society had to pay for progress. Andrew Carnegie amassed a fortune from the steel industry and was one of the few immigrants to become rich. He published "Wealth," excerpted below, in the prominent North American Review, in an effort to encourage businessmen to use their wealth properly. Carnegie set the example and followed his "Gospel of Wealth" until the day he died.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does Andrew Carnegie justify the contrast between the rich and the working poor?
2. What does Carnegie believe is the "proper administration of wealth"? Why?
3. Would Carnegie agree with William Graham Sumner's speech "The Forgotten Man" (Document 132)?
4. Why would some people criticize Carnegie's proposal?

The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth. The ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and the poor, but revolutionized within the past few hundred years, contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the poor with us to-day measures the change which has come with civilization. This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as a blessing. It is well, nay, essential for the progress of the race, that the some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature, arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that no one should be so much better than the rest as to be a universal squalor. . . .

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like that which pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great, but the advantage is also greater still, for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful development, which brings improved conditions in its train. Law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial inequality in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the world. We start, then, with a condition of affairs under which the best the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few and poverty to the many. We accept the conditions as they exist, the situations can be surveyed and accepted good. The question then arises, . . . What is the proper

Politics

PARADOXICAL POLITICS

Throughout the last third of the nineteenth century, political inertia reigned at the national level. A close division between Republicans and Democrats in Congress created a sense of stalemate. Neither party was willing to embrace controversial issues or take bold initiatives because each one's relative strength was so precarious. Many observers then and since considered this a time of political mediocrity, in which the parties refused to confront "real issues" such as the runaway growth of an unregulated economy and its attendant social injustices. Voters of the time nonetheless thought politics was very important. Voter turnout during the Gilded Age was commonly about 70 to 80 percent, even in the South, where the disenfranchisement of African Americans was not yet complete. (By contrast, the turnout for the 2004 presidential election was 56 percent.) The paradox of such a high rate of voter participation in the face of the inertia at the national political level raises an obvious question: How was it that leaders who failed to address the "real issues" of the day presided over the most highly organized and politically active electorate in U.S. history?

The answer is partly that the politicians and the voters believed that they were dealing with crucial issues: tariff rates, the regulation of corporations, monetary policy, Indian disputes, civil service reform, and immigration. But the answer also reflects the extreme partisanship of the times and the essentially local nature of political culture during the Gilded Age.

PARTISAN POLITICS Most Americans after the Civil War were intensely loyal to one of the two major parties, Democratic or Republican. Political parties gave people an anchor for their activity and loyalty in an unstable world. Local party officials took care of those who voted their way and distributed appointive public offices and other favors to party loyalists. These "city machines" used patronage and favoritism to keep the loyalty of business supporters while providing jobs or food or fuel to working-class voters who had fallen on hard times. The party faithful eagerly took part in rallies and picnics, deriving a sense of camaraderie as well as an opportunity for recreation that offered a welcome relief from their usual workday routine.

Party loyalties and voter turnout in the late nineteenth century reflected religious and ethnic divisions as well as geographic differences. The Republican party attracted mainly Protestants of British descent. Their native seat

Midwest, both of which were populated with Yankee stock. The Republicans the party of Abraham Lincoln, could also rely upon the votes of African Americans and Union veterans of the Civil War.

The Democrats, by contrast, tended to be a heterogeneous, often unruly coalition embracing southern whites, immigrants and Catholics of an origin, Jews, freethinkers, skeptics, and all those repelled by the "party morality." As one Chicago Democrat explained, "A Republican is a man who wants you to go to church every Sunday. A Democrat says if a man wants to have a glass of beer on Sunday he can have it."

Republicans pressed nativist causes, calling for restrictions on both immigration and the employment of foreigners and greater emphasis on the teaching of the "American" language in the schools. Prohibitionism revived along with nativism in the 1880s. Among the immigrants who crowded into the growing cities were many Irish, Germans, and Italians who enjoyed alcoholic beverages. Republicans increasingly saw saloons as the central social evil around which all others revolved, including vice, crime, political corruption, and neglect of families, and they associated these problems with the ethnic groups that frequented the saloons.

POLITICAL STALEMATE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL Between 1869 and 1913, from the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant to that of William Howard Taft, Republicans monopolized the White House except for the two nonconsecutive terms of the Democrat Grover Cleveland, but Republican domination was more apparent than real. Between 1872 and 1896 no president won a majority of the popular vote. In each of those presidential elections, sixteen states invariably voted Republican and fourteen vote Democratic, leaving a pivotal six states whose results might change. The important swing-vote role played by two of those states, New York and Ohio, helps explain the election of eight presidents from those states from 1872 to 1912.

No chief executive between Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt could be described as a "strong" president. None challenged the prevailing view that Congress, not the White House, should formulate policy. Senator John Sherman of Ohio expressed the widely held notion that the legislative branch should take initiative in a republic: "The President should merely obey and enforce the law."

Republicans controlled the Senate, and Democrats controlled the House during the Gilded Age. Only during 1881–1883 and 1889–1891 did a Republican president coincide with a Republican Congress, and only between 1891 and 1895 did a Democratic president enjoy a Democratic Congress.

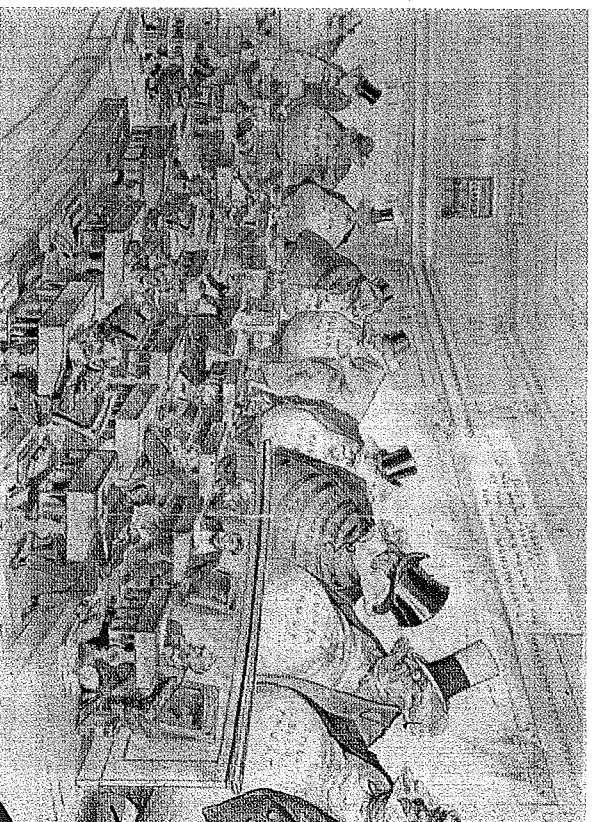
Political stasis thus led Congress to postpone making major decisions or launching new programs and to concentrate instead on partisan maneuvering over procedural issues. Because most bills required bipartisan support to pass both houses and legislators tended to vote along party lines, the Democrats and the Republicans pursued a policy of evasion on the national issues of the day. Only the tariff created clear-cut divisions between protectionist Republicans and low-tariff Democrats, but there were individual exceptions even on that. On the important questions of the currency, regulation of big business, farm problems, civil service reform, and immigration, the parties differed very little. As a result, they primarily became vehicles for seeking office and dispensing patronage in the form of government jobs and contracts.

STATE AND LOCAL INITIATIVES Unlike today, Americans during the Gilded Age expected little direct support from the federal government; most significant political activity occurred at the state and local levels. Residents of the western territories were largely forced to fend for themselves rather than rely upon federal authorities. They formed towns, practiced vigilante justice, and made laws on their own. Once incorporated into the Union, the former territories retained much of their autonomy.

Thus state governments after the Civil War were dynamic centers of political activity and innovation. Over 60 percent of the nation's spending and taxing were exercised by state and local authorities. Then, unlike today, the large cities spent far more on local services than did the federal government. And three fourths of all public employees worked for state and local governments. Local issues such as prohibition, Sunday closing laws, and parochial-school funding generated far more excitement than complex debates over tariffs and monetary policies. It was the state and local governments that first sought to curb the power and restrain the abuses of corporate interests.

CORRUPTION AND REFORM

After the Civil War, states made rudimentary attempts to regulate big business; most of these regulations were overturned by the courts, however. A close alliance developed between business and political leaders. As a congressman, James G. Blaine of Maine, for example, and many of his supporters, saw nothing wrong in his accepting stock certificates from an Arkansas railroad after helping it win a land grant from Congress. Railroad passes, free entertainment, and a host of other favors were freely provided to politicians, newspaper editors, and other leaders in positions to influence public opinion or affect legislation.



The Bosses of the Senate

This 1889 cartoon blithely portrays the period's alliance between big business and politics.

On the local level the exchange of favors for votes was not perceived as improper either. People voted for their parties out of intense partisan loyalty. Although they looked to their parties to supply them with favors, entertainment, and even jobs, they did not see themselves as "selling their vote." It was simply the practice of patronage democracy, in which local party officials awarded party loyalists with contracts and public jobs, such as heating customhouses and post offices.

Both Republican and Democratic leaders squabbled over the "spoils" office, the appointive offices at the local and the national levels. After an election it was expected that the victorious party would throw out the defeated party's appointees and appoint their own men to office. Each party had its share of corrupt officials willing to buy and sell government appointments or congressional votes, yet each also witnessed the emergence of politicians promoting honesty in government. The struggle for clean government became one of the foremost issues of the day.

HAYES AND CIVIL SERVICE REFORM In the aftermath of Reconstruction, President Rutherford B. Hayes admirably embodied the party

The most famous speech of the political history of the Gilded Age was delivered by William Jennings Bryan on July 9, 1896, at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The issue was whether to endorse the free coinage of silver at a ratio of silver to gold of 16 to 1. (This inflationary measure would have increased the amount of money in circulation and aided cash-poor and debt-burdened farmers.) After speeches on the subject by several U.S. Senators, Bryan rose to speak.

William Jennings Bryan—July 9, 1896

I would be presumptuous, indeed, to present myself against the distinguished gentlemen to whom you have listened if this were but a measuring of ability; but this is not a contest among persons. The humblest citizen in all the land when clad in the armor of a righteous cause is stronger than all the whole hosts of error that they can bring. I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity. When this debate is concluded, a motion will be made to lay upon the table the resolution offered in commendation of the administration and also the resolution in condemnation of the administration. I shall object to bringing this question down to a level of persons. The individual is but an atom; he is born, he acts, he dies; but principles are eternal; and this has been a contest of principle.

Never before in the history of this country has there been witnessed such a contest as that through which we have passed. Never before in the history of American politics has a great issue been fought out as this issue has been by the voters themselves.

But in this contest, brother has been arrayed against brother, and father against son. The warmest ties of love and acquaintance and association have been disregarded. Old leaders have been cast aside when they refused to give expression to the sentiments of those whom they would lead, and new leaders have sprung up to give direction to this cause of freedom. Thus has the contest been waged, and we have assembled here under as binding and solemn instructions as were ever fastened upon the representatives of a people.

We do not come as individuals. Why, as individuals we might have been glad to compliment the gentleman from New York [Senator Hill], but we knew that the people for whom we speak would never be willing to put him in a position where he could thwart the will of the Democratic Party. I say it was not a question of persons; it was a question of principle; and it is not with gladness, my friends, that we find ourselves brought into conflict with those who are now arrayed on the other side. The gentleman who just preceded me [Governor Russell] spoke of the old state of Massachusetts. Let me assure him that not one person in all this convention entertains the least hostility to the people of the state of Massachusetts.

...I shall not slander the fair state of Massachusetts nor the state of New York by saying that when citizens are confronted with the proposition, "Is this nation able to attend to its own business?"—I will not slander either one by saying that the people of those states will declare our helpless impotency as a nation to attend to our own business. It is the issue of 1776 over again. Our ancestors, when but 3 million, had the courage to declare their political independence of every other nation upon earth. Shall we, their descendants, when we have grown to 70 million, declare that we are less independent than our forefathers? No, my friends, it will never be the judgment of this people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetallism is good but we cannot have it till some nation helps us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we shall restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States have.

If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we shall fight them to the uttermost, having behind us the producing masses of the nation and the world. Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

Source: *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1896*, (Logansport, Indiana, 1896), 226–234. Reprinted in *The Annals of America*, Vol. 12, 1895–1904: *Populism, Imperialism, and Reform* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), 100–105.

Immigration

(Chinese + European)

ington Plunkitt, for instance, a power in Tammany Hall (New York City's Democratic organization) at the turn of the century, saw nothing wrong with a little honest graft. "Well, I'm tipped off, say, that they're going to lay out a new park at a certain place. . . . I go to that place and buy up all the land I can in the neighborhood. . . . Ain't it perfectly honest to charge a good price and make a profit on my investment and fore-sight?" Dishonest graft would consist of "robbin' the city treasury or levin' blackmail on disorderly houses or workin' in with the gamblers and lawbreakers." For his own epitaph Plunkitt proposed: "He Seen His Opportunities, and He Took 'Em."

MOVING FROM COUNTRY TO CITY But whatever the problems of the cities, the wonder of their glittering new electric lights, their street-cars, telephones, amusements, newspapers and magazines, and a thousand other enticements exerted a magnetic lure on the youth of the farms. Hamlin Garland told in his autobiography, *A Son of the Middle Border*, of his mixed sense of dread and wonder at first visiting Chicago with his brother. The city first appeared from the train window enveloped in clouds of smoke, "the soaring banners of the great and gloomy inland metropolis, whose dens of vice and houses of greed had been so often reported to me." Later the two young men wandered the streets: "Everything interested us. The business section so sordid to others was grandly terrifying to us. . . . Nothing was commonplace, nothing was ugly to us."

The new cities threw into stark contrast the frustration of unending farm toil, the isolation and loneliness of country life. The exodus from the countryside was especially evident in the East, where the census documented the shift in population from country to city, and stories began to appear of entire regions where buildings were abandoned and going to ruin, where the wilderness was reclaiming farms that had been wrested from it during the previous 250 years.

THE NEW IMMIGRATION

The industrial revolution brought to American shores waves of new immigrants from every part of the globe. By the end of the century, nearly 30 percent of the residents of major cities were foreign-born.

These newcomers provided much-needed labor, but their arrival created ugly racial and ethnic tensions.

AMERICA'S PULL European immigrants not only moved from country to city in their own lands, but increasingly they moved from the great agricultural areas of eastern and southern Europe directly to the foremost cities of America. They gathered in these cities in order to live with others of like language, customs, and religion, and also because they lacked the means to go west and take up farms. Though cities of the South and West (excepting the Far West) drew their populations mainly from the native-born of their regions, American cities as a whole drew more residents from abroad. During the peak decade of immigration, 1900-1910, 41 percent of the urban newcomers arrived from abroad, while 30 percent were American-born, 22 percent were the products of natural increase, and almost 8 percent lived in areas annexed to the cities.

Ethnic neighborhoods, sometimes populated by those from a single province or town, preserved familiar folkways and shielded newcomers from the shocks of a strange culture. In 1890 four out of five New Yorkers were foreign-born, a higher proportion than any other city in the world. New York had twice as many Irish as Dublin, as many Germans as Hamburg, and half as many Italians as Naples. "A map of the city, colored to designate nationalities," Jacob Riis (a native of Denmark) wrote in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), "would show more stripes than . . . a zebra, and more colors than any rainbow." In 1893 Chicago claimed the largest Bohemian (Czech) community in the world, and by 1910 the size of its Polish population ranked behind only Warsaw and Lodz.

This nation of immigrants continued to draw new inhabitants for much the same reasons as always, and from much the same strata of society. Immigrants took flight from famine or the grinding lack of opportunity in their native lands. They fled racial, religious, and political persecution and compulsory military service. Yet one historian has suggested that "the desire to get cheap labor, to take in passenger fares, and to sell land have probably brought more immigrants than the hard conditions of Europe, Asia, and Africa have sent."

More immigrants probably were pulled by America's promise than were pushed out by conditions at home. American industries, seeking



Steerage Deck of the S.S. Penland, 1893. These immigrants are about to arrive at New York's Ellis Island.

cheap labor, kept recruiting agents on watch abroad and at American ports. Railroads, eager to sell land and build up the traffic on their lines, put out tempting propaganda in a medley of languages. Many of the western and southern states set up official bureaus and agents to attract immigrants. Under the Contract Labor Law of 1864, the federal government itself encouraged immigration by helping to pay the immigrant's passage through a lien on his or her wages. The law was repealed in 1868, but not until 1885 did the government forbid companies to import contract labor, which put immigrant workers under the control of their employers. However, domestic service and some skilled occupations were exempted from the ban, and evasion was easy.

From 1820 (when by requirement of Congress official statistics on immigration began to be kept) to 1900, about 20 million immigrants entered American ports, more than half of them coming after the Civil War. The tide of immigration rose from just under 3 million in the 1870s to more than 5 million in the 1880s, then fell to a little over 3.5 million in the depression decade of the 1890s, and rose to its high-water mark of nearly 9 million in the first decade of the new century.

The numbers declined to 6 million in the 1910s and 4 million in the 1920s, after which official restrictions cut the flow of immigration down to a negligible level.

A NEW WAVE During the 1880s, the continuing search for cheap labor combined with renewed persecutions in eastern Europe to bring a noticeable change in the source of immigration, one fraught with meaning for American social history. Before 1880 immigrants were mainly of Teutonic and Celtic origin, hailing from northern and western Europe. But by the 1870s there were signs of a change. The proportion of Latin Slavic, and Jewish peoples from southern and eastern Europe rose sharply. After 1890 these groups made up a majority of the newcomers, and by the first decade of the new century they formed 70 percent of the immigrants to this country. Among these new immigrants were Italians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Russians, Romanians, and Greeks—all people of markedly different cultural and language stocks from those of western Europe, and most followers of different religions, including Judaism and Catholicism.



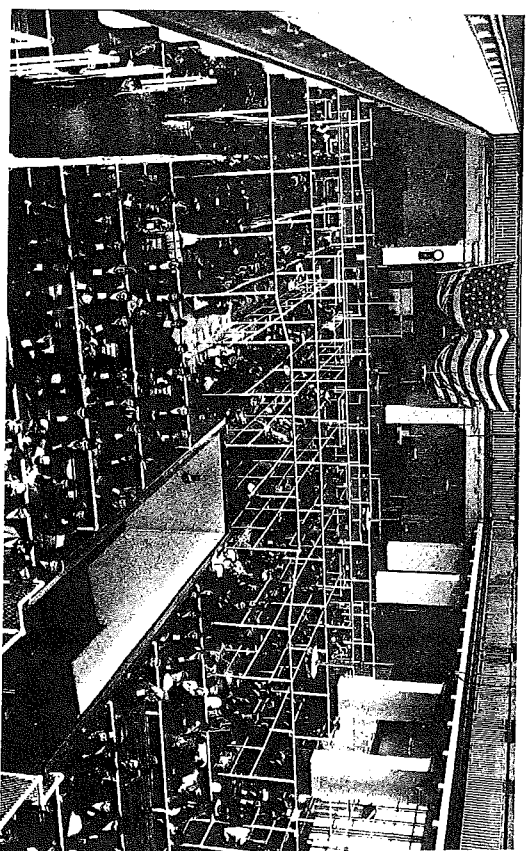
Immigrants, with identification papers, newly arrived at Ellis Island.

ELLIS ISLAND As the number of immigrants passing through the Port of New York soared during the late nineteenth century, the state-run Castle Garden receiving center overflowed with corruption. Money-changers cheated new arrivals, railroad agents overcharged them for tickets, and baggage handlers engaged in blackmail. With reports of these abuses filling the newspapers, Congress ordered an investigation of Castle Garden, which resulted in the closure of the facility in 1890. Thereafter the federal government's new Bureau of Immigration took over the business of admitting newcomers to New York City.

To launch this effort, Congress funded the construction of a new reception center on a tiny island off the New Jersey coast, a mile south of Manhattan and some 1,300 feet from the Statue of Liberty. The statue, unveiled in 1886, was a centennial gift from the French government commemorating the Franco-American alliance during the Revolutionary War. It soon came to be viewed as a symbol of hope for immigrants passing under "Lady Liberty." In the base of the statue, workers had chiseled the poet Emma Lazarus's tribute to the promise of new life in America:

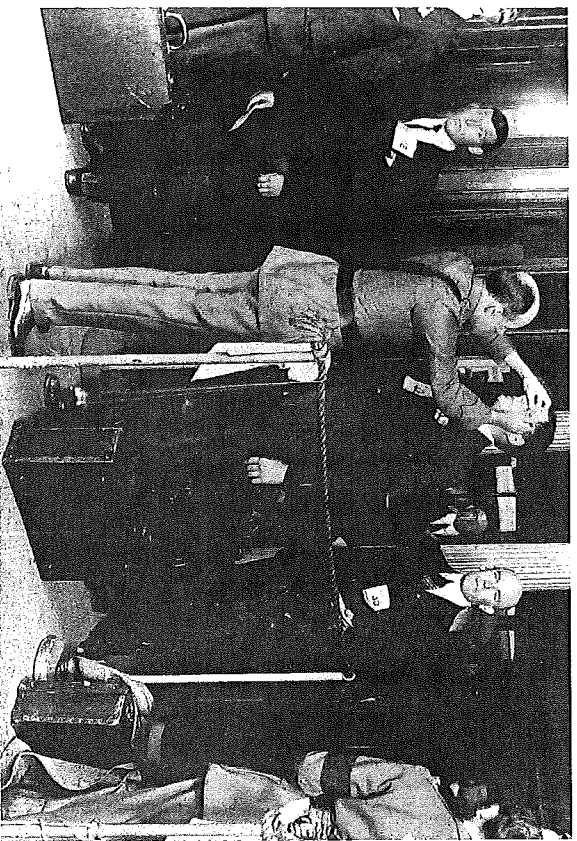
Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

In 1892 Ellis Island (named after its late-eighteenth-century owner, Samuel Ellis) opened its doors to the "huddled masses" of the world. Until 1954, when it closed, some 12 million people first touched American soil there. In 1907, the reception center's busiest year, more than a million new arrivals filtered through the cavernous Great Hall, an average of about 5,000 per day; in one day alone immigration officials processed some 11,750 arrivals. These were the immigrants who arrived crammed into the steerage compartments deep in the ships' hulls. Those immigrants who could afford first- and second-class cabins did not have to visit Ellis Island; they were examined on board ship, and most of them simply walked down the gangway onto the docks in lower Manhattan.



Immigrants waiting in the Registry Room for further inspections.

The prevailing atmosphere at Ellis Island was not comforting. Its bureaucratic purpose was to process immigrants, not welcome them. An army of inspectors, doctors, nurses, and public officials questioned, examined, and documented the newcomers. Inspectors asked twenty-nine probing questions, including: Have you money, relatives, or a job in the United States? Are you a polygamist? An anarchist? Doctors and nurses poked and prodded, searching for any sign of debilitating handicap or infectious disease. All the while, the immigrant worried: "Will they let me in?" Although some who were sick or lame were detained for days or weeks, the vast majority of immigrants received stamps of approval and were on their way after three or four hours. "I was jostled and dragged and shoved and shouted at," recalled one immigrant. "I took it philosophically. I had been through the performance many times before—at the Hungarian border, at Vienna, in Germany, in Holland." Only 2 percent of the newcomers were denied entry altogether, usually because they were criminals, anarchists, or carriers of some "loathsome or dangerous contagious disease," such as tuberculosis or trachoma, a contagious eye disease resulting in blindness. These luckless folk were then returned to their places of origin, with the steamship companies picking up the tab.



A health inspector checks immigrants on Ellis Island, 1909. Before being granted entry, each immigrant was examined for contagious diseases, including trachoma, an eye disease that could lead to blindness.

Between 1892 and 1954, 70 percent of all European immigrants circulated through Ellis Island (others landed at Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, and Galveston). Among the arrivals at Ellis Island were many youngsters who would distinguish themselves in their new country: songwriter Irving Berlin (Russia), football legend Knute Rockne (Norway), Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter (Austria), singer Al Jolson (Lithuania), and comedian Bob Hope (England). But many others found America's opportunities harder to grasp. An old Italian saying expresses the disillusionment that was felt by many: "I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I found out three things: First, the streets weren't paved with gold; second, they weren't paved at all; and third, I was expected to pave them."

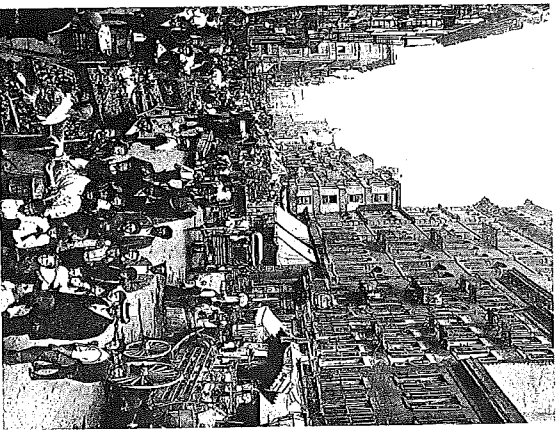
MAKING THEIR WAY Once on American soil in Manhattan or New Jersey, the immigrants felt exhilaration, exhaustion, and usually a desperate need for work. Many were greeted by family and friends who had

come over before, others by representatives of the many immigrant aid societies or by hiring agents offering jobs in mines, mills, and sweatshops. Since most knew little if any English and nothing about American employment practices, the immigrants were easy subjects for exploitation. In exchange for providing arrivals with a bit of whiskey and a job, obliging hiring agents claimed a healthy percentage of their wages. Among Italians and Greeks these agents were known as *padrones*, and they came to dominate the labor market in New York. Other contractors provided train tickets for immigrants to travel inland to jobs in cities such as Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and St. Louis.

Eager to retain a sense of community and to use skills they brought with them, the members of ethnic groups tended to cluster in particular vocations. Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks, Bohemians, and Italians used to the pick and shovel flocked to coal mines, just as the Irish, Cornish, and Welsh had done at mid-century; Slavs and Poles comfortable with muscle work gravitated to the steel mills; Greeks preferred working in textile mills; Russian and Polish Jews peopled the sewing trades and pushcart markets of New York. A few determined peasants uprooted from their agricultural heritage made their way west and were able to find work on farms or even a parcel of land for themselves.

Most of the immigrants, however, settled in the teeming cities. Strangers in a new land, they naturally gravitated to neighborhoods populated by their own kind. These immigrant enclaves—nicknamed Little Italy, Little Hungary, Chinatown, and so on—served as crucial transitional communities between the newcomers' Old World past and their New World future. By 1920 Chicago had some seventeen separate Little Italy colonies scattered across the city representing various home provinces. In such kinship communities the immigrants could practice their religions and native customs, converse in their native tongue, and fill an aching loneliness. But they paid a price for such community solidarity. When the "new immigrants" moved into an area, older residents typically moved out, taking with them whatever social prestige and political influence they had achieved. The quality of living conditions quickly deteriorated as housing and sanitation codes went unenforced.

As the number of new arrivals mushroomed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, cities grew so cramped and land so scarce that designers were forced to build upward. The result was the "dumbbell"



Mulberry Street, Little Italy, New York, 1906. Immigrants established their own enclaves where old-world traditions could be carried on within their new American homes.

tenement house. These structures, usually six to eight stories in height and jammed tightly against one another, lined street after street. They derived their name from the fact that housing codes required a two-foot-wide air shaft between buildings, giving each structure the appearance of a dumbbell when viewed from overhead. Twenty-four to thirty-two families would cram into each building, meaning that some city blocks housed almost 4,000 people. The tiny air shaft provided little ventilation; instead it proved to be a fire hazard, fueling and conveying flames from building to building. The early tenements were poorly heated and had toilets outside in the yard or alley for communal use. By the end of the century they would feature two toilets on each floor, available to all comers. Shoehorned into such quarters, families had no privacy, free space, or sunshine; children had few places to play except in the city streets; infectious diseases and noxious odors were rampant. Not surprisingly, the mortality rate for urban immigrants was much higher than that of the general population. In one Chicago ethnic ghetto at the end of the century, three babies of every five died before their first birthday.

THE NATIVIST RESPONSE Not only did immigrants have to face difficult living conditions, they also confronted growing prejudice from

native-born Americans. Many saw the new immigration as a threat to their way of life and their jobs. "Immigrants work for almost nothing," grouched one American laborer, "and seem to be able to live on wind—something which I cannot do." Others saw in the tide of new immigrants a threat to traditional American culture and values. A Stanford University professor called them "illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order, and government." The undercurrent of nativism so often present in American culture now surfaced mainly in anti-Catholic, and secondarily anti-Semitic, sentiments. The Catholic church in America, long dominated by the English-speaking Irish, became a polyglot group all the more subject to misunderstanding and persecution. Similarly, Russian and Polish Jews came from a far different tradition than the Sephardic and German Jews who preceded them. The unruly beards and long black coats of the men and the new arrivals' distinctive language, Yiddish, made them seem strange and exotic.

More than religious prejudice underlay hostility toward the latest newcomers. Cultural differences confirmed in the minds of nativists the assumption that the Nordic peoples of the old immigration were superior to the Slavic and Latin peoples of the new immigration. Many of the new immigrants were illiterate, and more appeared so because they could not speak English. Some resorted to crime in order to survive in the new land, encouraging suspicions that criminals were being quietly helped out of Europe just as they had once been transported from England to the colonies. In the early 1890s vendettas among Italian gangs in New Orleans led to the murder of the police chief and the lynching of eleven Italian suspects, an incident that convinced many that the new immigrants were criminals.

The success of the Irish in city politics was emulated by the newer groups, who also thereby offended the sensibilities of well-born natives. Political and social radicals turned up among these immigrant groups in sufficient numbers to encourage nativists to blame labor disputes on alien elements. Such charges harbored a fine irony, however, because mainline labor organizations generally favored restricting immigration to keep down the competition for jobs. Employers sometimes used immigrants as strikebreakers; those who came from peasant origins, and were unfamiliar with strikes, were apt as not to think they were merely taking jobs that others had abandoned. Employers also learned quickly

good advice how to get a job. I bought two shirts, a hat, a ~~coat~~, a necktie, two pairs of socks and some shoes. We kept going upstairs and downstairs. I saw one Lithuanian ~~man~~ buying everything for his wife and three children, ~~who would come here the next week from Lithuania.~~ My things cost me \$8. I put these on right away and then I began to feel better.

The next night they took me for a walk down town. We would not pay to ride, so we walked so long that I wanted to take my shoes off, but I did not tell them this. When we came there I forgot my feet. We stood by one theater and watched for half an hour. Then we walked all around a store that filled one whole block and had walls of glass. Then we had a drink of whisky, and this is better than vodka. We felt happier and looked into *cafes*. We saw shiny carriages and automobiles. I saw men with dress suits, I saw women with such clothes that I could not think at all. Then my friends punched me and I turned around and saw one of these women, and with her was a gentleman in a fine dress suit. I began looking harder. It was the Jew man that sold me my suit. "He is a grafter," said my friends. "See what money can do." Then we walked home and I felt poor and my shoes got very bad.

That night I felt worse. We were tired out when we reached the stockyards, so we stopped on the bridge and looked into the river out there. It was so full of grease and dirt and sticks and boxes that it looked like a big, wide, dirty street, except in some places, where it boiled up. It made me sick to look at it. When I looked away I could see on one side some big fields full of holes, and these were the city dumps. On the other side were the stockyards, with twenty tall slaughterhouse chimneys. The wind blew a big smell from them to us. Then we walked on between the yards and the dumps and all the houses looked bad and poor. In our house my room was in the basement. I lay down on the floor with three other men and the air was rotten. I did not go to sleep for a long time. I knew then that money was everything I needed. My money was almost gone and I thought that I would soon die unless I got a job, for this was not like home. Here money was everything and a man without money must die.

The next morning my friends woke me up at five o'clock and said, "Now, if you want life, liberty and happiness," they laughed, "you must push for yourself. You must get a job. Come with us." And we

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went to the yards. Men and women were walking in by thousands as far as we could see. We went to the doors of one big slaughter house. There was a crowd of about 200 men waiting there for a job. They looked hungry and kept watching the door. At last a special policeman came out and began pointing to men, one by one. Each one jumped forward. Twenty-three were taken. Then they all went inside, and all the others turned their faces away and looked tired. I remember one boy sat down and cried, just next to me, on a pile of boards. Some policemen waved their clubs and we all walked on. I found some Lithuanians to talk with, who told me they had come every morning for three weeks. Soon we met other crowds coming away from other slaughter houses, and we all walked around and felt bad and tired and hungry.

That night I told my friends that I would not do this many days, but would go some place else. "Where?" they asked me, and I began to see then that I was in bad trouble, because I spoke no English. Then one man told me to give him \$5 to give the special policeman. I did this and the next morning the policeman pointed me out, so I had a job. I have heard some big talk since then about my American freedom of contract, but I do not think I had much freedom in bargaining for this job with the Meat Trust. My job was in the cattle killing room. I pushed the blood along the gutter. Some people think these jobs make men bad. I do not think so. The men who do the killing are not as bad as the ladies with fine clothes who come every day to look at it, because they have to do it. The cattle do not suffer. They are knocked senseless with a big hammer and are dead before they wake up. This is done not to spare them pain, but because if they got hot and sweating with fear and pain the meat would not be so good. I soon saw that every job in the room was done like this—so as to save everything and make money. One Lithuanian, who worked with me, said, "They get all the blood out of those cattle and all the work out of us men." This was true, for we worked that first day from six in the morning till seven at night. The next day we worked from six in the morning till eight at night. The next day we had no work. So we had no good, regular hours. It was hot in the room that summer, and the hot blood made it worse. I held this job six weeks and then I was turned off. I think some other man had paid for my job, or perhaps I was too slow. The foreman in

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that room wanted quick men to make the work rush, because he was paid more if the work was done cheaper and quicker. I saw now that every man was helping himself, always trying to get all the money he could. At that time I believed that all men in Chicago were grafters when they had to be. They only wanted to push themselves. Now, when I was idle I began to look about, and everywhere I saw sharp men beating out slow men like me. Even if we worked hard it did us no good. I had saved \$13—\$5 a week for six weeks makes \$30, and take off \$15 for six weeks' board and lodging and \$2 for other things. I showed this to a Lithuanian, who had been here two years, and he laughed. "It will be taken from you," he said. He had saved a hundred dollars once and had begun to buy a house on the instalment plan, but something had happened that he did not know about and his landlord put him out and kept the hundred dollars. I found that many Lithuanians had been beaten this way. At home we never made a man sign contract papers. We only had him make the sign of a cross and promise he would do what he said. But this was no good in Chicago. So these sharp men were beating us.

I saw this, too, in the newspaper. I was beginning to learn English, and at night in the boarding house the men who did not play cards used to read the paper to us. The biggest word was "Graft" in red letters on the front page. Another word was "Trust." This paper kept putting these two words together. Then I began to see how every American man was trying to get money for himself. I wondered if the old German man in Cincinnati had found his pipe yet. I felt very bad and sorrowful in that month. I kept walking around with many other Lithuanians who had no job. Our money was going and we could find nothing to do. At night we got homesick for our fine green mountains. We read all the news about home in our Lithuanian Chicago newspaper, *The Kavalikas*. It is a good paper and gives all the news. In the same office we bought this song, which was written in Brooklyn by P. Brandukas. He, too, was homesick. It is sung all over Chicago now and you can hear it in the summer evenings through the open windows. In English it is something like this:

Oh, Lithuania, so dear to me,
Good-by to you, my Fatherland.

Sorrowful in my heart I leave you,
I know not who will stay to guard you.

Is it enough for me to live and enjoy between my neighbors,
In the woods with the flowers and birds?
Is it enough for me to live peaceful between my friends?
No, I must go away from my old father and mother.

The sun shines bright,
The flowers smell sweet,
The birds are singing,
They make the country glad.
But I cannot sing because I must leave you.

Those were bad days and nights. At last I had a chance to help myself. Summer was over and Election Day was coming. The Republican boss in our district, Jonidas, was a saloonkeeper. A friend took me there. Jonidas shook hands and treated me fine. He taught me to sign my name, and the next week I went with him to an office and signed some paper, and then I could vote. I voted as I was told, and then they got me back into the yards to work, because one big politician owns stock in one of those houses. Then I felt that I was getting in beside the game. I was in a combine like other sharp men. Even when work was slack I was all right, because they got me a job in the street cleaning department. I felt proud, and I went to the back room in Jonidas's saloon and got him to write a letter to Alexandria to tell her she must come soon and be my wife.

But this was just the trouble. All of us were telling our friends to come soon. Soon they came—even thousands. The employers in the yard liked this, because those sharp foremen are inventing new machines and the work is easier to learn, and so these slow Lithuanians and even green girls can learn to do it, and then the Americans and Germans and Irish are put out and the employer saves money, because the Lithuanians work cheaper. This was why the American labor unions began to organize us all just the same as they had organized the Bohemians and Poles before us.

Well, we were glad to be organized. We had learned that in Chicago every man must push himself always, and Jonidas had taught us how much better we could push ourselves by getting into a combine. Now, we saw that this union was the best combine for us, because it was the

exceptional experience of its class," but also that each memoir would be "truthful, both as to facts and mode of thought . . ." Even without access to that modern tool of oral historians and interviewers—the tape recorder—Holt and the other editors presented an accurate, insightful, and suggestive portrait of individual American experiences and of the socioeconomic life of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

Four years after the inauguration of this series, Holt edited a collection of sixteen of these lifelets, which were published under the title *The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans: As Told by Themselves*. Again, Holt's purpose was to illuminate the lives not of "great" people, not of national leaders, but "of undistinguished men and women who will never become leaders in this country, but who have made the nation what it is."⁶ In book form they received favorable reviews. One reason for the positive reception was that the lifelets served as a mirror in which Americans could see themselves, their nation, and its prospects for the future. As the sociologist W. I. Thomas wrote, "Perhaps the most striking and instructive feature of the narratives is the disclosure of the conditions which make for content and discontent." Thomas also argued that "these stories of foreigners who have become ardent Americans by leaps and bounds do much to modify our prejudice against indiscriminate foreign immigration."⁷ Moreover, with the exception of the stories of the black peon and the farmer's wife, these lifelets validated the American Dream of acquiring money and becoming rich. "To live well you must get money," observed the Lithuanian stockyards worker in his lifelet. These undistinguished Americans were certainly in hot pursuit of the dollar, the vehicle of upward mobility.⁸

5. *Ibid.*, 7.

6. *Independent*, LXV (Dec. 10, 1908), 1430. Another of Holt's and the *Independent's* reforms was simplified spelling; this accounts for the word "undistinguished." Holt was also engaged in reform movements for the initiative and referendum, labor unions, and international understanding and peace.

7. *American Journal of Sociology*, XII (Sept. 1906), 274.

8. See Rebecca Harding Davis, "Undistinguished Americans," *Independent*, LX (Apr. 26, 1906), 962-64; *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XXVIII (July 1906), 176.

The significance of the publication of these lifelets was that between the Civil War and World War I the United States was self-consciously a nation of immigrants. From 1880 through 1919, the United States drew twenty-three million immigrants to her shores. Most immigrants entered at Ellis Island, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor. Emma Lazarus expressed the gravitational pull of the United States when in 1883 she wrote "The New Colossus," contrasting the Statue of Liberty with the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the legendary wonders of the ancient world. The Philadelphia poet named the statue "Mother of Exiles," and gave voice to her silent lips:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. . . .

So they came, drawn by the beacons of economic opportunity, religious freedom, and hope. In the cities and on the prairies they sought their fortune. Railroad company advertisements, state emigration agents, and letters from relatives and friends in the United States promised success and prosperity; the riches to be found in America where "streets were paved with gold" became part of European folklore. Other immigrants came to practice their religion in the United States because it had no single established church and was more tolerant of religious diversity.

By the late 1880s the pattern of immigration to the United States was significantly different from that of the earlier period. Between 1860 and 1890, ten million immigrants arrived in the United States, predominantly from the British Isles, Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Holland. In the peak year of 1882, eighty-seven percent of the immigrants came from these countries. But the fifteen million immigrants who entered the United States between 1890 and 1914 came largely from Italy, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Greece, Rumania, and Turkey. Referred to as the "new immigrants," people from these countries comprised eighty-one percent of all immigrants in the peak year of 1907.

European conditions influenced the ebb and flow of immigration to the United States. Industrialization in northern Europe opened up economic opportunities at the end of the nineteenth century and slowed emigration abroad. Heavy migration to the United States earlier in the century had reduced pressures from overpopulation and removed some of the stimuli for leaving northern and western Europe. The famine and poor crops in Ireland in the 1840s and in Sweden in the 1860s had not been repeated. At the same time, conditions in eastern and southern Europe had encouraged millions of families and individuals to leave their homes to find new lives across the ocean. Not only had many eastern and southern Europeans faced limited economic opportunities at home, but also population in those parts of Europe was expanding rapidly, and small farmers, craftsmen, and peasants could neither support their families nor provide opportunities for their children. In some cases, landlords promoted emigration by dispossessing their tenants. In addition, some people fled to the United States for safety, as did Jews from czarist Russia after 1881. Government-provoked pogroms in Russia destroyed countless Jewish communities and killed thousands. Similarly European ethnic minorities—Germans in Russia, Greeks in Rumania, Macedonians in the Balkans, and Czechs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire—found their ethnic identity repressed and, without a national state, sought freedom in the United States. Moreover, the development of transoceanic steamers brought the cost of the Atlantic passage within the means of large masses of eastern and southern Europeans for the first time; they booked passage either with tickets bought themselves or with those purchased and sent back by relatives already in the New World.

The earlier immigrants, those from northern Europe, had received a more hospitable reception in the United States than did the new immigrants. The report of the Dillingham Commission, established by Congress in 1907 to investigate the shift in immigration, reflected the changed American attitude toward immigration and the new immigrants. The commission reported that there was a fundamental difference in the character of American immigration before and after the 1880s. In the earlier period, immigration had been largely a movement of families seeking permanent homes in the New World.

Northern Europeans, the report argued, had assimilated quickly into American society. In contrast, the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were in large part unskilled laborers who had come as transients. Unlike earlier immigrants, they avoided agriculture and congregated in the industrial cities of the East and Midwest, where they clustered in their own communities apart from other Americans.

In dwelling on the "perils" to American society from the new immigration, the Dillingham Commission was wrong but many of its descriptions of the new immigrants were correct. Many of the new immigrants were transients, in part because steamer passage facilitated easy travel back and forth across the Atlantic. On the other hand, those who, like the Jews, had fled religious persecution usually settled permanently in the United States. Most of the new immigrants did settle in cities rather than in agricultural areas, thus stimulating the emergence of ghettos in which ethnic-based foreign-language societies and institutions flourished. Many of the old immigrants, however, had exhibited similar patterns. British and Irish immigrants to the United States, for instance, were no less transient than the new immigrants: between 1881 and 1889, 370,000 Britons and Irish left the United States to return home. Those emigrating from the British Isles also congregated together, forming ethnic enclaves within American society. For example, ethnically based societies and institutions thrived in predominantly Welsh mining towns and English mill villages throughout the United States. These immigrants, too, founded their own churches, groceries, taverns, sports leagues, and newspapers separate and apart from the rest of American society.

What did change radically was the attitude of many native-born Americans toward immigrants in general, and this change found expression in virulent hostility against the new immigrants. The optimism with which Emma Lazarus had penned "The New Colossus" in 1883 had faded by the turn of the century; pessimism over the ability of the United States to absorb large numbers of immigrants had become dominant. The experiences of Americans in a society undergoing transformation from a traditional, mostly agrarian society to a modern, industrial, and urban America was so searing and uprooting that optimism itself became a major victim.

Earlier in the century, Americans had welcomed immigrants. The potential garden beyond the Mississippi lured people to till the soil and to recover the abundance of natural resources. All who could make the journey would contribute to the nation's productivity; through their labor in the garden, unused land would yield harvests. They would become the independent yeoman farmers of the Jeffersonian tradition and, in the process, help shape the new America, a blending of all the finer characteristics of the Old World shaped by the best of the new one. It was an optimistic vision, at least for whites; blacks, Orientals, and Native Americans were excluded.

In the late nineteenth century this optimism began to erode. Industrialization brought in its wake major depressions in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. Labor conflict and violence dramatically undermined visions of a natural harmony between capital and labor. European political radicalism and utopianism in the forms of socialism, communism, and anarchism brought nascent revolutionary stirrings to American shores. Events highlighted and exacerbated these very real fears: the violence of the Molly Maguires in the Pennsylvania coal fields, the national railroad strike of 1877, the 1886 Haymarket massacre, the 1893 Pullman strike, mining strikes in Colorado, and the assassinations of two presidents—James Garfield and William McKinley—all contrasted sharply with the optimistic vision of the pre-Civil War pastoral republic.

Native-born Americans blamed immigrants for these developments. Some attributed economic depressions to the inability of the new immigrants to adapt to American society. Others complained that the immigrants did not work hard enough or that, by avoiding agriculture, immigrants formed a parasitic group within the economy. Some Americans complained that the new immigrants brought conflicts with them from the Old World to the New; their politics or ethnic nationalism or class identity or religion introduced unnatural conflict in what was a harmonious society. The growing distrust of immigrants culminated during the depression of 1893 to 1897. The American Protective Association, founded as an anti-Catholic organization, blamed nearly all of America's problems on the new immigrants. From the well of Congress in Washington, D.C., to the pulpits of churches in the Midwest, orators expressed their loss of faith in the

ability of the United States to absorb immigrants or in the wisdom of even trying to do so. In addition, many people now saw the wealth of the United States as finite. Immigrants not only did not contribute to the growing national wealth or productivity, but also, the anti-immigrant argument went, by increasing the population they had reduced the slices of the finite pie of resources available to everyone. Economic recovery in 1897 and the decline of the American Protective Association did not end the debate over the contribution of immigrants. The Dillingham Commission clearly doubted the ability of Americans society to absorb the new immigrants, and its findings were supported by contemporary theories of race in anthropology, so that by the 1920s free entry into the United States would be virtually ended.

While the native-born debated immigration policy, immigrants built and reshaped much of American society and life. They had helped build the American industrial order and, contrary to popular mythology, many of them had settled the agricultural land which fed the burgeoning cities; and they had helped build the railroads and supplied the labor for mines and factories. They had also transformed American politics, introducing the personalized style of clubhouse and patronage politics, and they had altered the political agenda, becoming a voice in state action. They had created new institutions in American society and, by doing so, had introduced the cultural variety and pluralism which have become hallmarks of the United States.

In reshaping American society, immigrants experienced a process in which they themselves were reshaped as well. In immigrating to the United States, they brought with them life-styles and cultural patterns different from the ones they encountered here; the ideals, habits, and rituals of life in their native hamlets and cities differed from the society they encountered after passing through Ellis Island. Once in the United States, immigrants wrestled with the conflict between adapting to American society while trying to maintain their traditional, European customs. Many wished to become "Americanized," to shed the label of "greenhorn" and mirror their image of the native-born, while many others sought to resist Americanizing, to maintain their native languages and life-styles. Settlement in an immigrant ghetto, for instance, could shelter the immigrant from direct and

that a babel of foreign tongues could confound unity of action among workers.

A resurgence of nativism in the 1880s spawned groups devoted to saving the country from imaginary papal conspiracies. The most successful of these nativist groups, the American Protective Association (APA), operated mainly in Protestant strongholds of the upper Mississippi Valley. Its organizer harbored paranoid fantasies of Catholic conspiracies, and was especially anxious to keep the public schools free from Jesuit control. The association grew slowly from its start in 1887 until 1893, when leaders took advantage of a severe depression to draw large numbers of the frustrated to its ranks. The APA soon vanished, swallowed up in the Populist and free-silver agitations, but while it lasted it promoted restricted immigration, more stringent naturalization requirements, refusal to employ aliens or Catholics, and the teaching of the "American" language in the schools.

IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION The movement to restrict immigration had mixed success beyond the exclusion of certain individuals deemed undesirable. In 1875, for instance, a new law refused entry to prostitutes and to convicts whose sentences had been remitted in other countries on condition that they leave. In 1882 a more general law added lunatics, idiots, and persons likely to become public charges, and over the years other specific undesirables joined the list. In 1891 Representative Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts took up the cause of excluding illiterates—a measure that would have affected much of the new immigration even though the language did not have to be English. Bills embodying the restriction were vetoed by three presidents on the ground that they penalized people for lack of opportunity: Cleveland in 1897, Taft in 1913, and Wilson in 1915 and 1917. The last time, however, Congress overrode the veto.

Proponents of immigration restriction during the late nineteenth century did succeed in excluding the Chinese, who were victims of everything the European immigrants suffered, plus color prejudice as well. By 1880 there were some 75,000 Chinese in California, about one-ninth of the state's population. Their nemesis there was himself an immigrant (from Ireland), Dennis Kearney, leader of the Workingmen's party. Many white workers resented the Chinese for accepting lower wages, but their greatest sin, the editor of the *New York Nation* opined,

was perpetuating "those disgusting habits of thrift, industry, and self-denial."

Exclusion of the Chinese was initially prevented by the Burlingame Treaty, which in 1868 gave China most-favored-nation status (the same as the best conceded to any other country) with respect to travel and immigration. But by 1880 the urgent need for railway labor had ebbed, and a new treaty with China permitted the United States to "regulate, limit, and suspend" Chinese immigration. In 1882 President Chester A. Arthur vetoed a twenty-year suspension of immigration from China as actually a prohibition, but accepted a ten-year suspension, known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. The legislation closing the doors to Chinese immigrants received overwhelming support. One congressman explained that because the "industrial army of Asiatic laborers" was increasing the tension between workers and management in the American economy, "the gate must be closed." The Chinese Exclusion Act was periodically renewed before being extended indefinitely in 1902. Not until 1943 were such barriers finally removed.

The West Coast counterpart to Ellis Island was the Immigration Station on rugged Angel Island, six miles offshore from San Francisco. Opened in 1910, it served as a processing center for tens of thousands of Asian immigrants, most of them Chinese. Although the Chinese Exclusion Act had sharply reduced the flow of Chinese immigrants, it did not stop the influx completely. Those arrivals who could claim a Chinese-American parent were allowed to enter, as were certain officials, teachers, merchants, and students. The powerful prejudice the Chinese immigrants encountered helps explain why over 30 percent of the arrivals at Angel Island were denied entry. Those who appealed such decisions were housed in prison-like barracks for weeks or months. One of the detainees scratched a poignant poem on a wall:

This place is called an island of immortals,
When, in fact, this mountainous wilderness is a prison.
Once you see the open net, why throw yourself in?
It is only because of empty pockets. I can do nothing else.



The Biography of a Chinaman: Lee Chew

A native of Canton province, the source of much of the nineteenth-century Chinese immigration to the United States, Lee Chew grew up to distrust and even despise white "foreign devils," especially the English and the Americans. At the same time, he marveled at the technology of these vulgar, duplicitous, violent people—their wireless telegraphy, weapons and explosives, and steam-powered ships and spinning mills. And when he was sixteen, one of his fellow villagers returned home "with unlimited wealth, which he had obtained in the country of the American wizards." Deciding that he, too, "would like to go to the country of the wizards and gain some of their wealth," Lee Chew obtained his father's permission to emigrate.

Lee Chew debarked from his ship in San Francisco at a time of widespread and virulent anti-Chinese sentiment on the West Coast. Perceived as racially inferior, as repulsive in life-style, and as pawns of organized capital in its struggle against the workers, the Chinese in America in the 1870s and early 1880s suffered from violence and exclusion from labor unions. In California, anti-Chinese sentiment and agitation were intense and widespread in state politics, with two of its parties, the Democratic and the Workingmen's, both protesting that the Chinese were every bit as repulsive and un-American as the blacks. The Democratic party, contended the San Francisco *Examiner*, the state's foremost Democratic paper, is "for a white man's government constitutionally administered, against a great Mongrel military despotism, upheld by a union of the purse and the sword, and sought to be perpetuated through negro and Chinese votes." And Denis Kearney, an Irish immigrant and the leader of the Workingmen's party, asked his fellow workers: "Are you ready to march down to the wharf and stop the leprous Chinese from landing? . . . Judge Lynch is the judge wanted by the workingmen of California. I

Independent, LV (Feb. 19, 1903), 417-23.

advise all to own a musket and a hundred rounds of ammunition." One result of this agitation was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers for a period of ten years; subsequently, by treaty (in 1894) and legislative enactment (in 1902), this prohibition was made permanent. Other results were the looting and destruction of Chinese shops and industries, the burning to the ground of Chinese ghettos and the dispersal of their residents, and, on occasion, murder.

In spite of these conditions, Lee Chew was ambitious and highly acquisitive, and he relocated frequently in his pursuit of money. Operating laundries for a railroad construction gang and for an assortment of hard-drinking, pistol-toting "wild men" in the gold mines, he also established laundries successively in the Great Lakes cities of Chicago, Detroit, and Buffalo. Finally, Lee Chew became "a general merchant" in New York, opening an import store in the Chinese section of the city. In the Midwest and the East, as on the West Coast, he had to confront the harsh reality of anti-Chinese sentiment. Viewed as opium and gambling addicts, berated as cheap, anti-union workers, and hated as nonwhites, the Chinese in New York and elsewhere, most of whom were unattached males, banded together to found self-help and benevolent societies. Like other immigrant groups which had been branded by the majority of Americans as unassimilable—for racial, religious, or ethnic reasons—the Chinese turned inward and found strength and support in and among themselves.

THE VILLAGE where I was born is situated in the province of Canton, on one of the banks of the Si-Kiang River. It is called a village, altho it is really as big as a city, for there are about 5,000 men if it over eighteen years of age—women and children and even youths are not counted in our villages.

All in the village belonged to the tribe of Lee. They did not intermarry with one another, but the men went to other villages for their wives and and brought them home to their fathers' houses, and

1. Both quotations are in Alexander Saxton, "Race and the House of Labor," in Gary B. Nash and Richard Weis, eds., *The Great Fear Race in the Mind of America* (New York, 1970), 111.

men from other villages—Wus and Wings and Sings and Fongs, etc.—chose wives from among our girls.

When I was a baby I was kept in our house all the time with my mother, but when I was a boy of seven I had to sleep at nights with other boys of the village—about thirty of them in one house. The girls are separated the same way—thirty or forty of them sleeping together in one house away from their parents—and the widows have houses where they work and sleep, tho they go to their fathers' houses to eat.

My father's house is built of fine blue brick, better than the brick in the houses here in the United States. It is only one story high, roofed with red tiles and surrounded by a stone wall which also incloses the yard. There are four rooms in the house, one large living room which serves for a parlor and three private rooms, one occupied by my grandfather, who is very old and very honorable; another by my father and mother, and the third by my oldest brother and his wife and two little children. There are no windows, but the door is left open all day.

All the men of the village have farms, but they don't live on them as the farmers do here; they live in the village, but go out during the day time and work their farms, coming home before dark. My father has a farm of about ten acres, on which he grows a great abundance of things—sweet potatoes, rice, beans, peas, yams, sugar cane, pine-apples, bananas, lychee nuts and palms. The palm leaves are useful and can be sold. Men make fans of the lower part of each leaf near the stem, and water proof coats and hats, and awnings for boats, of the parts that are left when the fans are cut out.

So many different things can be grown on one small farm, because we bring plenty of water in a canal from the mountains thirty miles away, and every farmer takes as much as he wants for his fields by means of drains. He can give each crop the right amount of water.

Our people all working together make these things, the mandarin has nothing to do with it, and we pay no taxes, except a small one on the land. We have our own Government, consisting of the elders of our tribe—the honorable men. When a man gets to be sixty years of age he begins to have honor and to become a leader, and then the older he grows the more he is honored. We had some men who were nearly one hundred years, but very few of them.

In spite of the fact that any man may correct them for a fault,



An immigrant from China, Lee Chew attained financial success despite the anti-Oriental sentiment that was rampant in the United States. Chew was financially ambitious, but he also wanted to maintain Chinese customs, such as his traditional dress. Reproduced from the *Independent*.

Chinese boys have good times and plenty of play. We played games like tag, and other games like shinny and a sort of football called yin.

We had dogs to play with—plenty of dogs and good dogs—that understand Chinese as well as American dogs understand American language. We hunted with them, and we also went fishing and had as good a time as American boys, perhaps better, as we were almost always together in our house, which was a sort of boys' club house, so we had many playmates. Whatever we did we did all together, and our rivals were the boys of other club houses, with whom we sometimes competed in the games. But all our play outdoors was in the daylight, because there were many graveyards about and after dark, so it was said, black ghosts with flaming mouths and eyes and long claws and teeth would come from these and tear to pieces and devour any one whom they might meet.

It was not all play for us boys, however. We had to go to school, where we learned to read and write and to recite the precepts of Kong-foo-tsze and the other Sages and stories about the great Emperors of China, who ruled with the wisdom of gods and gave to the whole world the light of high civilization and the culture of our literature, which is the admiration of all nations.

I went to my parents' house for meals, approaching my grandfather with awe, my father and mother with veneration and my elder brother with respect. I never spoke unless spoken to, but I listened and heard much concerning the red haired, green eyed foreign devils with the hairy faces, who had lately come out of the sea and clustered on our shores. They were wild and fierce and wicked, and paid no regard to the moral precepts of Kong-foo-tsze and the Sages; neither did they worship their ancestors, but pretended to be wiser than their fathers and grandfathers. They loved to beat people and to rob and murder. In the streets of Hong Kong many of them could be seen reeling drunk. Their speech was a savage roar, like the voice of the tiger or the buffalo, and they wanted to take the land away from the Chinese. Their men and women lived together like animals, without any marriage or faithfulness and even were shameless enough to walk the streets arm in arm in daylight. So the old men said.

All this was very shocking and disgusting, as our women seldom were on the street, except in the evenings, when they went with the

water jars to the three wells that supplied all the people. Then if they met a man they stood still, with their faced turned to the wall, while he looked the other way when he passed them. A man who spoke to a woman in the street in a Chinese village would be beaten, perhaps killed.

My grandfather told how the English foreign devils had made wicked war on the Emperor, and by means of their enchantments and spells had defeated his armies and forced him to admit their opium, so that the Chinese might smoke and become weakened and the foreign devils might rob them of their land.

My grandfather said that it was well known that the Chinese were always the greatest and wisest among men. They had invented and discovered everything that was good. Therefore the things which the foreign devils had and the Chinese had not must be evil. Some of these things were very wonderful, enabling the red haired savages to talk with one another, tho they might be thousands of miles apart. They had suns that made darkness like day, their ships carried earthquakes and volcanoes to fight for them, and thousands of demons that lived in iron and steel houses spun their cotton and silk, pushed their boats, pulled their cars, printed their newspapers and did other work for them. They were constantly showing disrespect for their ancestors by getting new things to take the place of the old.

I heard about the American foreign devils, that they were false, having made a treaty by which it was agreed that they could freely come to China, and the Chinese as freely go to their country. After this treaty was made China opened its doors to them and then they broke the treaty that they had asked for by shutting the Chinese out of their country.

When I was ten years of age I worked on my father's farm, digging, hoeing, manuring, gathering and carrying the crop. We had no horses, as nobody under the rank of an official is allowed to have a horse in China, and horses do not work on farms there, which is the reason why the roads there are so bad. The people cannot use roads as they are used here, and so they do not make them.

I worked on my father's farm till I was about sixteen years of age, when a man of our tribe came back from America and took ground as large as four city blocks and made a paradise of it. He put a large stone

wall around and led some streams through and built a palace and summer house and about twenty other structures, with beautiful bridges over the streams and walks and roads. Trees and flowers, singing birds, water fowl and curious animals were within the walls.

The man had gone away from our village a poor boy. Now he returned with unlimited wealth, which he had obtained in the country of the American wizards. After many amazing adventures he had become a merchant in a city called Mott Street, so it was said.

When his palace and grounds were completed he gave a dinner to all the people who assembled to be his guests. One hundred pigs roasted whole were served on the tables, with chickens, ducks, geese and such an abundance of dainties that our villagers even now lick their fingers when they think of it. He had the best actors from Hong Kong performing, and every musician for miles around was playing and singing. At night the blaze of the lanterns could be seen for many miles.

Having made his wealth among the barbarians this man had faithfully returned to pour it out among his tribesmen, and he is living in our village now very happy, and a pillar of strength to the poor.

The wealth of this man filled my mind with the idea that I, too, would like to go to the country of the wizards and gain some of their wealth, and after a long time my father consented, and gave me his blessing, and my mother took leave of me with tears, while my grandfather laid his hand upon my head and told me to remember and live up to the admonitions of the Sages, to avoid gambling, bad women and men of evil minds, and so to govern my conduct that when I died my ancestors might rejoice to welcome me as a guest on high.

My father gave me \$100, and I went to Hong Kong with five other boys from our place and we got steerage passage on a steamer, paying \$50 each. Everything was new to me. All my life I had been used to sleeping on a board bed with a wooden pillow, and I found the steamer's bunk very uncomfortable, because it was so soft. The food was different from that which I had been used to, and I did not like it at all. I was afraid of the stewes, for the thought of what they might be made of by the wicked wizards of the ship made me ill. Of the great power of these people I saw many signs. The engines that moved the ship were wonderful monsters, strong enough to lift mountains. When

We slept there and that night I left my father and young brother. My father gave me \$50 besides my ticket. The next morning before light we were going through the woods and we came to the frontier. Three roads run along the frontier. On the first road there is a soldier every mile, who stands there all night. On the second road is a soldier every half mile, and on the third road is a soldier every quarter of a mile. The guide went ahead through the woods. I hid with my big bag behind a bush and whenever he raised his hand I sneaked along. I felt cold all over and sometimes hot. He told me that sometimes he took twenty immigrants together, all without passports, and then he could not pass the soldiers and so he paid a soldier he knew one dollar a head to let them by. He said the soldier was very strict and counted them to see that he was not being cheated.

So I was in Germany. Two days after that we reached Tilzit and the guide took me to the railroad man. This man had a crowd of immigrants in a room, and we started that night on the railroad—fourth class. It was bad riding sometimes. I used to think of Alexandria. We were all green and slow. The railroad man used to say to me, "You will have to be quicker than this in Chicago," and he was right. We were very slow in the stations where we changed trains, and he used to shout at us then, and one old German man who spoke Lithuanian told me what the man was calling us. When he told me this I hurried, and so did the others, and we began to learn to be quicker. It took three days to get to Hamburg. There we were put in a big house called a barracks, and we waited a week. The old German man told me that the barracks men were cheating us. He had been once to Cincinnati in America to visit his son, who kept a saloon. His old, long pipe was stolen there. He kept saying, "Dem grafters, dem grafters," in a low voice whenever they brought food to sell, for our bags were now empty. They kept us there till our money was half spent on food. I asked the old man what kind of American men were grafters, and he said "All kinds in Cincinnati, but more in Chicago!" I knew I was going to Chicago, and I began to think quicker. I thought quicker yet on the boat. I saw men playing cards. I played and lost \$1.86 in my new money, till the old man came behind me and said, "Dem grafters." When I heard this I got scared and threw down my cards. That old man used to point up at the rich people looking down at us

and say "Dem grafters." They were the richest people I had ever seen—the boat was the biggest boat I had ever seen—the machine that made it go was very big, and so was the horn that blew in a fog. I felt everything get bigger and go quicker every day.

It was the most when we came to New York. We were driven in a thick crowd to the railroad station. The old man kept pointing and saying "Grafters, grafters," till the guide punched him and said, "Be quick, damn you, be quick." . . . "I will be quick pretty soon," said the old man to me, "and den I will get back dot pipe in Cincinnati. And when I will be quicker still, alreddy, I will steal some odder man's pipe. Every quick American man is a grafter." I began to believe that this was true, but I was mixed up and could not think long at one time. Everything got quicker—worse and worse—till then at last I was in a boarding house by the stockyards in Chicago, with three Lithuanians, who knew my father's sisters at home.

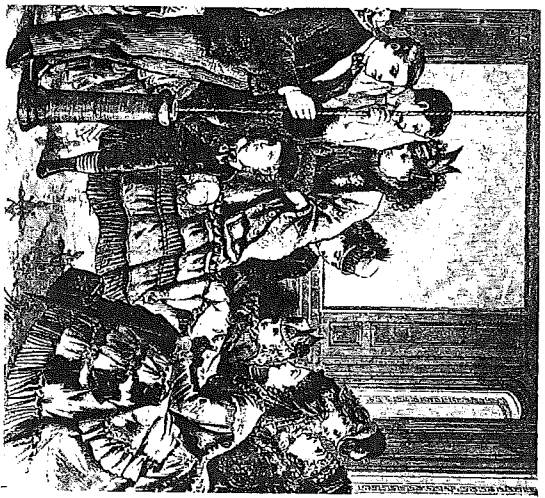
That first night we sat around in the house and they asked me, "Well, why did you come?" I told them about that first night and what the ugly shoemaker said about "life, liberty and the getting of happiness." They all leaned back and laughed. "What you need is money," they said. "It was all right at home. You wanted nothing. You ate your own meat and your own things on the farm. You made your own clothes and had your own leather. The other things you got at the Jew man's store and paid him with sacks of rye. But here you want a hundred things. Whenever you walk out you see new things you want, and you must have money to buy everything."

Then one man asked me, "How much have you?" and I told him \$30. "You must buy clothes to look rich, even if you are not rich," he said. "~~With good clothes you will have friends.~~"

The next morning three of these men took me to a store near the stockyards to buy a coat and pants. "Look out," said one of them. "Is he a grafter?" I asked. They all laughed. "You stand still. That is all you have to do," they said. So the Jew man kept putting on coats and I moved my arms and back and sides when they told me. We stayed there till it was time for dinner. Then we bought a suit. I paid \$5 and then I was to pay \$1 a week for five weeks.

In the afternoon I went to a big store. There was a man named Elias. "He is not a grafter," said my friends. He was nice to me and gave me

Urban Poor



The elevator at Lord & Taylor store, 1873.

grounds and representing every walk of life poured into the high-rise apartment buildings and ramshackle tenements springing up in every major city. They came in search of jobs, wealth, and new opportunities. Rising wages and the availability of new consumer goods in the dazzling new downtown department stores improved the material standard of living for millions—while widening the gap between the poor and the affluent. Broadened access to public education and to public health services improved literacy and lowered infant mortality rates (although the death rate for adult black males remained quite high). Breakthroughs in medical science eventually brought cures for tuberculosis, typhoid, and diphtheria—although these infectious diseases remained the century's leading killers.

The rise of metropolitan America also created an array of new social problems. Corporations became so powerful that some of their owners decided that they were above the law. When someone warned Cornelius Vanderbilt, the railroad tycoon, that he might be violating the law, he is alleged to have replied, "Law? What do I care about the law. Hain't I got the power?" Rapid urban development also produced widespread poverty and political corruption. How to feed, clothe, shelter, and educate the new arrivals taxed the imagination—and patience—of many Americans.

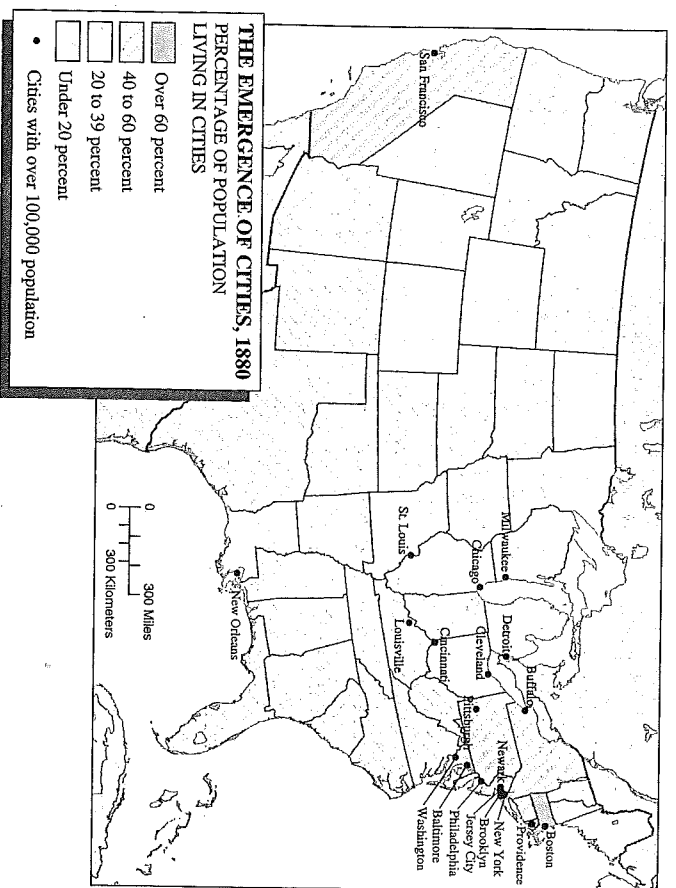
AMERICA'S MOVE TO TOWN

The mushrooming cities served as powerful magnets that lured workers by the millions from the countryside and overseas. This urban-industrial revolution greatly increased the national wealth and transformed the pace and tenor of American life. City people and folks who worked in factories rather than on farms, while differing significantly among themselves, also became distinctively and recognizably urban in demeanor and outlook.

EXPLOSIVE URBAN GROWTH The frontier was a safety valve, historian Frederick Jackson Turner said in his influential thesis on American development. Its cheap lands afforded a release for the population pressures mounting in the cities. If there was such a thing as a safety valve in his own time, however, he had it exactly backward. The flow of population toward the city was greater than toward the West, and "country come to town" epitomized the American people better than the occasional city "dude" who turned up in cow country.

Much of the westward movement in fact was itself an urban movement, spawning new towns near the mining digs or at the railheads. More often than not, western towns anticipated settlement. They supplied headquarters for the land boomers and services for the hinterlands. On the Pacific coast a greater portion of the population was urbanized than anywhere else; its major concentrations were around San Francisco Bay at first, and then in Los Angeles, which became a boom town after the arrival of the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads in the 1880s. Seattle grew quickly, first as the terminus of three transcontinental railroad lines, and by the end of the century as the staging area for the Yukon gold rush. Minneapolis, St. Paul, Omaha, Kansas City, and Denver were no longer the mere villages they had been in 1860. The South, too, produced new cities: Durham, North Carolina, and Birmingham, Alabama, which were centers of tobacco and iron manufactures, and Houston, Texas, which handled cotton and cattle, and later oil.

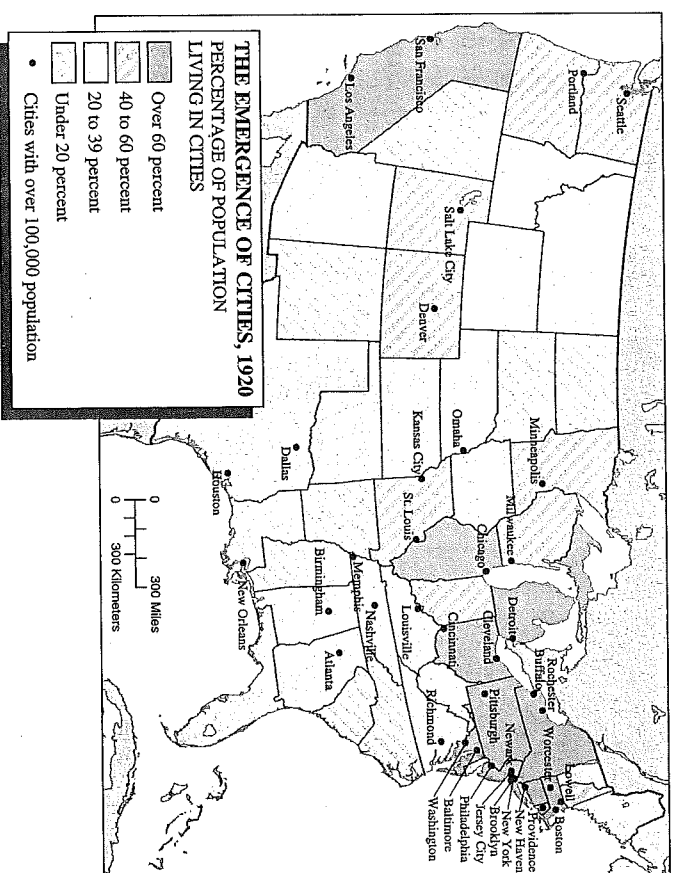
Trade and transportation had been the city builders of the past. Eight of the nine cities that by 1860 had passed 100,000 in population were ports, and the ninth (Brooklyn) was a suburb to the largest port. By the



late nineteenth century no city could hope to thrive without at least one railroad, and most had a cluster of railroads. But it was the explosive rise of industry that powered the growth of new cities during this period. Industry brought huge concentrations of labor, and both required the proliferation of services that became synonymous with city life.

The emergence of the major cities was completed during the years from 1860 to 1910. After that, new cities sprang up only in unusual circumstances: Miami was the product of tourism brought by the coastal railroad, while Tulsa resulted from an oil boom. In those fifty years, population in incorporated towns of 2,500 or more grew from 6 million to 45 million, or from 20 to 46 percent of the nation's total population.

While the Far West had the greatest proportion of urban population, the Northeast had far greater numbers of people in its reeming cities. There the situation that Thomas Jefferson had so dreaded was coming to pass: the people "piled high up on one another in the cities," and worse, these people increasingly were landless, tool-less, and homeless—an urban proletariat with nothing but their labor to sell. By 1900



more than 90 percent of the residents in New York's Manhattan lived in rented homes or tenements.

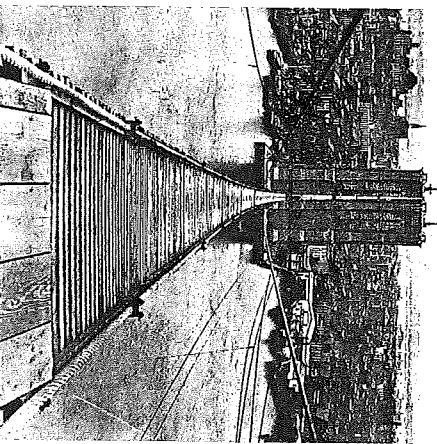
The cities expanded both vertically and horizontally to absorb their huge populations. In either case, transportation innovations played an important role: the elevator, the streetcar, and, before the end of the century, the first automobiles. The first safety elevator, which would not fall if the rope or cable broke, was developed in 1852 by Elisha Graves Otis. In 1889 the Otis Elevator Company installed the first electric elevator, which made possible the erection of taller buildings. Before the 1860s, few structures had gone higher than three or four stories.

Before the 1890s, the chief power sources of urban transport were either animals or steam. Horse- and mule-drawn streetcars had appeared in antebellum cities, but they were slow and cumbersome, and cleaning up after the animals added to the cost. In 1873 San Francisco became the first city to use cable cars that clamped onto a moving underground cable driven by a central power source. Some cities used steam-powered trains on elevated tracks, but by the 1890s electric trolleys were replacing these.

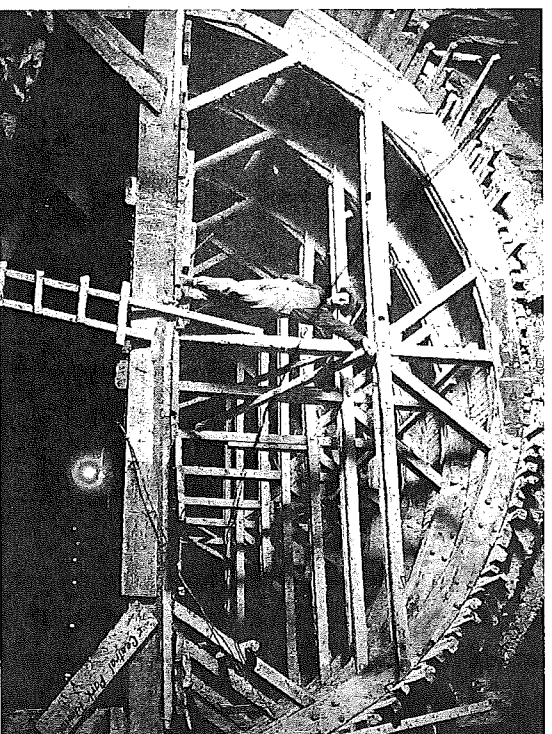
Such systems spread rapidly, and in some places mass-transit companies began to dig underground passages for their cars. Around the turn of the century, subway systems began operation in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Advances in bridge building through the use of steel and the perfection of the steel-cable suspension bridge also extended the reach of commuters. The marvels of the age were James B. Eads's cantilevered steel bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis (1874) and John A. and Washington Roebling's cable-supported Brooklyn Bridge (1883), which linked Brooklyn to Manhattan.

The spread of mass transit allowed large numbers of people to become commuters, and a growing middle class (working folk often could not afford even the nickel fare) retreated to quieter tree-lined "streetcar suburbs" whence they could travel into the central city for business or entertainment. The pattern of urban growth often became a sprawl, since it took place usually without plan, in the interest of a fast buck, and without thought to the need for parks and public services.

The use of horse-drawn railways, cable cars, and electric trolleys helped transform the social characters of cities. Until the implementation of such new transportation systems, people of all classes lived and worked together in the central city. After the Civil War, however, the emergence of suburbs began to segregate people according to their eco-



The Brooklyn Bridge under construction, 1877.



Central Park tunnel, 1903. The subway system helped abate the street-level congestion that plagued cities at the turn-of-the-century.

nomie standing. The more affluent moved outside the city, leaving the working folk, many of whom were immigrants, behind. The poorer districts in the city became more congested and crime-ridden as the population grew, fueled by waves of newcomers from abroad.

CITY POLITICS The sheer size of cities helped create a new form of politics. Since individuals could hardly provide for themselves such necessary services as transit, paving, water, sewers, street lighting and cleaning, and fire and police protection, they came increasingly to rely on city government. Meanwhile, many city problems were handled by local political bosses who traded in patronage favors and graft. Big-city political machines were not altogether sinister in their effects: they provided food and money for the poor, fixed problems at city hall, and generally helped immigrants in their adjustment to a new life. One ward boss in Boston said: "There's got to be in every ward somebody that any bloke can come to—no matter what he's done—and get help. Help, you understand, none of your law and justice, but help."

In return, the political professionals felt entitled to some reward for having done the grubby work of the local organization. George Wash-



The Down Town Back-alleys and the Sweaters of Jewtown

Here comes a pleasure party, as gay as any on the avenue, though the carry-all is an ash-cart. The father is the driver and he has taken his brown-legged boy for a ride. How proud and happy they both look up there on their perch! The queer old building they have halted in front of is "The Ship," famous for fifty years as a ramshackle tenement filled with the oddest crowd. No one knows why it is called "The Ship," though there is a tradition that once the river came clear up here to Hamilton Street, and boats were moored along-side it. More likely it is because it is as bewildering inside as a crazy old ship, with its ups and downs of ladders parading as stairs and its unexpected pitfalls. But Hamilton Street, like Water Street, is not what it was. The missions drove from the latter the worst of its dives. A sailors' mission has lately made its appearance in Hamilton Street, but there are no dives there, nothing worse than the ubiquitous saloon and tough tenements.

Enough of them everywhere. Suppose we look into one? No.—Cherry Street. Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there. Not that it would hurt them, kicks and cuffs are their daily diet. They have little else. Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way, if you cannot see it. Close? Yes! What would you have? All the

fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes from the hall-door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of dark bedrooms that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of elements God meant to be free, but man deals out with such niggardly hand. That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against. The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access—and all to be poisoned alike by their summer stench. Hear the pump squeak! It is the lullaby of tenement-house babes. In summer, when a thousand thirsty throats pant for a cooling drink in this block, it is worked in vain. But the saloon, whose open door you passed in the hall, is always there. The smell of it has followed you up. Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail—what do they mean? They mean that the soiled bow of white you saw on the door downstairs will have another story to tell—Oh! a sadly familiar story—before the day is at an end. The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. The dark bedroom killed it.

"It was took all of a suddint," says the mother, smoothing the throbbing little body with trembling hands. There is no unkindness in the rough voice of the man in the jumper, who sits by the window grimly smoking a clay pipe, with the little life ebbing out in his sight, bitter as his words sound: "Hush, Mary! if we cannot keep the baby, need we complain—such as we?"

Such as we! What if the words ring in your ears as we grope our way up the stairs and down from floor to floor, listening to the sounds behind the closed doors—some of quarreling, some of coarse songs, more of profanity. They are true. When the summer heats come with their suffering, they have meaning more terrible than words can tell.

Come over here. Step carefully over this baby—it is a baby, spite of its rags and dirt—under these iron bridges called fire-escapes, but loaded down, despite the incessant watchfulness of the firemen, with broken household goods, with washtubs and barrels, over which no man could climb from a fire. This gap between dingy brick walls is the yard. The strip of smoke-colored sky up there is the heaven of these people. Do you wonder the name does not attract them to churches? That baby's parents live in the rear tenement here. She is at least as clean as the steps we are now climbing. There are plenty of houses with half a hundred such in. The tenement is much like the one in front we just left, only fouler, closer, darker—we will not say more cheerless. The word is a mockery. A hundred thousand people lived in rear tenements in New York last year.

Evening has worn into night as we take up our homeward journey through the streets, now no longer silent. The thousands of lighted windows in the tenements glow like dull red eyes in a huge stone wall. From every door multitudes of tired men and women pour forth for a half-hour's rest in the men air before

sleep closes the eyes weary with incessant working. Crowds of half-naked children tumble in the street and on the sidewalk, or doze fretfully on the stone steps. As we stop in front of a tenement to watch one of these groups, a dirty baby in a single brief garment—yet a sweet, human little baby despite its dirt and tatters—tumbles off the lowest step, rolls over once, clutches my leg with unconscious grip, and goes to sleep on the flagstones, its curly head pillowed on my boot.

How the Case Stands

There are three effective ways of dealing with the tenements in New York:

- I. By law.
- II. By remodeling and making the most out of the old houses.
- III. By building new, model tenements.

Private enterprise—conscience, to put it in the category of duties, where it belongs—must do the lion's share under these last two heads. Of what the law has effected I have spoken already. The drastic measures adopted in Paris, in Glasgow, and in London are not practicable here on anything like as large a scale. Still it can, under strong pressure of public opinion, rid us of the worst plague-spots. The Mulberry Street Bend will go the way of the Five Points when all the red tape that binds the hands of municipal effort has been unwound. Prizes were offered in public competition, some years ago, for the best plans of modern tenement-houses. It may be that we shall see the day when the building of model tenements will be encouraged by subsidies in the way of a rebate of taxes. Meanwhile the arrest and summary punishment of landlords, or their agents, who persistently violate law and decency, will have a salutary effect. If a few of the wealthy absentee landlords, who are the worst offenders, could be got within the jurisdiction of the city, and by arrest be compelled to employ proper overseers, it would be a proud day for New York. To remedy the overcrowding, with which the night inspections of the sanitary police cannot keep step, tenements may eventually have to be licensed, as now the lodging-houses, to hold so many tenants, and no more; or the State may have to bring down the rents that cause the crowding, by assuming the right to regulate them as it regulates the fares on the elevated roads. I throw out the suggestion, knowing quite well that it is open to attack. It emanated originally from one of the brightest minds that have had to struggle officially with this tenement-house question in the last ten years. In any event, to succeed, reform by law must aim at making it unprofitable to own a bad tenement. At best, it is apt to travel at a snail's pace, while the enemy it pursues is putting the best foot foremost...

Enough has been said to show that model tenements can be built successfully and made to pay in New York, if the owner will be content with the five or six per cent. he does not even dream of when investing his funds in "governments" at three or four. It is true that in the latter case he has only to cut off his coupons and cash them. But the extra trouble of looking after his tenement property, that is the condition of his highest and lasting success, is the penalty exacted for the sins of our fathers that "shall be visited upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation." We shall indeed be well off, if it stop there. I fear there is too much reason to believe that our own iniquities must be added to transmit the curse still further. And yet, such is the leavening influence of a good deed in that dreary desert of sin and suffering, that the erection of a single good tenement has the power to change, gradually but surely, the character of a whole bad block. It sets up a standard to which the neighborhood must rise, if it cannot succeed in dragging it down to its own low level.

And so this task, too, has come to an end. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. I have aimed to tell the truth as I saw it. If this book shall have borne ever so feeble a hand in garnering a harvest of justice, it has served its purpose. While I was writing these lines I went down to the sea, where thousands from the city were enjoying their summer rest. The ocean slumbered under a cloudless sky. Gentle waves washed lazily over the white sand, where children fled before them with screams of laughter. Standing there and watching their play, I was told that during the fierce storms of winter it happened that this sea, now so calm, rose in rage and beat down, broke over the bluff, sweeping all before it. No barrier built by human hands had power to stay it then. The sea of a mighty population, held in galling fetters, heaves uneasily in the tenements. Once already our city, to which have come the duties and responsibilities of metropolitan greatness before it was able to fairly measure its task, has felt the swell of its restless flood. If it rise once more, no human power may avail to check it. The gap between the classes in which it surges, unseen, unsuspected by the thoughtless, is widening day by day. No tardy enactment of law, no political expedient, can close it. Against all other dangers our system of government may offer defence and shelter; against this not. I know of but one bridge that will carry us over safe, a bridge founded upon justice and built of human hearts.

I believe that the danger of such conditions as are fast growing up around us is greater for the very freedom which they mock. The words of the poet, with whose lines I prefaced this book, are truer to-day, have far deeper meaning to us, than when they were penned forty years ago:

—Think ye that building shall endure
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?

to Children is to the baby-waif, the Children's Aid Society is to the homeless boy at this real turning-point in his career. The good it has done cannot easily be overestimated. Its lodging-houses, its schools and its homes block every avenue of escape with their offer of shelter upon terms which the boy soon accepts, as on the whole cheap and fair. In the great Duane Street lodging-house for news-boys, they are succinctly stated in a "notice" over the door that reads thus: "Boys who swear and chew tobacco cannot sleep here." There is another unwritten condition, viz.: that the boy shall be really without a home; but upon this the managers wisely do not insist too obstinately, accepting without too close inquiry his account of himself where that seems advisable, well knowing that many a home that sends forth such lads far less deserves the name than the one they are able to give them.

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In His Steps

Charles Monroe Sheldon

There was some reason, perhaps, . . . for Henry Maxwell's feeling of satisfaction whenever he considered his parish as he had the previous Sunday. There was an unusually large number of strong, individual characters who claimed membership there. But as he noted their faces this morning he was simply wondering how many of them would respond to the strange proposition he was about to make. He continued slowly, taking time to choose his words carefully, and giving the people an impression they had never felt before, even when he was at his best with his most dramatic delivery.

"What I am going to propose now is something which ought not to appear unusual or at all impossible of execution. Yet I am aware that it will be so regarded by a large number, perhaps, of the members of this church. But in order that we may have a thorough understanding of what we are considering, I will put my proposition very plainly, perhaps bluntly. I want volunteers from the First Church who will pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the question, 'What would Jesus do?' And after asking that question, each one will follow Jesus as exactly as he knows how, no matter what the result may be. I will of course include myself in this company of volunteers, and shall take for granted that my church here will not be surprised at my future conduct, as based upon that standard of action, and will not oppose whatever is done if they think Christ would do it. Have I made my meaning clear? At the close of the service I want all those members who are willing to join such a company to remain and we will talk over the details of the plan. Our motto will be, 'What would Jesus do?' Our aim will be to

in the administration of justice, and the adopting of measures providing for the health and safety of those engaged in mining, manufacturing, or building pursuits.

VII. The enactment of laws to compel chartered corporations to pay their employes weekly, in full, for labor performed during the preceding week, in the lawful money of the country.

VIII. The enactment of laws giving mechanics and laborers a first lien on their work for their full wages.

IX. The abolishment of the contract system of national, State, and municipal work.

X. The substitution of arbitration for strikes, whenever and wherever employers and employes [sic] are willing to meet on equitable grounds.

XI. The prohibition of the employment of children in workshops, mines, and factories before attaining their fourteenth year.

XII. To abolish the system of letting out by contract the labor of convicts in our prisons and reformatory institutions.

XIII. To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work.

XIV. The reduction of the hours of labor to eight per day, so that the laborers may have more time for social enjoyment and intellectual improvement, and be enabled to reap the advantages conferred by the labor saving machinery which their brains have created.

XV. To prevail upon governments to establish a purely national circulating medium based upon the faith and resources of the nation, and issued directly to the people, without the intervention of any system of banking corporations, which money shall be a legal tender in payment of all debts, public or private.

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LIFE IN THE TENEMENTS OF NEW YORK CITY (1890)

the post-Civil War period, cities swelled in population as a twin migration of migrants and rural Americans flocked to the glittering urban environment hoping for a better life. For many, especially those lacking urban work skills, the city red a difficult life amid squalid living conditions. While poor districts have always existed in urban areas, never had poverty affected so many people in America. As a New York City police reporter, Riis made millions aware of the urban life as to gather evidence for his stories, but the wretched life of the people shocked into writing vivid articles and later books about life in the tenement slums. Riis said that the depictions would result in urban housing reform. His first book, *How Other Half Lives*, which is excerpted below, was widely read and gave many critics their first description of life in the tenement slums of New York City.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. According to Jacob Riis, what are some of the problems of tenement life in New York City?
2. How did these conditions develop, and why did they persist?
3. Who was the audience for Riis' book?
4. What is the significance of *How the Other Half Lives*?

... **B** e a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there. Not that it would hurt them; kicks and cuffs are their daily diet. They have little else. Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way, if you cannot see it. Close? Yes! What would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes from the hall-door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of dark bedrooms that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of the elements God meant to be free, but man deals out with such niggardly hand. That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against. The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access—and all be poisoned alike by their summer stench. Hear the pump squeak! It is the lullaby of tenement-house babes. In summer, when a thousand thirsty throats pant for a cooling drink in this block, it is worked in vain. But the saloon, whose open door you passed in the hall, is always there. The smell of it has followed you up. Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail—what do they mean? They mean that the soiled bow of white you saw on the door downstairs will have another story to tell—Oh! a sadly familiar story—before the day is at an end. The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. The dark bedroom killed it. . . .

In the dull content of life bred on the tenement-house dead level there is little to redeem it, or to calm apprehension for a society that has nothing better to offer its toilers; while the patient efforts of the lives finally attuned to it to render the situation tolerable, and the very success of these efforts, serve only to bring out in stronger contrast the general gloom of the picture by showing how much farther they might have gone with half a chance. Go into any of the "respectable" tenement neighborhoods—the fact that there are not more than two saloons on the corner, nor over three or four in the block will serve as a fair guide—where live the great body of hard-working Irish and German immigrants and their descendants, who accept naturally the conditions of tenement life, because for them there is nothing else in New York; be with the menagerie view that, if fed, they have no cause of complaint, you shall come away agreeing with me that, humanly speaking, life there does not seem worth the living. Take at random one of these uptown tenement blocks, not of the worst nor yet of the most prosperous kind, within hail of what the newspapers would call a "fine residential section." These houses were built since the last cholera scare

made people willing to listen to reason. The block is not like the one over on the East Side in which I actually lost my way once. There were thirty or forty rear houses in the heart of it, three or four on every lot, set at all sorts of angles, with odd, winding passages, or no passage at all, only "runaways" for the thieves and toughs of the neighborhood. These yards are clear. There is air there, and it is about all there is. The view between brick walls outside is that of a stony street; inside, of rows of unpainted board fences, a bewildering maze of clothes-posts and lines; underfoot, a desert of brown, hard-baked soil from which every blade of grass, every stray weed, every speck of green, has been trodden out, as must inevitably be every gentle thought and aspiration above the mere wants of the body in those whose moral natures such home surroundings are to nourish. In self-defense, you know, all life eventually accommodates itself to its environment, and human life is no exception. Within the house there is nothing to supply the want thus left unsatisfied. Tenement-houses have no aesthetic resources. If any are to be brought to bear on them, they must come from the outside. There is the common hall with doors opening softly on every landing as the strange step is heard on the stairs, the air-shaft that seems always so busy letting out foul stenches from below that it has no time to earn its name by bringing down fresh air, the squeaking pumps that hold no water, and the rent that is never less than one week's wages out of the four, quite as often half of the family earnings.

Why complete the sketch? It is dreadfully familiar already. Such as it is, it is the frame in which are set days, weeks, months, and years of unceasing toil, just able to fill the mouth and clothe the back. Such as it is, it is the world, and all of it, to which these weary workers return nightly to feed heart and brain after wearing out the body at the bench, or in the shop....

With the first hot nights in June police despatches, that record the killing of men and women by rolling off roofs and window-sills while asleep, announce that the time of greatest suffering among the poor is at hand. It is in hot weather, when life indoors is well-nigh unbearable with cooking, sleeping, and working, all crowded into the small rooms together, that the tenement expands, reckless of all restraint. Then a strange and picturesque life moves upon the flat roofs. In the day and early evening mothers air their babies there, the boys fly their kites from the house-tops, undismayed by police regulations, and the young men and girls court and pass the growler. In the stifling July nights, when the big barracks are like fiery furnaces, their very walls giving out absorbed heat, men and women lie in restless, sweating rows, panting for air and sleep....

POPULIST PARTY PLATFORM (1892)

In the late 1880s the American farmer increased agricultural production, yet plummeting prices and "middle men" costs removed much of the anticipated profit; some farmers went bankrupt and were forced off their land. In response to these

circumstances and disillusioned with both traditional parties, the (Populist) was formed in 1892 to represent small producers—particularly against large corporations, the railroads, and banks. Labeling itself a party, the People's party was a fusion of several agricultural groups, Farmer's Alliance, which advocated a program to rectify agricultural problems representing the interests of the common man. Adopting the early Farmer's Alliance, Ignatius Donnelly, a rabid Populist, drafted the form, which the People's party national convention, meeting in Omaha accepted on July 4, 1892. The platform expressed Populist frustration with the influence of big business while offering some remedies to correct the situation.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Who is the audience for the Populist platform?
2. How would the platform resolve agricultural problems arising from the need for more democracy?
3. What aspects of the platform are designed to attract votes from farmers?
4. What are some of more radical proposals?
5. Why is this platform significant?

While our sympathies as a party of reform are naturally in favor of every proposition which will tend to make men intelligent, and temperate, we nevertheless regard these questions, as they are, as secondary to the great issues now pressing for solution upon which not only our individual prosperity but the very existence of our institutions depend; and we ask all men to first help us determine what we are to have a republic to administer before we differ as to the manner in which it is to be administered, believing that the forces of day organized will never cease to move forward until every wrong is righted and equal rights and equal privileges securely established for men and women of this country.

We declare, therefore—

First—That the union of the labor forces of the United States, as summarized shall be permanent and perpetual; may its spirit be the heart for the salvation of the Republic and the uplifting of man.

Second—Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every man from industry without an equivalent is robbery. "If any will not work, he shall not eat." The interests of rural and civil labor are the same; they are identical.

Third—We believe that the time has come when the railroads will either own the people or the people must own the railroads; the government enter upon the work of owning and managing the railroads, we should favor an amendment to the constitution to

Union

Member/

Labor

nation, with annual sales over \$500 million. The new mail-order plant that opened in 1906 was the largest business building in the world. Soon there were regional distribution centers scattered across the country.

The Sears catalog helped create a truly national market and in the process transformed the lives of millions of people. With the advent of free rural mail delivery in 1898 and the widespread distribution of Sears catalogs, families on farms and in small towns and villages could purchase by mail the products that heretofore were either prohibitively expensive or available only to city dwellers. By the turn of the century, 6 million catalogs were distributed each year, and the catalog had become the single most widely read book in the nation except for the Bible. Rural schools that lacked readers used the catalog to teach reading and spelling. Students learned arithmetic by adding up lists of orders, and they learned geography by studying the postal zone maps included in the catalog. Some readers of the Sears catalog thought everything pictured was available for purchase. One lonely farmer wrote a letter to the company in which he proposed marriage to the "girl wearing hat number 68 on p. 153 of your catalog."

A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT FOR WORKERS

THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH Accompanying the spread of huge industrial combinations was a rising standard of living for most people. If the rich were still getting richer, a lot of other people were at least better off, and the pre-Civil War trend toward even higher concentrations of wealth slackened off. This, of course, is far from saying that disparities in the distribution of wealth had disappeared. One set of estimates reveals that in both 1860 and 1900 the richest 2 percent of American families owned more than a third of the nation's physical wealth, while the top 10 percent owned almost three-fourths. All the nation's physical assets were in the hands of half its families. Studies of social mobility in towns across the country show, however, that while the rise from rags to riches was rare, "upward mobility both from blue-collar to white-collar callings and from low-ranked to high-ranked manual jobs was quite common."

The continuing demand for unskilled or semiskilled workers, meanwhile, attracted new groups entering the workforce at the bottom: immi-

grants above all, but also growing numbers of women and children. Because of a long-term decline in prices and the cost of living, real wages and earnings in manufacturing went up about 50 percent between 1860 and 1890, and another 37 percent from 1890 to 1914. By modern-day standards, however, working conditions were dreary indeed. At the turn of the century, the average hourly wage in manufacturing was 21.6¢, and average annual earnings were \$490. The average workweek was fifty-nine hours, or nearly six ten-hour days, but that was only an average. Most steelworkers put in a twelve-hour day, and as late as the 1920s, a great many worked a seven-day, or eighty-four-hour, week.

A NEW SOCIAL WORLD The fact that wages rose in no way discounts the high social costs of industrialization. In the crowded tenements that were built in major cities, the death rates ran substantially higher than in the countryside. Factories maintained poor health and safety conditions. In 1913, for instance, there were some 25,000 factory fatalities and 700,000 job-related injuries that required at least four weeks' disability. In this new bureaucratic world, ever-larger numbers of people were dependent on the machinery and factories of owners whom they seldom if ever saw. In the simpler world of small shops, workers and employers could enter into close personal relationships; the larger corporation, on the other hand, was likely governed by a bureaucracy in which ownership was separate from management. Much of the social history of the modern world in fact turns on the transition from a world of personal relationships to one of impersonal and contractual relationships.

UNION ORGANIZATION

DISORGANIZED PROTEST Under these circumstances it was far more difficult for workers to organize for mutual benefit than for a few captains of industry to organize for profit. Civic leaders respected property rights more than the rights of labor. Many businessmen believed that a "labor supply" was simply another commodity to be procured at the lowest possible price.

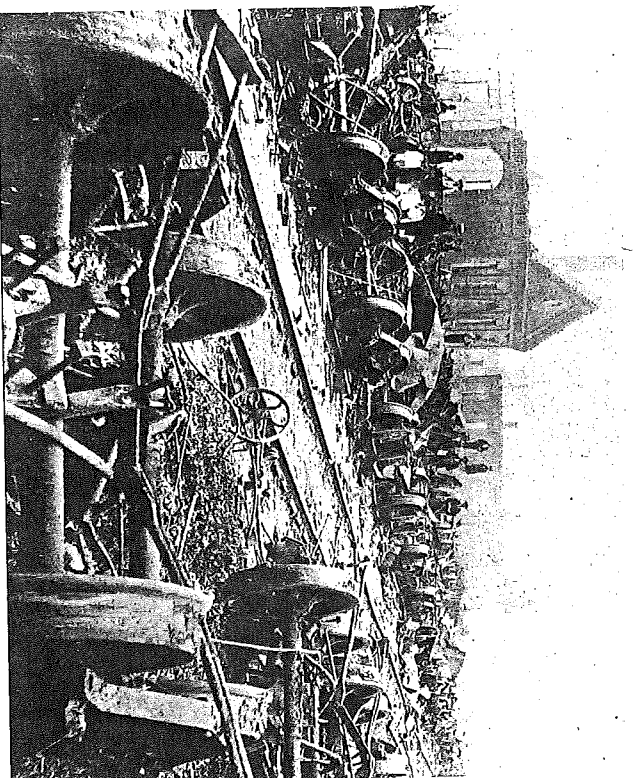
Among workers recently removed from an agrarian world, the idea of permanent unions was slow to take hold. Immigrant workers came from

many cultures. They spoke different languages and harbored ethnic animosities. Many, if not most, saw their jobs as transient, the first rung on the ladder to success. They hoped to move on to a homestead, or to return with their earnings to the old farms of their European homelands. With or without unions, though, workers often staged impromptu strikes in response to wage cuts and other grievances. But such action often led to violence, and three incidents of the 1870s colored much of the public's view of labor unions thereafter.

The decade's early years saw a reign of terror in the eastern Pennsylvania coal fields, attributed to an Irish group called the Molly Maguires. Taking their name from an Irish patriot who had directed violent resistance against the British, the group was provoked by the miserable, dangerous working conditions in the mines and the owners' brutal efforts to suppress union activity. Convinced of the justness of their cause, the Molly Maguires used intimidation, beatings, and killings to right perceived wrongs against Irish workers. Later investigations have shown that agents of the mine operators themselves stirred up some of the trouble. The terrorism reached its peak in 1874-1875, and mine owners hired Pinkerton detectives to stop the movement. One of the agents who infiltrated the Mollies produced enough evidence to indict the leaders. At trials in 1876 twenty-four of the Molly Maguires were convicted; ten were hanged. The trials also resulted in a wage reduction in the mines and the final destruction of the Miners' National Association, a weak union the Mollies had dominated.

THE RAILROAD STRIKE OF 1877 Far more significant, because more widespread, was the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the first major interstate strike. Wage cuts caused the Great Strike. After the Panic of 1873 and the ensuing depression, the major rail lines in the East had cut wages. In 1877 they made another 10 percent cut, which provoked most of the railroad workers at Martinsburg, West Virginia, to walk off the job and block the tracks. Without organized direction, however, their picketing groups degenerated into a mob that burned and plundered railroad property.

Walkouts and sympathy demonstrations spread spontaneously from Maryland to San Francisco. The strike engulfed hundreds of cities and towns, leaving in its wake over a hundred people killed and millions of dollars in property destroyed. Federal troops finally quelled the vio-



The Devastation Wrought by the Railroad Strike of 1877. Railroad workers in Pittsburgh reacted violently to wage cuts.

lence. The greatest outbreak began at Pittsburgh, when the Pennsylvania Railroad put on "double-headers" (long trains pulled by two locomotives) in order to reduce crews. Public sympathy for the strikers was so great at first that local militiamen, called out to suppress them, instead joined the workers. Militiamen called in from Philadelphia managed to disperse one crowd at the cost of twenty-six lives, but then found themselves besieged in the railroad's roundhouse, where they disbanded and shot their way out.

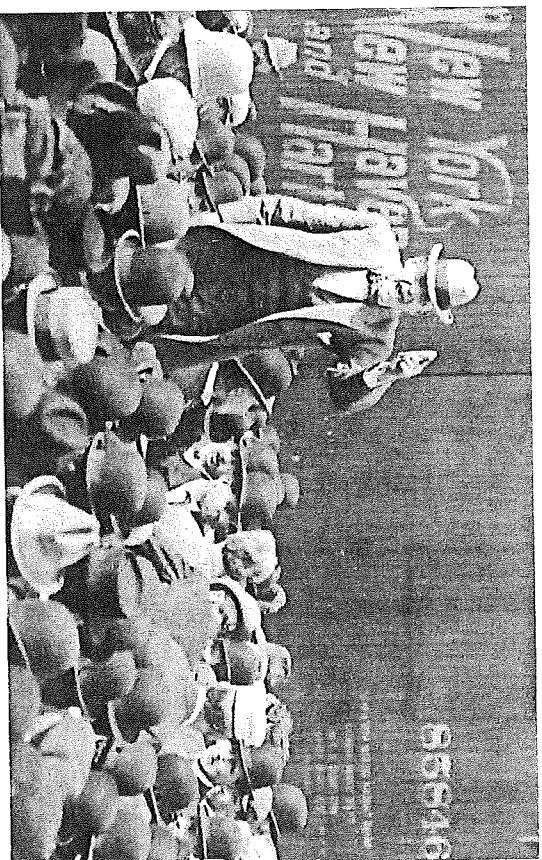
Looting, rioting, and burning went on for another day until the frenzy wore itself out. A reporter described the scene as "the most horrible ever witnessed, except in the carnage of war. There were fifty miles of hot rails, ten tracks side by side, with as many miles of ties turned into glowing coals and tons of iron car skeletons and wheels almost at white heat." Public opinion, sympathetic at first, tended to blame the workers for the looting and violence. Eventually the strikers, lacking organized bargaining power, had no choice but to drift back to work. Everywhere the strikes failed.

Meanwhile, the attorney-general won an injunction forbidding any interference with the mails or any combination to restrain interstate commerce; the principle was that a strike or boycott violated the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. On July 13 the union called off the strike and on the same day the district court cited Debs for violating the injunction and sentenced him to six months in jail. The Supreme Court upheld the decree in the case of *In re Debs* (1895) on broad grounds of national sovereignty: "The strong arm of the national government may be put forth to brush away all obstructions to the freedom of interstate commerce or the transportation of the mails." Debs served his term, during which time he read deeply in socialist literature, and he emerged to devote the rest of his life to that cause.

SOCIALISM AND THE UNIONS The major American unions, for the most part, never allied themselves with the socialists, as many European labor movements did. But socialist ideas had been abroad in the country at least since the 1820s. Marxism, one strain of socialism, was imported mainly by German immigrants. Karl Marx's International Workingmen's Association, the First International, founded in 1864, inspired a few affiliates in the United States. In 1872, at Marx's urging, the headquarters was moved from London to New York. In 1876 the First International expired, but the next year followers of Marx in America organized the Socialist Labor party, a group so filled with immigrants that German was its official language in the first years.

The movement gained little notice before the rise of Daniel DelLeon in the 1890s. As editor of its paper, *The People*, he became the dominant figure in the party. A native of the Dutch West Indies, DelLeon had studied law and lectured for some years at Columbia University. He proposed to organize industrial unions with a socialist purpose, and to build a political party that would abolish the state once it gained power, after which the unions of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance would become the units of control. His ideas seem to have influenced Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, but DelLeon preached revolution at the ballot box, not by violence.

Debs was more successful at building a socialist movement in America. To many, DelLeon seemed doctrinaire and inflexible. Debs, however, built his new party by following a method now traditional in the



Eugene V. Debs, founder of the American Railway Union and later candidate for president as head of the Socialist Party of America.

United States: he formed a coalition, one that embraced viewpoints ranging from moderate reform to doctrinaire Marxism. In 1897 Debs announced that he was a socialist and organized the Social Democratic party from the remnants of the American Railway Union. He got over 4,000 votes as its candidate for president in 1900. In 1901 his followers joined a number of secessionists from DelLeon's party, led by Morris Hillquit of New York, to set up the Socialist Party of America. In 1904 Debs polled over 400,000 votes as the party's candidate for president and more than doubled that to almost 900,000 votes in 1912, or 6 percent of the popular vote. In 1910 Milwaukee elected a socialist mayor and congressman.

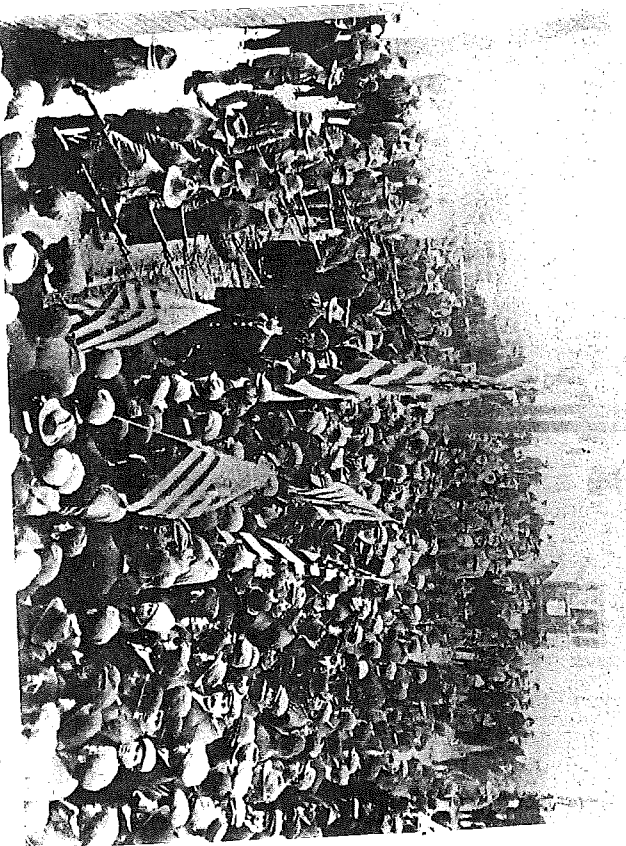
By 1912 the Socialist party seemed well on the way to becoming a permanent fixture in American politics. Thirty-three cities had socialist mayors, including Berkeley, California; Butte, Montana; Flint and Jackson, Michigan; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The party sponsored five English daily newspapers, eight foreign-language dailies, and a number of weeklies and monthlies. Its support was not confined to urban workers and intellectuals. In the Southwest the party built a sizable grass-

roots following among farmers and tenants. Oklahoma, for instance, in 1910 had more paid-up party members than any other state except New York, and in 1912 gave 16.5 percent of its popular vote to Debs, a greater proportion than any other state ever gave. But the Socialist party reached its peak in 1912. During World War I, it was wracked by disagreements over America's participation in the war, and it was split thereafter by desertions to the new Communist party.

THE WOBBLIES During the years of Socialist party growth, there emerged a parallel effort to revive industrial unionism, led by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The chief base for this group was the Western Federation of Miners, organized at Butte, Montana, in 1893. Over the next decade the Western Federation was the storm center of violent confrontation with unyielding bosses who mobilized private armies against it in Colorado, Idaho, and elsewhere. In 1905 the founding convention of the IWW drew a variety of people who opposed the AFL's philosophy. Debs participated, although many of his comrades preferred to work within the AFL. DeLeon seized this chance to strike back at craft unionism. A radical manifesto issued from the meetings, arguing that the IWW "must be founded on the class struggle, and its general administration must be conducted in harmony with the recognition of the irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class."

But the IWW waged class war better than it articulated class ideology. Like the Knights of Labor, it was designed to be "One Big Union," including all workers, skilled or unskilled. Its roots were in the mining and lumber camps of the West, where unstable conditions of employment created a large number of nomadic workers, to whom neither the AFL's pragmatic approach nor the socialists' political appeal held much attraction. The revolutionary goal of the Wobblies, as they came to be called, was an idea labeled syndicalism by its French supporters: the ultimate destruction of the state and its replacement by one big union. But just how it would govern remained vague.

Like other radical groups, the IWW was split by sectarian disputes. Because of policy disagreements, all the major founders withdrew, first the Western Federation of Miners, then Debs, then DeLeon. William D. "Big Bill" Haywood of the Western Federation remained, however, and as its leader held the group together. Although since embellished in



Textile workers strike, Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1912. The IWW of this Lawrence mill engaged in a violent strike for increased wages, overtime pay, and other benefits.

myth, Haywood was in fact an imposing figure. Well over six feet tall, handsome and muscular, he commanded the attention and respect of his listeners. This hardrock miner, union organizer, and socialist from Salt Lake City despised the AFL and its conservative labor philosophy. He called Samuel Gompers "a squat specimen of humanity" who was "conceited, petulant, and vindictive." Instead of following Gompers' advice to organize only skilled workers, Haywood promoted the concept of one all-inclusive union whose credo would be the promotion of a socialism "with its working clothes on."

But Haywood and the Wobblies were reaching out to the fringe elements that had the least power and influence, chiefly the migratory workers of the West and the ethnic groups of the East. Always ambivalent about diluting their revolutionary principles, they scorned the usual labor agreements, even when they participated in them. Consequently, they engaged in spectacular battles with capital but scored few victories. The largest was a textile strike at Lawrence, Massachusetts,

in 1912, that garnered wage raises, overtime pay, and other benefits. But the next year a strike of silk workers at Paterson, New Jersey, ended in disaster, and the IWW entered a rapid decline.

Branded as anarchists, bums, and criminals, the IWW was effectively destroyed during World War I, when most of its leaders were jailed for conspiracy because of their militant opposition to the war. Big Bill Haywood fled to the Soviet Union, where he married a Russian woman, died in 1928, and was honored by burial in the Kremlin wall. The Wobblies left behind a rich folklore of nomadic working men and a gallery of heroic agitators such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, a dark-haired Irish woman who at age eighteen chained herself to a lamppost to impede her arrest during a strike. The movement also bequeathed martyrs such as the Swedish singer and labor organizer Joe Hill, framed (so the faithful assumed) for murder and executed by a Utah firing squad. His last words were written to Haywood: "Goodbye, Bill. I die like a true blue rebel. Don't waste any time mourning. Organize." The intensity of conviction and devotion to a cause shown by Hill, Flynn, and others ensured that the IWW's ideal of a classless society did not die.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

- The Darwinian ideas implicit in the attitudes of many leading entrepreneurs, especially Andrew Carnegie, are described in greater detail in the next chapter.
- In response to the growth of the railroads, reformers in the 1880s and 1890s began to push for regulation, a trend explored in Chapter 22.
- The economic and industrial growth described in this chapter was an important factor in America's "new imperialism" in the late nineteenth century, as shown in Chapter 23.
- The socialist approach to reform was a significant influence on the Progressive movement, covered in Chapter 24.

FURTHER READING

For a masterly synthesis of post-Civil War industrial development, see Walter Licht's *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century* (1995). Of more specialized interest are Alfred D. Chandler's *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (1977), and Maury Klein's *The Flowering of the Third America: The Making of an Organizational Society, 1850–1920* (1992).

On the growth of railroads see Albro Martin's *Railroads Triumphant The Growth, Rejection, and Rebirth of a Vital American Force* (1992) and Walter Licht's *Working for the Railroad: The Organization of Work in the Nineteenth Century* (1983) treats the life of the railroad workers Gabriel Kolko's *Railroads and Regulation, 1877–1916* (1965) argues that the entrepreneurs themselves sought regulation.

On entrepreneurship in the iron and steel sector, see Thomas J. Misa's *A Nation of Steel: The Making of Modern America, 1865–1920* (1995). The best biography of the leading business tycoon is Ron Chernow's *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (1998).

Nathan Rosenberg's *Technology and American Economic Growth* (1972) documents the growth of invention during the period. For an absorbing biography of the foremost inventor of the era, see Neil Baldwin's *Edison: Inventing the Century* (1995).

Much of the recent scholarship on labor stresses the traditional values and the culture of work that people brought to the factory. Herbert G. Gutman's *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (1976) best introduces these themes. The best survey remains David Montgomery's *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865–1925* (1987).

For the role of women in the changing workplace, see Alice Kessler-Harris's *Out to Work* (1983), Susan E. Kennedy's *If All We Did Was Weep at Home: A History of White Working-Class Women in America* (1979), and S. J. Kleinberg's *The Shadow of the Mills: Working-Class Families in Pittsburgh, 1870–1907* (1989).

As for the labor groups, Gerald N. Grob's *Workers and Utopias* (1961) examines the difference in outlook between the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. For the Knights, see Leon Fink's *Workingmen's Democracy* (1983). Also useful is Susan Levine's *Labor*

(2) That nearly as many were lynched for murder as for the above crime, which the world believes is the cause of all the lynchings. The world affects to believe that white womanhood and childhood, surrounded by their lawful protectors, are not safe in the neighborhood of the black man who protected and cared for them during the four years of civil war. The husbands, fathers and brothers of those white women were away for four years, fighting to keep the Negro in slavery, yet not one case of assault has ever been reported!

(3) That "robbery, incendiarism, race prejudice, quarreling with white men, making threats, rioting, miscegenation (marrying a white person), and burglary," are capital offences punishable by death when committed by a black against a white person. Nearly as many blacks were lynched for these charges (and unproven) as for the crime of rape.

(4) That for nearly fifty of these lynchings no reason is given. There is no demand for reasons, or need of concealment for what no one is held responsible. The simple word of any white person against a Negro is sufficient to get a crowd of white men to lynch a Negro. Investigation as to the guilt or innocence of the accused is never made. Under these conditions, white men have only to blacken their faces, commit crimes against the peace of the community, accuse some Negro, nor rest till he is killed by a mob. Will Lewis, an 18 year old Negro youth was lynched at Tullahoma, Tennessee, August, 1891, for being "drunk and saucy to white folks."

• • •

In the 1880s, George Pullman built the company town of Pullman, outside of Chicago. He slashed his workers' wages, forced them to pay high rents for the dwellings he owned, and controlled every aspect of their lives, treating them like serfs on a feudal estate. Workers struck Pullman on May 11, 1894. To support them, the American Railway Union, led by Eugene Debs, organized a nationwide boycott of the railroads. Soon all traffic on the twenty-four railroad lines leading out of Chicago could not move. The strike was broken by court injunctions and federal troops sent by President Grover Cleveland. Debs went to prison for six months, and came out a socialist. Here is a statement the Pullman workers delivered at the union's convention at Uhlich Hall in Chicago.

Statement from the Pullman Strikers (June 15, 1894)¹⁰

Mr. President and Brothers of the American Railway Union: We struck at Pullman because we were without hope. We joined the American Railway Union because

it gave us a glimmer of hope. Twenty thousand souls, men, women, and little ones, have their eyes turned toward this convention today, straining eagerly through dark despondency for a glimmer of the heaven-sent message you alone can give us on this earth.

In stating to this body our grievances it is hard to tell where to begin. You all must know that the proximate cause of our strike was the discharge of two members of our grievance committee the day after George M. Pullman, himself, and Thomas H. Wickes, his second vice-president, had guaranteed them absolute immunity. The more remote causes are still imminent. Five reductions in wages, in work, and in conditions of employment swept through the shops at Pullman between May and December, 1893. The last was the most severe, amounting to nearly 30 percent, and our rents had not fallen. We owed Pullman \$70,000 when we struck May 11. We owe him twice as much today. He does not evict us for two reasons: One, the force of popular sentiment and public opinion; the other because he hopes to starve us out, to break through in the back of the American Railway Union, and to deduct from our miserable wages when we are forced to return to him the last dollar we owe him for the occupancy of his houses.

Rents all over the city in every quarter of its vast extent have fallen, in some cases to one-half. Residences, compared with which ours are hovels, can be had a few miles away at the prices we have been contributing to make a millionaire a billionaire. What we pay \$15 for in Pullman is leased for \$8 in Roseland; and remember that just as no man or woman of our 4,000 toilers has ever felt the friendly pressure of George M. Pullman's hand, so no man or woman of us all has ever owned or can ever hope to own one inch of George M. Pullman's land. Why, even the very streets are his. . . . And do you know what their names are? Why, Fulton, Stephenson, Watt, and Pullman. . . .

When we went to tell him our grievances he said we were all his "children." Pullman, both the man and the town, is an ulcer on the body politic. He owns the houses, the schoolhouses, and churches of God in the town he gave his once humble name. The revenue he derives from these, the wages he pays out with one hand—the Pullman Palace Car Company, he takes back with the other—the Pullman Land Association. He is able by this to bid under any contract car shop in this country. His competitors in business, to meet this, must reduce the wages of their men. This gives him the excuse to reduce ours to conform to the market. His business rivals must in turn scale down; so must he. And thus the merry war—the dance of skeletons bathed in human tears—goes on, and it will go on, brothers, forever, unless you, the American Railway Union, stop it; end it; crush it out. Our town is beautiful. In all these thirteen years no word of scandal has arisen against one of our women, young or old. What city of 20,000 persons can show

the like? Since our strike, the arrests, which used to average four or five a day, have dwindled down to less than one a week. We are peaceable; we are orderly, and but for the kindly beneficence of kindly-hearted people in and about Chicago we would be starving. We are not desperate today, because we are not hungry, and our wives and children are not begging for bread. But George M. Pullman, who ran away from the public opinion that has arisen against him, like the genie from the bottle in the Arabian Nights, is not feeding us. He is patiently seated beside his millions waiting for what? To see us starve. We have grown better acquainted with the American Railway Union these convention days, and as we have heard sentiments of the noblest philanthropy fall from the lips of our general officers—your officers and ours—we have learned that there is a balm for all our troubles, and that the box containing it is in your hands today only awaiting opening to disseminate its sweet savor of hope.

George M. Pullman, you know, has cut our wages from 30 to 70 percent. George M. Pullman has caused to be paid in the last year the regular quarterly dividend of 2 percent on his stock and an extra slice of 1 1/2 percent, making 9 1/2 percent on \$30,000,000 of capital. George M. Pullman, you know, took three contracts on which he lost less than \$5,000. Because he loved us? No. Because it was cheaper to lose a little money in his freight car and his coach shops than to let his workmen go, but that petty loss, more than made up by us from money we needed to clothe our wives and little ones, was his excuse for effecting a gigantic reduction of wages in every department of his great works, of cutting men and boys and girls, with equal zeal, including everyone in the repair shops of the Pullman Palace cars on which such preposterous profits have been made. . . .

We will make you proud of us, brothers, if you will give us the hand we need. Help us make our country better and more wholesome. Pull us out of our slough of despond. Teach arrogant grinders of the faces of the poor that there is still a God in Israel, and if need be a Jehovah—a God of battles. Do this, and on that last great day you will stand, as we hope to stand, before the great white throne "like gentlemen unafraid."

...

One reaction to the poverty and violence of capitalism in the nineteenth century was to dream of a different kind of world. Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward* imagined a man waking up in the year 2000 in a society based on equality and justice. His book sold a million copies in a few years, and over a hundred groups were organized around the country to work toward Bellamy's vision.

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888)¹¹

"And, in heaven's name, who are the public enemies?" exclaimed Dr. Leete. "Are they France, England, Germany, or hunger, cold, and nakedness? In your day governments were accustomed, on the slightest international misunderstanding, to seize upon the bodies of citizens and deliver them over by hundreds of thousands to death and mutilation, wasting their treasures the while like water; and all this oftenest for no imaginable profit to the victims. We have no war now, and our governments no war powers, but in order to protect every citizen against hunger, cold, and nakedness, and provide for all his physical and mental needs, the function is assumed of directing his industry for a term of years. No, Mr. West, I am sure on reflection you will perceive that it was in your age, not in ours, that the extension of the functions of governments was extraordinary. Not even for the best ends would men now allow their governments such powers as were then used for the most maleficent."

"Leaving comparisons aside," I said, "the demagoguery and corruption of our public men would have been considered, in my day, insuperable objections to any assumption by government of the charge of the national industries. We should have thought that no arrangement could be worse than to entrust the politicians with control of the wealth-producing machinery of the country. Its material interests were quite too much the football of parties as it was."

"No doubt you were right," rejoined Dr. Leete, "but all that is changed now. We have no parties or politicians, and as for demagoguery and corruption, they are words having only an historical significance."

"Human nature itself must have changed very much," I said.

"Not at all," was Dr. Leete's reply, "but the conditions of human life have changed, and with them the motives of human action. The organization of society with you was such that officials were under a constant temptation to misuse their power for the private profit of themselves or others. Under such circumstances it seems almost strange that you dared entrust them with any of your affairs. Nowadays, on the contrary, society is so constituted that there is absolutely no way in which an official, however ill-disposed, could possibly make any profit for himself or anyone else by a misuse of his power. Let him be as bad an official as you please, he cannot be a corrupt one. There is no motive to be. The social system no longer offers a premium on dishonesty. But these are matters which you can only understand as you come, with time, to know us better."

"But you have not yet told me how you have settled the labor problem. It is the problem of capital which we have been discussing," I said. "After the nation had

thority, but the efforts made to stop it were without practical result. In a normal year the steel mills are crowded with work. Sunday was, the year of inquiry, a day for clearing up, for tardy departments to get even with their ones. Often the mills rolled out the finished product faster than the cars or the transportation department could take care of it. Then there was great activity of traveling cranes and narrow-gauge or dinky engines, and when the rolling mills began again on Sunday evening everything was cleared away, and all departments were ready for another week. Whenever there was construction work of any sort it was customary for it to go on without interruption until it was finished. Loading cars and unloading them frequently continued on Sunday, and for all this work many laborers, crane men, engineers, firemen, millwrights and machinists, besides the regular watchmen, were on duty seven nights in the week....

Added to and intensifying the evils of Sunday work is the "long turn" of twenty-four hours that comes every second week to 60 per cent of the blast race workers and to many others. This is involved in the variations tried to on a previous page. The men average seven working days a week working six days one week and the next week eight. Every Sunday there is change about. The men on the night shift give place on Sunday morning to the men on the day shift, and these work through until Monday morning a full twenty-four hours, so as to change to the night shift for the week ending, while the old night shift changes to the day. The men who get through Sunday morning have a twenty-four hour interval. Theoretically have a day of rest, but they must choose between trying to take advantage of it without resting from a twelve hour night of work, or going to bed waking, later, to find most of the precious day of freedom gone....

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PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR (1878)

with the growing size and complexity of business, small groups of skilled workers began to form labor organizations or societies to protect their jobs and gain some of the wealth that business generated. Many of the early societies were secret societies, organized to protect against employer retaliation. Often these organizations were small, and limited to certain industries, and usually failed to achieve their goals. Among the first labor organizations that created a national following was the Knights of Labor, begun as a secret trade union of tailors in Philadelphia in 1869, the Knights of St. Terrence V. Powderly assumed the leadership in 1879. Powderly included all workers—regardless of trade—and women and African Americans (though in separate locals) into the Knights. He also believed in arbitrating disputes, the use of boycotts, but opposed the use or threat of a strike when it came to business. Powderly, who served three terms as mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania, while leading the Knights, assisted in writing the preamble to the constitution of the Knights of Labor, which is excerpted below.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were some of the key issues the Knights of Labor wanted addressed?
2. Who was the audience for this document?
3. What were some of the obstacles facing workers during this time period?
4. How do the Knights propose to attain their demands?
5. What is the significance of this document?

The recent alarming development and aggression of aggregated wealth, which, unless checked, will invariably lead to the pauperization and hopeless degradation of the toiling masses, render it imperative, if we desire to enjoy the blessings of life, that a check should be placed upon its power and upon unjust accumulation, and a system adopted which will secure to the laborer the fruits of his toil; and as this much-desired object can only be accomplished by the thorough unification of labor, and the united efforts of those who obey the divine injunction that "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," we have formed the * * * * with a view of securing the organization and direction, by co-operative effort, of the power of the industrial classes; and we submit to the world the object sought to be accomplished by our organization, calling upon all who believe in securing "the greatest good to the greatest number" to aid and assist us:

- I. To bring within the folds of organization every department of productive industry, making knowledge a standpoint for action, and industrial and moral worth, not wealth, the true standard of individual and national greatness.
- II. To secure to the toilers a proper share of the wealth that they create; more of the leisure that rightfully belongs to them; more societarian advantages; more of the benefits, privileges, and emoluments of the world; in a word, all those rights and privileges necessary to make them capable of enjoying, appreciating, defending, and perpetuating the blessings of good government.
- III. To arrive at the true condition of the producing masses in their educational, moral, and financial condition, by demanding from the various governments the establishment of bureaus of Labor Statistics.
- IV. The establishment of co-operative institutions, productive and distributive.
- V. The reserving of the public lands—the heritage of the people—for the actual settler;—not another acre for railroads or speculators.
- VI. The abrogation of all laws that do not bear equally upon capital and labor, the removal of unjust technicalities, delays, and discriminations

in the administration of justice, and the adopting of measures providing for the health and safety of those engaged in mining, manufacturing, or building pursuits.

VII. The enactment of laws to compel chartered corporations to pay their employes weekly, in full, for labor performed during the preceding week, in the lawful money of the country.

VIII. The enactment of laws giving mechanics and laborers a first lien on their work for their full wages.

IX. The abolishment of the contract system of national, State, and municipal work.

X. The substitution of arbitration for strikes, whenever and wherever employes and employes [sic] are willing to meet on equitable grounds.

XI. The prohibition of the employment of children in workshops, mines, and factories before attaining their fourteenth year.

XII. To abolish the system of letting out by contract the labor of convicts in our prisons and reformatory institutions.

XIII. To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work.

XIV. The reduction of the hours of labor to eight per day, so that the laborers may have more time for social enjoyment and intellectual improvement, and be enabled to reap the advantages conferred by the labor saving machinery which their brains have created.

XV. To prevail upon governments to establish a purely national circulating medium based upon the faith and resources of the nation, and issued directly to the people, without the intervention of any system of banking corporations, which money shall be a legal tender in payment of all debts, public or private.

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LIFE IN THE TENEMENTS OF NEW YORK CITY (1890)

In the post-Civil War period, cities swelled in population as a twin migration of immigrants and rural Americans flocked to the glittering urban environment hoping for a better life. For many, especially those lacking urban work skills, the city offered a difficult life amid squalid living conditions. While poor districts have always existed in urban areas, never had poverty affected so many people in America. Danish-born newspaper reporter Jacob Riis made millions aware of the urban slums. As a *New York City* police reporter, Riis frequently entered the tenement districts to gather evidence for his stories, but the wretched life of the people shocked Riis into writing vivid articles and later books about life in the tenement slums. Riis

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. According to Jacob Riis, what are some of the problems of life in New York City?
2. How did these conditions develop, and why did they persist?
3. Who was the audience for Riis' book?
4. What is the significance of *How the Other Half Lives*?

Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might see the children pitching pennies back there. Not that I mean; kicks and cuffs are their daily diet. They have little else the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another flight of stairs. You can feel your way if you cannot see it. Clo would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes hall-door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of the that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of the meant to be free, but man deals out with such niggardly hand a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped again are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access—and all alike by their summer stencils. Hear the pump squeak! It is tenement-house babes. In summer, when a thousand thirsty throats a cooling drink in this block, it is worked in vain. But the saloon door you passed in the hall, is always there. The smell of it has up. Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that wall—what do they mean? They mean that the soiled bow of the on the door downstairs will have another story to tell—Oh! a story—before the day is at an end. The child is dying with measles a chance it might have lived; but it had none. The dark bedroom In the dull content of life bred on the tenement-house dead level to redeem it, or to calm apprehension for a society that has not offer its toilers; while the patient efforts of the lives finally attain der the situation tolerable, and the very success of these efforts, bring out in stronger contrast the general gloom of the picture how much farther they might have gone with half a chance. Go in "respectable" tenement neighborhoods—the fact that there are two saloons on the corner, nor over three or four in the block will guide—where live the great body of hard-working Irish and Germans and their descendants, who accept naturally the condition life, because for them there is nothing else in New York; be with view that, if fed, they have no cause of complaint, you shall come ing with me that, humanly speaking, life there does not seem worse Take at random one of these uptown tenement blocks, not of the of the most prosperous kind, within hail of what the newspapers

strike that occurs and the increasing arbitrariness of labor demands on their employers.

(4) They are destroying respect for law and authority among the working classes, as many have no higher conception of these than such as are embodied in the commands and demands of labor organizations and labor leaders.

(5) They are educating the laboring classes against the employing classes, thus creating antagonisms between those whose mutuality of interests should be fostered and encouraged by every friend of good government; for the success of government hangs on no less a basis than the harmony and happiness of the people, embracing alike employers and the employed.

(6) They are demanding of Federal, State, and municipal authorities class legislation and class discrimination utterly at variance with the fundamental principles of our Government, in that they are demanding of these various authorities the employment of only union labor, thus seeking to bring the power of organized society to crush out all nonunion workers.

(7) They are destroying the right of individual contract between employees and employers and forcing upon employers men at arbitrary wages, which is unjust alike to other labor more skilled, and to capital, which is thus obliged to pay for more than it receives in equivalent.

(8) They demand the discharge of men who risk life to protect employers' interests during strikes to reinstate those who were formerly employed, but who have been instrumental, directly or indirectly, in the destruction of life and property, thereby placing a premium upon disloyalty and crime.

(9) They are bringing public reproach upon the judicial tribunals of our Country by public abuse of these tribunals and often open defiance of their judgments and decrees, thus seeking to break down the only safeguards of a free people. . . .

A further law should be enacted that would make it justifiable homicide for any killing that occurred in defense of any lawful occupation, the theory of our government being that anyone has a right to earn an honest living in this country, and any endeavor to deprive one of that right should be placed in the same legal status with deprivation of life and property.

Samuel Compers, Letter to the American Federationist, 1894

You say that . . . you believe in labor organizations within such lawful and reasonable limits as will make them a service to the laboring man, and not a menace to the lawful institutions of the country. . . .

You would certainly have no objection . . . to workmen organizing, and in their meetings discuss perhaps "the origin of man," benignly smiling upon each other, and declaring that all existing things are right, going to their wretched homes to find some freedom in sleep from gnawing hunger. You would have them extol the virtues of monopolists and wreckers of the people's welfare. You would not have them consider seriously the fact that more than two million of their fellows are unemployed, and though willing and able, cannot find the opportunity to work, in order that they may sustain themselves, their wives and their children. You would not have them consider seriously the fact that Pullman who has grown so rich from the toil of his workmen, that he can riot in

luxury, while he heartlessly turns these very workmen out of their tenements into the streets and leave to the tender mercies of corporate greed. Nor would you have them ponder upon the hundreds of other Pullmans of different names.

You know, or ought to know, that the introduction of machinery is turning into idleness thousands, faster than new industries are founded, and yet, machinery certainly should not be either destroyed or hampered in its full development. The laborer is a man, he is made warm by the same sun and made cold — yes, colder — by the same winter as you are. He has a heart and brain, and feels and knows the human and paternal instinct for those depending upon him as keenly as do you.

What shall the workers do? Sit idly by and see the vast resources of nature and the human mind be utilized and monopolized for the benefit of the comparative few? No. The laborers must learn to think and act, and soon, too, that only by the power of organization, and common concert of action, can either their manhood be maintained, their rights to life (work to sustain it) be recognized, and liberty and rights secured.

Since you say that you favor labor organizations within certain limits, will you kindly give to thousands of your anxious fellow citizens what you believe the workers could and should do in their organizations to solve this great problem? Not what they should not do. . . .

I am not one of those who regards the entire past as a failure. I recognize the progress made and the improved conditions of which nearly the entire civilized world are the beneficiaries. I ask you to explain . . . how is it that thousands of able-bodied, willing, earnest men and women are suffering the pangs of hunger? We may boast of our wealth and civilization, but to the hungry man and woman and child our progress is a hollow mockery, our civilization a sham, and our "national wealth" a chimera.

You recognize that the industrial forces set in motion by steam and electricity have materially changed the structure of our civilization. You also admit that a system has grown up where the accumulations of the individual have passed from his control into that of representative combinations and trusts, and that the tendency in this direction is on the increase. How, then, can you consistently criticize the workmen for recognizing that as individuals they can have no influence in deciding what the wages, hours of toil and conditions of employment shall be?

You evidently have observed the growth of corporate wealth and influence. You recognize that wealth, in order to become more highly productive, is concentrated into fewer hands, and controlled by representatives and directors, and yet you sing the old siren song that the working man should depend entirely upon his own "individual effort."

The school of *laissez faire*, of which you seem to be a pronounced advocate, has produced great men in advocating the theory of each for himself, and his Satanic Majesty taking the hindmost, but the most pronounced advocates of your school of thought in economics have, when practically put to the test, been compelled to admit that combination and organization of the toiling masses are essential both to prevent the deterioration and to secure an improvement in the condition of the wage earners.

If, as you say, the success of commercial society depends upon the full play of competition, why do not you and your conferees turn your attention and

direct the shafts of your attacks against the trusts and corporations, business wreckers and manipulators in the food products — the necessities of the people. Why garland your thoughts in beautiful phrase when speaking of these modern vampires, and steep your pen in gall when writing of the laborers' efforts to secure some of the advantages accruing from the concentrated thought and genius of the ages? . . .

One becomes enraptured in reading the beauty of your description of modern progress. Could you have had in mind the miners of Spring Valley or Pennsylvania, or the clothing workers of the sweat shops of New York or Chicago when you grandiloquently dilate, "Who is not rich to-day when compared with his ancestors of a century ago? The steamboat and the railroad bring to his breakfast table the coffees of Java and Brazil, the fruit from Florida and California, and the steaks from the plains. The loom arrays him in garments and the factories furnish him with a dwelling that the richest contemporaries of his grandfather would have envied. With health and industry he is a prince."

Probably you have not read within the past year of babies dying of starvation at their mothers' breasts. More than likely the thousands of men lying upon the bare stones night after night in the City Hall of Chicago last winter escaped your notice. You may not have heard of the cry for bread that was sounded through this land of plenty by thousands of honest men and women. But should these and many other painful incidents have passed you by unnoticed, I am fearful that you may learn of them with keener thoughts with the coming sleets and blasts of winter.

You say that "labor cannot afford to attack capital." Let me remind you that labor has no quarrel with capital, as such. It is merely the possessors of capital who refuse to accord to labor the recognition, the right, the justice which is the laborers' due, with whom we contend. . . .

Inquire from the thousands of women and children whose husbands or fathers were suffocated or crushed in the mines through the rapacious greed of the stockholders clamoring for more dividends. Investigate the sweating dens of the large cities. Go to the mills, factories, through the country. Visit the modern tenement houses or hovels in which thousands of workers are compelled to eke out an existence. . . . Ascertain from employers whether the laborer is not regarded the same as a machine, thrown out as soon as all the work possible has been squeezed out of him.

Are you aware that all the legislation ever secured for the ventilation or safety of mines, factory or work-shop is the result of the efforts of organized labor? Do you know that the trade unions were the shield for the seven-year-old children . . . until they become somewhat older? And that the reformatory laws now on the statute books, protecting or defending . . . both sexes, young and old, from the fond care of the conquerors, were wrested from Congresses, legislatures and parliaments despite the Pullmans. . . .

By what right, sir, do you assume that the labor organizations do not conduct their affairs within lawful limits, or that they are a menace to the lawful institutions of the country? Is it because some thoughtless or overzealous member at a time of great excitement and smarting under a wrong may violate . . . a law or commit an improper act? Would you apply the same rule to the churches, the other moral agencies and organizations that you do to the organizations of labor? If you did, the greatest moral force of life to-day, the trade unions, would

certainly stand out the clearest, brightest and purest. Because a certain class (for which you and a number of your colleagues on the bench seem to be the special pleaders) have a monopoly in their lines of trade, I submit that this is no good reason for their claim to have a monopoly on true patriotism or respect for the lawful institutions of the country.

Year by year man's liberties are trampled under foot at the bidding of corporations and trusts, rights are invaded and law perverted. In all ages wherever a tyrant has shown himself he has always found some willing judge to clothe that tyranny in the robes of legality, and modern capitalism has proven no exception to the rule.

You may not know that the labor movement as represented by the trades unions, stands for right, for justice, for liberty. You may not imagine that the issuance of an injunction depriving men of a legal as well as a natural right to protect themselves, their wives and little ones, must fail of its purpose. Repression or oppression never yet succeeded in crushing the truth or redressing a wrong.

In conclusion let me assure you that labor will organize and more compactly than ever and upon practical lines, and despite relentless antagonism, achieve for humanity a nobler manhood, a more beautiful womanhood and a happier childhood.

QUESTIONS FOR READING AND DISCUSSION

1. Why were labor unions "the greatest menace to this Government," according to Thompson? How did Gompers's arguments respond to such claims? How did Thompson and Gompers differ in their views of strikes?
2. In what ways did labor unions violate the rights of others, according to Thompson? What workers' rights and liberties did Thompson recognize?
3. How did Gompers and Thompson differ in their beliefs about the benefits and liabilities of competition? Why was government important to each of them?
4. How did Gompers respond to accusations that labor unions were treasonous? Did Gompers oppose capitalism and industrialization?
5. How did Thompson and Gompers view the future? How did they differ in their assumptions about a just society?

DOCUMENT 4

Mark Twain on the Blessings-of-Civilization Trust

Many Americans welcomed the war against Spain in 1898. The notion of American soldiers liberating colonists from a decaying monarchy had wide appeal. But the temptation to start an American overseas empire in the Philippines proved irresistible. Mark Twain wrote a bitter satire that ridiculed official claims that it was necessary to take over the Philippines in order to spread the virtues of American civilization to backward Filipinos, whom Twain termed the "Person Sitting in Darkness." Twain's satire made clear that the burgeoning American empire was a betrayal of fundamental national values. Selections from Twain's essay "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" follow.

I have had fairly good work since I was married. I made the average of what we contract miners are paid; but, as I said before, I am not much better off than when I started.

In 1896 my wife was sick eleven weeks. The doctor came to my house almost every day. He charged me \$20 for his services. There was medicine to buy. I paid the drug store \$18 in that time. Her mother nursed her, and we kept a girl in the kitchen at \$1.50 a week, which cost me \$15 for ten weeks, besides the additional living expenses.

In 1897, just a year afterward, I had a severer trial. And mind, in those years, we were only working about half time. But in the fall of that year one of my brothers struck a gas feeder. There was a terrible explosion. He was hurled downward in the breast and covered with the rush of coal and rock. I was working only three breasts away from him and for a moment was unable to realize what had occurred. Myself and a hundred others were soon at work, however, and in a short while we found him, horribly burned over his whole body, his laborer dead alongside of him.

He was my brother. He was single and had been boarding. He had no home of his own. I didn't want him taken to the hospital, so I directed the driver of the ambulance to take him to my house. Besides being burned, his right arm and left leg were broken, and he was hurt internally. The doctors—there were two at the house when we got there—said he would die. But he didn't. He is living and a miner to-day. But he lay in bed just fourteen weeks, and was unable to work for seven weeks after he got out of bed. He had no money when he was hurt except the amount represented by his pay. All of the expenses for doctors, medicine, extra help and his living were borne by me, except \$25, which another brother gave me. The last one had none to give. Poor work, low wages and a sickly woman for a wife had kept him scratching for his own family.

It is nonsense to say I was not compelled to keep him, that I could have sent him to a hospital or the almshouse. We are American citizens and we don't go to hospitals and poorhouses.

Let us look at things as they are to-day, or as they were before this strike commenced.

My last pay envelope shows my wages, after my laborer, powder,

oil and other expenses were taken off, were \$29.47; that was my earnings for two weeks, and that was extra good. The laborer for the same time got some \$21. His wages are a trifle over \$10 a week for six full days. Before the strike of 1900 he was paid in this region \$1.70 per day, or \$10.20 a week. If the ten per cent raise had been given, as we expected, his wages would be \$1.87 per day, or \$11.22 per week, or an increase of \$1.02 per week. But we all know that under the present system he doesn't get any eleven dollars.

Well, as I said, my wages were \$29.47 for the two weeks, or at the rate of \$58.94 per month. My rent is \$10.50 per month. My coal costs me almost \$4 per month. We burn a little over a ton a month on an average and it costs us over \$3 per ton. Light does not cost so much, we use coal oil altogether.

When it comes down to groceries is where you get hit the hardest. Everybody knows the cost of living has been extremely high all winter. Butter has been 32, 36 and 38 cents a pound; eggs as high as 32 cents a dozen; ham, 12 and 16 cents a pound; potatoes away up to a dollar, and cabbage not less than a cent a pound. Fresh meat need not be counted. Flour and sugar did not advance, but they were about the only staples that didn't. Anyhow, my store bill for those two weeks was \$11. That makes \$22 per month. The butcher gets \$6 per month. Add them all, and it costs me, just to live, \$42.50. That leaves me \$17 per month to keep my family in clothes, to pay my church dues and to keep the industrial insurance going. My insurance alone costs me 55 cents a week, or \$2.20 a month.

The coal president never allows his stable boss to cut the amount of fodder allotted to his mules. He insists on so many quarts of oats and corn to the meal and so much hay in the evening. The mule must be fed, the miner may be, if he works hard enough and earns money to buy the grub.

Company stores are of the time that has been. Their existence ended two years ago. But we've got a system growing up that threatens to be just as bad. Let me explain. Over a year ago I was given a breast to drive at one of our mines and was glad to get it. My wife took her cash and went around the different places to buy. When I went to the office for my first pay the "super" met me and asked me if I didn't know his wife's brother George kept a store. I answered, "Yes," and

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wanted to know what that had to do with it

"Nothing, only I thought I'd call your attention to it," he answered. No more was said then. But the next day I got a quiet tip that my breast was to be abandoned. This set me thinking. I went to the boss and, after a few words, told him my wife had found brother-in-law George's store and that she liked it much better than where she had bought before. I told him the other store didn't sell the right kind of silk waists, and their patent leather shoes were away back. Brother-in-law George had the right kind of stuff and, of course, we were willing to pay a few cents more to get just what we wanted.

That was sarcastic, but it's the cash that has the influence. I have had work at that colliery ever since. I know my living costs me from 10 to 15 per cent extra. But I kept my job, which meant a good deal.

Now you must take into consideration that I am a contract miner and that my earnings are more than the wages of three-fourths of the other fellows at the same colliery. It is not that I am a favorite with the boss. I just struck a good breast. Maybe next month my wages would be from two to six or seven dollars less.

In the days of Pardee, Cox, Fagley, Fulton, Dewees, Paterson, Riley, Repler, Graeber and a hundred others, men were better paid than they have ever been since the centralization ideas of the late Franklin B. Gowen became fixed institutions in the anthracite counties. It may be true that in the days of the individual operation the cost per ton of mining coal was less than it is to-day. But it is not right that the entire increase in the cost of mining should be charged to the miner. That is what is being done, if you count the reductions made in wages.

We miners do not participate in the high prices of coal. The operators try to prove otherwise by juggling with figures, but their proving has struck a fault, and the drill shows no coal in that section. One-half of the price paid for a ton of coal in New York or Philadelphia goes into the profit pocket of the mine owner, either as a carrier or miner.

We all know that the price of coal has advanced in the past twenty years. We also know that wages are less, that the cost of living is higher. I remember the time, when I was a wee lad, my father used to get his coal for \$1 per ton. Now I pay \$3. In those days we lads used to

go to the dirt banks and pick a load of coal, and it cost our parents only a half a dollar to get it hauled home. We dare not do that now. Then we did not need gum boots, safety lamps or any such things as that, and for all of them we must now pay out of wages that have been reduced.

Our condition can be no worse; it might and must be better. The luxuries of the rich we do not ask, we do want butter for our bread and meat for our soup. We do not want silk and laces for our wives and daughters. But we want to earn enough to buy them a clean calico once in a while. Our boys are not expecting automobiles and membership cards in clubs of every city, but they want their fathers to earn enough to keep them at school until they have a reasonably fair education.

around him, we put him in a position to add to the wealth of the community by putting new powers in operation to produce....

The men who have not done their duty in this world never can be equal to those who have done their duty more or less well. If words like wise and foolish, thrifty and extravagant, prudent and negligent, have any meaning in language, then it must make some difference how people behave in this world, and the difference will appear in the position they acquire in the body of society, and in relation to the chances of life. They may, then, be classified in reference to these facts. Such classes always will exist; no other social distinctions can endure. If, then, we look to the origin and definition of these classes, we shall find it impossible to deduce any obligations which one of them bears to the other. The class distinctions simply result from the different degrees of success with which men have availed themselves of the chances which were presented to them. Instead of endeavoring to redistribute the acquisitions which have been made between the existing classes, our aim should be to increase, multiply, and extend the chances. Such is the work of civilization. Every old error or abuse which is removed opens new chances of development to all the new energy of society. Every improvement in education, science, art, or government expands the chances of man on earth. Such expansion is no guarantee of equality. On the contrary, if there be liberty, some will profit by the chances eagerly and some will neglect them altogether. Therefore, the greater the chances, the more unequal will be the fortune of these two sets of men. So it ought to be, in all justice and right reason.

QUESTIONS FOR READING AND DISCUSSION

1. According to Sumner, what did one class owe to another? What defined classes?
2. What, according to Sumner, were the advantages of a "social structure... based on contract"? What was the relationship between contracts and freedom?
3. "Rights do not pertain to results, but only to chances," Sumner declared. Why was that distinction important to him? Why did increasing chances create greater inequality? Was great inequality therefore a sign of the health and strength of American society? Why or why not?
4. In Sumner's view, what was the proper role for government and politics in a society based on "justice and right reason"? In what ways might "agents who are to direct State action" have disagreed with him?

DOCUMENT 3

Andrew Carnegie Explains the Gospel of Wealth

Gilded Age critics argued that the concentration of wealth in the bank accounts of the rich robbed workers of just compensation and gave the few too much power. Andrew Carnegie, one of the nation's leading industrialists and among the richest Americans of the era, defended the concentration of wealth. In an article published in 1889 — the source of the following selection — Carnegie declared that the wealthy knew best how to use their riches for the public welfare.

"Wealth," 1889

The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the tie of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized, within the past few hundred years. In former days there was little difference between the dwelling, dress, food, and environment of the chief and those of his retainers. The Indians are today where civilized man then was.... The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us today measures the change which has come with civilization. This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, nevertheless, essential, for the progress of the race that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, — and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this green irregularity than universal squalor.... The "good old times" were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as to-day. A relapse to old conditions would be disastrous to both — not the least so to him who serves — and would sweep away civilization with it. But whether the change be for good or ill, it is upon us, beyond our power to alter, and, therefore, to be accepted and made the best of. It is a waste of time to criticize the inevitable.

It is easy to see how the change has come.... In the manufacture of products we have the whole story.... Formerly, articles were manufactured at the domestic hearth, or in small shops which formed part of the household. The master and his apprentices worked side by side, the latter living with the master, and therefore subject to the same conditions. When these apprentices rose to be masters there was little or no change in their mode of life, and they, in turn, educated succeeding apprentices in the same routine. There was, substantially, social equality and even political equality, for those engaged in industrial pursuits had then little or no voice in the State.

The inevitable result of such a mode of manufacture was crude articles at high prices. To-day the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the preceding generation would have deemed incredible.... The poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessities of life. The laborer has now more comforts than the farmer had a few generations ago. The farmer has more luxuries than the landlord had and is more richly clad and better housed. The landlord has books and pictures rarer and appointments more artistic than the king could then obtain.

The price we pay for this salutary change is, no doubt, great. We assemble thousands of operatives in the factory, and in the mine, of whom the employer can know little or nothing, and to whom he is little better than a myth. All intercourse between them is at an end. Rigid castes are formed, and, as usual, mutual ignorance breeds mutual distrust. Each caste is without sympathy with the other, and ready to credit anything disparaging in regard to it. Under the law of competition, the employer of thousands is forced into the strictest economies, among which the rates paid to labor figure prominently, and often there is friction between the employer and the employed, between capital and labor, between rich and poor. Human society loses homogeneity.

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still than its cost — for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But, whether the law be benign or not, we must say of it, as we say of the change in the conditions of men to which we have referred: It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environments; the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few; and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential to the future progress of the race....

What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few? And it is of this great question that I believe I offer the true solution. It will be understood that fortunes are here spoken of, not moderate sums saved by many years of effort, the returns from which are required for the comfortable maintenance and education of families. This is not wealth, but only competence, which it should be the aim of all to acquire, and which it is for the best interests of society should be acquired....

There remains... only one mode of using great fortunes:... in this we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor — a reign of harmony.... It is founded upon the present most intense Individualism, and the race is prepared to put it in practice by degrees whenever it pleases. Under its sway we shall have an ideal State, in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good; and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if distributed in small sums to the people themselves. Even the poorest can be made to see this, and to agree that great sums gathered by some of their fellow-citizens and spent for public purposes, from which the masses reap the principal benefit, are more valuable to them than if scattered among themselves in trifling amounts through the course of many years....

Poor and restricted are our opportunities in this life, narrow our horizon, our best work most imperfect; but rich men should be thankful for one inestimable boon. They have it in their power during their lives to busy themselves in organizing benefactions from which the masses of their fellows will derive lasting advantage, and thus dignify their own lives. The highest life is probably to be reached, not by such imitation of the life of Christ as Count Tolstoi gives us, but, while animated by Christ's spirit, by recognizing the changed conditions of this age, and adopting modes of expressing this spirit suitable to the changed conditions under which we live, still laboring for the good of our fellows, which was the essence of his life and teaching, but laboring in a different manner.

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: To set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which in his judgment is best calculated to advance

the most beneficial results for the community — the man of wealth thus being the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves....

[O]ne of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity. It were better for mankind that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unthrift. Of every thousand dollars spent in so-called charity to-day, it is probable that nine hundred and fifty dollars is unwisely spent — so spent, indeed, as to produce the very evils which it hopes to mitigate or cure....

[T]he best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach ladders upon which the aspiring can rise — free libraries, parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain kinds, which will improve the public taste; and public institutions of various kinds, which will improve the general condition of the people; in this manner turning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good.

Thus is the problem of rich and poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free, the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor, intrusted for a season with a part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself....

Such, in my opinion, is the true gospel concerning wealth, obedient which is destined some day to solve the problem of the rich and the poor, and bring "Peace on earth, among men good will."

QUESTIONS FOR READING AND DISCUSSION

1. According to Carnegie, what were the revolutionary changes that made it possible for "the poor [to] enjoy what the rich could not before afford"?
2. What did Carnegie believe were the relative advantages and disadvantages of competition, the concentration of wealth, and the "law of competition"?
3. Why should the goal of the truly wealthy be to bring about "the reconciliation of the rich and the poor"? How should they accomplish that goal, according to Carnegie?
4. To what extent would "the millionaire" be a better "trustee for the poor" than government agencies, reform societies, or the poor themselves?

DOCUMENT 4

Henry Demarest Lloyd Attacks Monopolies

Muckraking journalists attacked the pompous rhetoric of free markets and self-made men. They argued that the realities of the Gilded Age had more to do with monopoly greed than with hard work and virtuous perseverance. Henry Demarest Lloyd, a Christian muckraker, assailed monopolies in his book *Wealth against Commonweal*, excerpted here. Lloyd contrasted the rhetoric of competition with the reality of monopolies and blasted the wealthy for the evil social consequences of their gains. Lloyd articulated a spread view among working people that, for them, the age was not gilded.

For a minority of workers, the burgeoning industrial system created new modes of freedom. In some industries, craftsmen exercised considerable control over the production process, their autonomy resting on skill and collective self-government rather than property ownership as in earlier times. The "miner's freedom" consisted of elaborate work rules that left skilled underground workers free of managerial supervision on the job. Skilled iron- and steelworkers ruled over a "craftsman's empire"; through their union, they fixed output quotas and controlled the training of apprentices in the technique of iron rolling. Such "freedom," however, applied only to a tiny portion of the industrial labor force and had little bearing on the lives of the new army of unskilled factory operatives. The appearance of what the Massachusetts cotton manufacturer Edward Atkinson called "a permanent factory population" challenged assumptions inherited from antebellum political culture: that liberty rested on the widely diffused ownership of productive property, and that the promise of the New World lay in the opportunity it offered the ordinary citizen to achieve economic autonomy. "The great curse of the Old World—the division of society into classes," declared *The Nation* two years after the end of the Civil War, had come to America.⁴ P P T

As the United States matured into an industrial economy and the "labor question" replaced the struggle over slavery as the dominant focus of public life, contemporaries struggled to make sense of the new social and political order and to determine its implications for American freedom. Debates over political economy engaged the attention of millions of Americans, reaching far beyond the tiny academic world into the "public sphere" inhabited by self-educated workmen and farmers, reformers of all kinds, newspaper editors, and politicians. This broad public discussion produced thousands of books, pamphlets, and articles on such technical issues as land taxation, currency reform, and the subtreasury plan, as well as widespread debate over the social and ethical implications of economic change.

Given the vast expansion of the nation's productive capacity, many Americans viewed the concentration of capital as inevitable, natural, and justified by progress. Among economists, social scientists, and captains of industry, ideas like the worker's right to the fruits of his labor increasingly seemed quaint anachronisms, irrelevant at a time when the modern corporation had replaced the independent producer as the driving force of economic change. Gradually, the old idea of the dignity of labor yielded to an emphasis on the contributions of managers, entrepreneurs, and technology itself to economic progress. By the turn of the century, advanced economics taught that wages were determined by the iron law of supply and demand, and that wealth rightly flowed not to

those who labored hardest, but to those with entrepreneurial skills, especially the ability to satisfy consumer needs in a mass market. The close link between freedom and equality, forged in the Revolution and reinforced during the Civil War, appeared increasingly out of date. The task of social science, wrote iron manufacturer Abram Hewitt, was to devise ways of making "men who are equal in liberty" content with the "inequality in . . . distribution" inevitable in modern society.⁵

Among the first to take up this challenge were the self-styled "liberal" reformers, an influential group of editors, academics, and professionals who abandoned the wartime equation of freedom with activism by democratic government. In its place, they elevated a "negative" understanding of freedom as the absence of restraint on autonomous individuals into a moral and political dogma. During the Civil War and early Reconstruction, liberal leaders like E. L. Godkin, editor of *The Nation*, Horace White of the *Chicago Tribune*, and the Republican political activist Carl Schurz had fully embraced the principle that the national state had a responsibility to guarantee equal rights to all citizens regardless of race. But once the framework of legal equality had been established, they came to believe, freedom's further progress must occur in the social and economic realms, not the political. In the face of the Republican Party's degeneration into a set of corrupt state organizations, and demands by women, farmers, and laborers that the government use its new powers to address their grievances, these publicists, who claimed to speak for society's "best men," retreated not only from the Civil War's broad assertion of nationalism and egalitarianism but from democracy itself. Echoing white southerners' complaints that Reconstruction violated principles of good government by expelling men of property from power, liberals became persuaded that spoilsmen and demagogues were manipulating gullible lower-class voters throughout the country, producing such travesties of good government as the Tweed Ring of New York City. The democratic state was in danger of becoming a threat to liberty, rather than liberty's handmaiden. The solution was to return to the long-abandoned principle that voting should be limited to men of property.⁶

Among elite thinkers, a retreat from the previous consensus in favor of manhood suffrage was among the most remarkable developments of the late nineteenth century. "Expressions of doubt and distrust in regard to universal suffrage are heard constantly . . . [at] the top of our society," wrote one observer in 1879. Except in the case of blacks, however, proposals for sweeping restriction of the franchise stood little chance of approval, since as one reformer noted, "men will not vote to disfranchise themselves." But while unable to implement their elitist vision of government, liberals played a major role in pop-

clarizing an idea that would achieve hegemonic status among the business and professional classes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century—the equation of freedom with limited government and laissez-faire economics.⁷

With some of the nation's leading newspapers and periodicals at their disposal, liberal reformers took it upon themselves to educate the public in the principles of freedom. Central to their social vision was the idea of contract, ostensibly the embodiment of free will and voluntary action, and an all-purpose metaphor for proper social relationships. "The laws of contract," wrote one reformer, "are the foundation of civilization." In 1861, the British historian of the law Sir Henry Maine had made the oft-quoted observation that the history of "progressive societies" could be described as "a movement from *Status* to *Contract*." Emancipation and the emergence of the freedpeople as workers whose relations with their former owners were governed by labor contracts rather than the sovereignty of mastership offered a perfect example of this dictum. So long as economic processes and labor relations were governed by contracts freely arrived at by autonomous individuals, Americans had no grounds to complain of a loss of freedom.⁸

The man born a laborer, announced the economist David A. Wells in 1877, would "never be anything but a laborer," and government could do nothing to alter this situation. Indeed, demands by workers that the government enforce an eight-hour day or in other ways intervene in the economy struck liberals as a perfect example of how the misuse of political power posed the gravest threat to liberty. "The right of each man to labor as much or as little as he chooses, and to enjoy his own earnings, is the very foundation stone of . . . freedom," wrote Horace White. The market, not democratic politics, Godkin echoed, was the true realm of freedom: liberty meant "the liberty to buy and sell, and mend and make, where, when, and how we please," without interference by the state. In the Gilded Age, slavery continued to shape discussions of freedom, but in new ways. Liberals invoked the ghost of slavery to discredit efforts to influence the market's operations. Laws regulating labor conditions were a form of slavery, since they deprived free agents of the right to dispose of property, including their own labor, as they saw fit. Thus did the idea of free labor, which originated as a celebration of the independent small producer in a broadly egalitarian society, metamorphosize into a defense of the unfettered operations of the capitalist marketplace.⁹

Just as the idea of the natural superiority of some races to others had earlier been invoked to justify slavery in a free society, social theorists in the Gilded Age called upon science to explain the success and failure of individuals and so-

cial classes. Analogies to the natural world pervaded the era's thinking. The growing use of language borrowed from Charles Darwin (often by way of the British social philosopher Herbert Spencer), such as "natural selection," "the struggle for existence," and "the survival of the fittest," became part and parcel of the era's laissez-faire outlook. In the hands of Spencer and his American disciples, what came to be called Social Darwinism offered a powerful critique of all forms of state interference with the "natural" workings of society. Unlike Burkean conservatives, whose politics was rooted in a reverence for tradition, Social Darwinists embraced the idea of constant social change. History, they believed, was a narrative of progress in which, as in nature, simpler forms evolved into more complex ones. The corporation was one of these more advanced forms, more efficient because better adapted to its environment than earlier modes of production. To restrict its operations by legislation would reduce society to an earlier, more primitive level.¹⁰

Even the severe depressions of the 1870s and 1890s, each of which lasted half a decade and threw millions of Americans out of work, did not shake the general middle-class view that the poor were essentially responsible for their own dire conditions. Charity workers and local governments spent much time and energy distinguishing the "deserving" poor (those destitute through no fault of their own) from the "undeserving," but the former were always defined as exceptions to a general rule. Failure to advance in society bespoke moral incapacity, a lack of "character" (a key term in social discourse on both sides of the Atlantic), the absence of self-reliance, perseverance, and courage in the face of adversity. As late as 1900, half the nation's largest cities offered virtually no poor relief except to those residing in poorhouses. The way for workers to improve their lot was not to form unions—coercive institutions that held their members in "absolute subjection," according to one group of manufacturers—but to practice personal economy, keep out of debt, and educate their children in the principles of the marketplace.¹¹

Spencer's most prominent American disciple and the era's most influential Social Darwinist was Yale professor William Graham Sumner, who strove to disabuse Americans of their highly confused notions of freedom. Cries of "wage slavery," and the misguided equation of liberty with a share in political power, Sumner insisted, reflected a dangerous belief that individuals were entitled to a certain standard of living provided, if necessary, by the government. For Sumner, freedom properly understood meant the "abnegation of state power" and a frank acceptance of inequality. Society faced two and only two alternatives: "liberty, inequality, survival of the fittest; not-liberty, equality, survival of

Labor and the Republic

As Mitchell's remark suggests, more than at almost any other moment in American history, public discourse in the late nineteenth century fractured along class lines. And from the labor movement arose a sustained assault on the understanding of freedom grounded in Social Darwinism and liberty of contract. Caught between nostalgia for the era of small production and frank acknowledgment of the triumph of the factory and the wage labor system, labor reformers of the Gilded Age were attracted to a wide array of programs, from the eight-hour day to public employment in hard times, currency reform, anarchism, socialism, and the creation of a vaguely defined "cooperative commonwealth." But uniting these various plans and panaceas was an "ideology of disinheritance," the conviction that new social conditions amounted to a loss of Americans' birthright of freedom. In the course of its campaigns, labor developed a full-blown critique of the prevailing definition of liberty. Americans, declared Terence V. Powderly, head of the era's largest labor organization, the Knights of Labor, were not "the free people that we imagine we are."¹⁶

Emancipation cast a long shadow over labor reform discourse in the Gilded Age. Like the courts and Social Darwinists, labor spoke the language of free labor and claimed the mantle of the struggle against slavery—partly as a continuation of prewar rhetoric and partly because the slavery metaphor offered an effective way of appealing to the reform-minded middle class. "The laborer," wrote eight-hour reformer Ira Steward, "instinctively feels that something of slavery still remains, or that something of freedom is yet to come." Although, by and large, the labor movement did little to address the problems of the former slaves or to identify with them as dispossessed laborers, it adopted and expanded the Reconstruction language of equal citizenship. "Under the guise of republican freedom," claimed Florence Kelley in 1889, "we have degenerated into a nation of mock citizens." Only when the "social structure" conformed to the egalitarian ideals embodied in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, proclaimed a Boston labor newspaper, could genuine freedom be secured. Labor spokesmen referred to the Thirteenth Amendment as a "glorious labor amendment" that enshrined the dignity of labor in the Constitution and whose prohibition of involuntary servitude was violated by court injunctions undermining the right to strike. Reaching back across the divide of the Civil War, labor defined employers as a new "slave power," called for the "emancipation and enfranchisement of all who labor," and spoke of an "irrepressible conflict between the wage system of labor and the republican system

of government." Concentrated capital, warned George E. McNeill, a shoemaker and woolmill operative who became one of the movement's most eloquent writers, had become "a greater power than that of the State." The remedy was not to return to the days of the small-scale craftsman, but to "engraft republican principles into our industrial system," by guaranteeing a basic set of economic rights for all Americans.¹⁷

Through the 1880s, the "abolition of the wage system" remained the stated goal of labor organizations. When congressional committees in the late 1870s and early 1880s traveled the country taking testimony on "the relations of capital and labor," they encountered a steady stream of complaints from labor leaders and ordinary workers—low wages, the power of monopolies, grinding poverty—summarized in the reinvigorated language of "wage slavery." One correspondent of a labor newspaper presented American development as a saga of successive forms of slavery: feudalism, chattel slavery, and wage labor, all members of the same "species."

The growing number of women working for wages in dire circumstances were also described as suffering from a new form of slavery. In 1888, the *Chicago Times* published a remarkable series of articles by reporter Nell Cusack under the title "City Slave Girls," exposing wretched working conditions in the city's factories and sweatshops. The articles unleashed a flood of letters to the editor from women workers themselves, many of whom employed the language of liberty. Domestic service was especially singled out as "a slave's life," as one woman put it, with "long hours, late and early, seven days in the week, bossed and ordered about as niggers before the war." Many complained about sexual abuse on the job—another analogy to chattel slavery—while rejecting the widespread opinion that work outside the home inevitably injured a woman's virtue. The problem, "A Working Woman" observed, was not immorality, but insufficient pay and inadequate job opportunities. Why, she wondered, "in this free country have not women the right to choose their own avocations?" So widespread, on both sides of the Atlantic, was the rhetoric of wage slavery that when the English economic historian John K. Ingram published his *History of Slavery and Serfdom* in 1895, he felt compelled to include an appendix on the "lax" uses of the word "slavery," foremost among them its application to wage workers.¹⁸

But more than reiterating the venerable idea that wage labor was incompatible with freedom, labor offered a powerful critique of a contract ideology that justified increasing inequality in the name of liberty. In *Capital*, Karl Marx, whose works were now beginning to circulate in the United States, had ridiculed the essence of liberty of contract thought—the assumption of equality in the

labor market. The "sale and purchase of labor power," he waxed sardonically, occurred in "a very Eden of the innate rights of man," a world of "freedom, because both buyer and seller . . . are constrained only by their own free will." Marx's themes—that the market in labor embodied its own none too subtle coercions and that gross economic inequalities made a mockery of the ostensible equality of employer and employee—were echoed throughout the American labor press. "Competitive freedom, in a scramble for the interests of mere self," one writer insisted, was a "rankly anti-American" definition of liberty, yet "this freedom has obtained such prominent, and almost unquestioned propriety, as to stand and rule." Labor leaders challenged the individualist premises of Gilded Age social thought. Solidarity among all who toiled for a living was the motto of the Knights of Labor, a broadly inclusive social movement that sought to unite the skilled and unskilled, immigrant and native, male and female wage earners (their platform called for "equal pay for equal work for both sexes"), and even black workers (although not the despised Chinese). The labor movement, wrote George McNeill, embodied the principle that "mutualism is preferable to individualism," that no contradiction existed between demands for rights as individuals and an understanding of freedom as a collective attribute of a class.¹⁹

Most profoundly, labor raised the question whether meaningful freedom could exist in a situation of extreme economic inequality. On July 4, 1886, the Federated Trades of the Pacific Coast rewrote Jefferson's Declaration to list among mankind's inalienable rights "Life and the means of living, Liberty and the conditions essential to liberty." Freedom required certain kinds of social arrangements, not simply liberty of contract. No one was more effective at appropriating the language of American freedom for labor's cause than Eugene V. Debs, the head of the American Railway Union, whose jailing in 1894 as a result of a strike against the Pullman Company made him a symbol of how concentrated economic power, now aligned with federal authority, was undermining traditional notions of freedom. On his release from prison, over one hundred thousand people greeted Debs at a railroad depot in Chicago. Hailing the crowd of well-wishers as "lovers of liberty," Debs went on to offer a discourse on how corporate control of politics and the economy endangered "American liberty."²⁰

Even as labor unrest crested, a different kind of uprising was ripening in the South and the Great Plains, a response to falling agricultural prices and growing economic dependency in rural areas. Farmers experienced the spread of sharecropping in the South and mortgage debt in the West not simply as economic deprivation but as a loss of freedom. Through the Farmers Alliance, with

its program of cooperative financing and marketing of crops, they sought to restore their beleaguered economic autonomy. The farmers' alternatives, said J. D. Fields, a Texas Alliance leader, were "success and freedom, or failure and servitude." In the early 1890s, the Alliance would evolve into the People's, or Populist, Party—the era's greatest political insurgency. Though strongest in the cotton and wheat belts, the party sought to speak for all the "producing classes" and achieved some of its greatest successes in states like Colorado and Idaho, where it became a vehicle for embattled miners and industrial workers.²¹

In the familiar language of nineteenth-century radicalism, Populists condemned the "new slavery" that kept not only farmers but "sewing women, coal miners, and iron workers" in thrall to "millionaire slavemasters." Their 1892 platform, adopted at the party's Omaha convention, cited a litany of grievances—governmental corruption, denial of the right to organize unions, the rise of "colossal fortunes . . . unprecedented in the history of mankind"—all of which "endanger[ed] liberty." The party's specific demands included government ownership of the railroads, a national currency to end bankers' control of finance, a graduated income tax, and a system of low-cost public financing to enable farmers to market their crops. "The power of government," declared the Omaha platform, must be brought to bear to eliminate "oppression, injustice, and poverty" from American life, thereby creating the social conditions of freedom.²²

Here was the last great political manifestation of the nineteenth-century vision of America as a commonwealth of small producers. "Two great classes—tramps and millionaires," the Populist platform claimed, had arisen on the American scene, threatening the stability of the republic. Between lay the vast middle ground of the producing classes, inheritors of definitions of freedom and citizenship linked to the ownership of productive property and respect for the dignity of labor. Drawing on both traditional aspirations for economic autonomy and local self-government, and a sense that only the national state could curb the power of the corporations and make American society a "united brotherhood of free men," Populists sought to rethink the meaning of freedom, to meet the exigencies of the 1890s. To the heritage of "individual freedom," once "the pride of our system," said a Nebraska Populist newspaper, Americans needed to add "*industrial freedom*," for "what is life and so-called liberty if millions were denied 'the means of subsistence?'" Like the labor movement, Populists rejected the era's *laissez-faire* orthodoxy ("survival of the fittest," said Governor Lorenzo Lewelling of Colorado, was "the philosophy of brutes"). Populists hardly envisioned the massive programs of state-sponsored social provision that the Progressive era and the New Deal would come to see

as the antidote to economic inequality. Yet a generation would pass before a major party offered so sweeping a plan for governmental action on behalf of economic freedom as the Omaha platform.²³

Dissatisfaction with social conditions in the Gilded Age was not confined to aggrieved workers and farmers. Alarmed by the specter of class warfare and the growing power of concentrated capital, social thinkers of the period offered numerous prescriptions for reclaiming the nation's heritage of freedom. Of the many books proposing remedies for the unequal distribution of wealth, the most popular were *Progress and Poverty* (1879) by Henry George, and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888). Both were among the century's greatest best-sellers, their extraordinary success testifying to what George called "a wide-spread consciousness . . . that there is something radically wrong in the present social organization." Both writers sought to restore an imagined golden age of freedom and social harmony. Their solutions, however, pointed in opposite directions: George toward a society in which self-directed individuals controlled their own destiny within a laissez-faire market, Bellamy to a collectivist future in which personal autonomy had been subordinated to a socially determined common good.

No one knows how many of Henry's George's readers actually believed that the single tax on land—his panacea for the nation's social ills—would usher in an egalitarian future, "the City of God on earth." But millions responded to his jargon-free exposition of economic relationships and his stirring explication of how the "social distress" long thought to be confined to the Old World had made its appearance in the New. Freedom lay at the heart of George's analysis. The "proper name" for the political movement spawned by his book, he once wrote, was "freedom men," who would "do for the question of industrial slavery" what the Republican Party had recently done for the slavery of blacks. Political liberty, George wrote at the conclusion of *Progress and Poverty*, was meaningless without its economic counterpart. If George rejected the traditional equation of freedom with ownership of land (since the single tax in effect made land the "common property" of the entire society), in other ways, his definition of freedom was thoroughly in keeping with mainstream thought. George believed fervently in the justice of the free market; the problem was that land monopoly had enabled non-producers to enrich themselves at the expense of laborers and manufacturers alike. Despite calling for a single massive public intervention in the economy, George saw government as a "repressive power," whose functions in the "cooperative society" of the future would be limited to enhancing the quality of life—building "public baths, museums, libraries, gar-

dens," and the like. Genuine laissez-faire, George wrote, would solve the problem of social injustice: "freedom [is] the synonym of equality."²⁴

If George's vision of freedom rested on the familiar foundation of the sovereign individual, Bellamy questioned whether freedom was not, in the end, a social condition, resting on interdependence, not autonomy. In *Looking Backward*, 2000–1887, Bellamy's protagonist falls asleep in the late nineteenth century only to awaken in the year 2000, in a world where inequality has been banished and with it the idea of liberty as a condition to be achieved through individual striving free of governmental restraint. From the vantage point of the late twentieth century, Bellamy's utopia—with citizens obligated to labor for years in an Industrial Army controlled by a single Great Trust, and a police force ready to discipline slackers and nonconformists—seems a chilling blueprint for a world of coerced uniformity. Yet the book inspired the creation of hundreds of Nationalist clubs devoted to bringing into existence the world of 2000, and left a profound mark on a generation of reformers and intellectuals, from Debs to John Dewey. For Bellamy held out the hope of retaining the material abundance made possible by industrial capitalism while social inequalities were eliminated and harmony restored to nation and society.

In proposing that the state guarantee adequate annual incomes to all, Bellamy put forward a far-reaching expansion of the notion of citizenship and its entitlements. His utopia, moreover, offered women economic autonomy and political rights, complete with the replacement of private housekeeping and childrearing arrangements by public kitchens and nurseries. It thus helped to popularize the notion, still quite radical at the time, that married women should consider work outside the home a regular feature of their lives. And in suggesting that the idea of the autonomous, self-directing individual was hopelessly out of date in the complex organism of modern society, Bellamy gave expression to a widespread sense that genuine freedom could only be secured by the collective action of the community. "I am aware that you called yourself free in the nineteenth century," a resident of the year 2000 tells Bellamy's Rip Van Winkle. But "the meaning of the word could not then, however, have been at all what it is at present," or it could never have been applied to a society in which so many lived in a state of "galling personal dependence upon others as to the very means of life." For Bellamy, the unfettered market had failed to guarantee freedom; the only alternative was to turn to the state.²⁵

By 1888, when *Looking Backward* appeared, Social Darwinism and the laissez-faire definition of freedom were under attack from many quarters, including not only the labor and Populist movements but clergymen shocked by the inequities

in the emerging industrial order and a new generation of social science intellectuals proposing to unleash state activism in the service of social equality. If most of the era's Protestant preachers concentrated on attacking individual sins like drinking and sabbath-breaking and saw nothing immoral about the pursuit of wealth, the lineaments of a social gospel were taking shape in the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist minister in New York City, and others, who insisted that freedom and spiritual self-development required an equalization of wealth and power, and that unbridled competition mocked the Christian ideal of brotherhood.²⁶

Challenges to prevailing ideas of freedom also sprouted in the academic world, reflected in the establishment in 1885 of the American Economic Association (AEA), whose express purpose was to combat both Social Darwinism and "laissez-faire orthodoxy." "We regard the state," wrote AEA founder Richard T. Ely, "as an educational and ethical agency whose positive assistance is one of the indispensable conditions of human progress." Once the basis of liberty, many younger economists believed, private property had become a means of depriving others of their freedom, and poverty posed a far graver danger to the republic than an activist state. The paradox of liberty in the modern world, wrote the sociologist Lester Ward, was that "individual freedom can only come through social regulation." Here was a reminder that the power of the democratic state spawned by the Civil War could be employed to address issues other than slavery, and a harbinger of the transformation of the idea of freedom by social scientists, politicians, and social reformers in the soon-to-dawn Progressive era. But before this came to fruition, the nation would face its gravest crisis since the Civil War, and the boundaries of freedom would once more be redrawn.²⁷

Redrawing the Boundaries

The 1890s was a decade of social turmoil. It witnessed the century's most severe economic depression; the rise and fall of the People's Party; and continued labor unrest highlighted by the 1892 strike at the giant steel mill in Homestead, Pennsylvania, in which strikers fought pitched battles against the Carnegie Corporation's private police, and the railroad strike of 1894 against the Pullman Company, in which federal troops occupied Chicago. Simultaneously, the sources of immigration shifted from Northern and Western Europe to Southern and Eastern. Of the 3.5 million immigrants who entered the United States during the decade, over half hailed from Italy and the Russian and

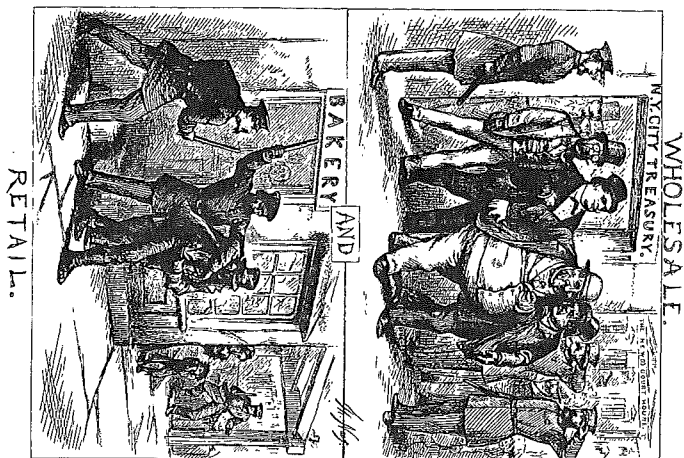
Austro-Hungarian empires. Among middle-class nativeborn Americans, these events inspired an abandonment of the egalitarian vision of citizenship spawned by the Civil War, and the revival of definitions of American freedom based on race.

By the turn of the century, the language of "race"—race conflict, race feeling, race problems—had assumed a central place in American public discourse. The putative inborn capacity of one or another "races" was commonly invoked to explain everything from the standard of living of various groups of workers to the ability or inability of various peoples to participate in American democracy. Just as individual character was thought to explain personal success or failure in the economic marketplace, the idea of "national character" took on a larger and larger role in explaining historical outcomes. Even as orthodox economic and legal thought spoke of society as a collection of self-directed individuals, nativists resuscitated an older vision of competing races and nations, each occupying a place within a worldwide hierarchy. Immigration, it was claimed, weakened the fiber of American society by allowing "inferior" races to outnumber the Anglo-Saxons best fitted for national and worldwide hegemony. The new immigrants, wrote the economist Francis Amasa Walker in 1890, were "beaten men from beaten races, representing the worst failures in the struggle for existence." American cities, said an Ohio newspaper, were being overrun by foreigners who "have no true appreciation of the meaning of liberty."²⁸

The new situation was most evident in the condition of black Americans. By the early twentieth century, a new system of racial subordination had come into being in the South. In the words of the historian Rayford Logan, blacks occupied a "separate wing" of the "edifice of national unity," and "on the pediments . . . were carved Exploitation, Disfranchisement, Segregation, Discrimination, Lynching, Contempt." The disenfranchisement of southern blacks (along with a considerable number of poor white voters), which began in Mississippi in 1890, not only halted and reversed the long trend toward expanding political freedom, but transformed Deep South states into political rotten boroughs whose representatives in Congress would long wield far greater power on the national scene than their tiny electorates warranted. But southern whites did not create their new system of white supremacy alone. The effective nullification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments occurred with the full acquiescence of the North. By 1900, the ideals of color-blind citizenship and freedom as a universal entitlement had been repudiated.

The retreat from the ideals of Reconstruction went hand in hand with the resurgence of an Anglo-Saxonism that united patriotism, xenophobia, and an ethnocultural definition of nationhood in a renewed rhetoric of racial exclu-

Wholesale and Retail



Source: Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 120 (Thomas Nast's cartoon of September 16, 1871).

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How the Other Half Lives

Jacob Riis

"We wuz six," said an urchin of twelve or thirteen I came across in the News-boys' Lodging House, "and we ain't got no father. Some on us had to go." And so he went, to make a living by blacking boots. The going is easy enough. There is very little to hold the boy who has never known anything but a home in a tenement. Very soon the wild life in the streets holds him fast, and thenceforward by his own effort there is no escape. Left alone to himself, he soon enough finds a place in the police books, and there would be no other answer to the second question: "what becomes of the boy?" than that given by the criminal courts every day in the week.

But he is not left alone. Society in our day has no such suicidal intention. Right here, at the parting of the ways, it has thrown up the strongest of all its defenses for itself and for the boy. What the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

Source: From Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Williamston, Mass.: Corner House Publishers,

One of the horses was my particular pet. He would permit no familiarity from anybody but me. He knew me, my step and voice and would prance about in his stall when I came in the morning, lay back his ears and show his big, strong teeth in a way that to others would have been a danger signal but to me meant his morning salutation. I would go fearlessly into his stall, pat his flank and shoulder and neck, ending by feeding him a lump of sugar. He sulked and was stubborn when driven by any one else, but for me would do anything I asked. He seemed to understand when I talked to him. I guess most horses must understand me, for they are all my friends.

I worked for the grocer seven years; got up between 5 and 6 in the morning, looked after the horses, had my breakfast and was out with my wagon soon after 7. I frequently did not get through until 9 or 10 at night, but I liked the work and my employer was a good man. He paid me \$6 a week and boarded me. It was really the only home I had had since my early boyhood, so when the grocer failed in business I felt as sorry over it as he did himself.

I next got a job with a department store, first as helper and afterward as driver. About that time the teamsters formed a union and I became a charter member of the delivery wagon drivers' branch. Through the influence of the union we got a regular scale of wages, the first year \$12 a week and after two and a half years \$15 a week as the minimum. We have nothing to do with the care of the horses. When a wagon is taken to the barn after the day's work is finished the "inside" men take charge and we have nothing further to do until the next morning, when we find our teams hitched, ready waiting for us to start right out.

I make one exception to the regular rule, however. I go to the barn a while before leaving time and personally grease my wagon. My reason for this is because I want it to run without grinding. I have learned just what attention the wagon requires and I find I can do the greasing more satisfactorily myself. After I have fixed it up the wheels run along easily and without "catching." A driver gets to know his wagon, what it requires and what it can do, just as a locomotive engineer knows his engine.

If there is a hitch anywhere he recognizes the cause of the trouble at once; so sensitive does a driver become to the smooth running of his wagon that he can actually tell the instant a boy catches hold of the

tailboard as he drives along the street. That little additional drag is felt by the man on the seat just as certainly as it is by the horse in the shafts.

The union not only regulated wages and working hours, but improved the class of men employed. We of the Delivery Wagons' Union are under bonds, and on account of the responsibility attached to the work we exercise care in admitting men to our organization. We frequently have the collection of C.O.D. bills, so it is to our own interest to have honest and reliable men. One man going wrong brings the whole organization into disrepute. I can see trouble ahead in getting back to our former standard when the strike ends.

Now, about this strike. The teamsters of Chicago are subdivided into over fifty different unions. Each branch of the work has its separate organization. There are over 35,000 teamsters enrolled, and at the height of the trouble something less than 10,000 drivers, helpers and boys became involved. If less than one-third of our number have been able to kick up all the fuss we are charged with, it is interesting to conjecture what might have been done if the entire number had taken an active part.

The strike started to compel Montgomery Ward & Co. to arbitrate the causes leading up to the walk-out of their garment workers. The teamsters, being a powerful organization, voted to help the garment workers and to refuse either to haul from the boycotted firm or to ~~deliver goods to them.~~ That naturally led to including in the boycott houses that insisted on their drivers delivering to strike-bound houses. Drivers for coal dealers, express companies, department stores, lumber firms and many wholesale houses were from time to time added to the boycott list. Ward & Co. would not yield to the demand for arbitration of the garment workers' difficulty, claiming that the workers left their employ voluntarily nearly a year ago and that the places left vacant had been filled at once and in a satisfactory manner. As the strike progressed the garment workers' grievance became rather lost sight of in the greater question of holding the teamsters' unions together.

Many things have occurred to hurt our side of the fight. I will not admit that all the things charged against us, directly, are true, but at the same time I must admit that many, many things can have no

defense. When the Employers' Association formed a teaming company and offered to put their men to work in the places of the strikers they brought to Chicago for that purpose a lot of non-union drivers, some of them pretty tough customers. The new drivers for coal teams were mostly negroes from Southern cities, and they had nerve to stay on their wagons in spite of persuasion to give up. Then some of the overzealous union drivers, assisted by sympathizers, who regarded force a better argument than mere words, undertook to dispose of these strike-breakers. Every union driver conceived it to be his privilege, if not duty, to block the way of the "scabs." One thing led to another until stones and bricks were freely thrown at the imported drivers. The officers of one of the local unions took part in the forcible style of argument, and their arrest followed.

It was charged in the hearing before the grand jury that a gang of fighters, known as the "Educational Committee," was employed to "do" certain drivers. A man would be spotted and when the chance came he would be attacked by the "Educational Committee." In some instances he would not recover from the beating, and in other cases he would be crippled for life. That sort of thing, of course, instead of doing our cause any good injured us with the public and caused discontent in our own ranks. Many of us are bitterly opposed to any such methods.

It got so that a man really carried his life in his hands when he started out to drive a team for a boycotted firm, if he happened to come in contact with a crowd of these "educators" without being amply protected by a police guard.

When the strike extended to the lumber drivers there was all sorts of trouble over in the West Side lumber district. A large number of the union drivers are Poles—Polaks, they are commonly called—and they live in small houses in the vicinity. Their women are big and strong. It is no unusual sight to see one of these women carrying, with apparently little effort, a load of firewood or huge sack of coal that would stagger an ordinary man. They know but little English, but constantly are chattering in the strange lingo of their native land. When their husbands and sons left their jobs and a new set took their places these women at once took a hand in the effort to drive away the men they regarded as interlopers. They knew little if anything about

any conflict between the unions and employers. All that any one of them could understand was that a stranger sat on the lumber wagon that "belongs to my man." That was not to be tolerated for a moment. Armed with heavy clubs they charged on the non-union drivers, and unless the police guard was strong enough to cope with infuriated amazons it went pretty hard with the drivers if the women got within reach of them with their clubs.

In all the riotous scenes attending the strike there was nothing done even to approach the fierceness of the attacks by these women. The police would charge upon them with drawn clubs, but hesitated when it came to rapping them over the head as they would have done in the case of dispersing a mob of men. The officers would content themselves with laying vigorous licks on the well-developed part of the muscular women's anatomy presenting the most promising target, without accomplishing much more than drawing the "fire" of the attacking party to themselves. Many a time drivers, policemen and bystanders would be compelled to flee pell-mell before a mob of these women, flourishing clubs of enormous size.

A favorite way to oppose the strike-breakers at the lumber yards was to set fire to their loads. A can of oil poured over the rear of the load and a lighted match did the work. In spite of the vigilance of the guards, the loads frequently would be set on fire, and, of course the sight of a load of burning lumber soon attracted a big crowd.

The attacks next hardest to handle by the police were those engaged in by school children. These young sympathizers soon picked up the spirit of lawlessness. At the public schools when a non-union driver brought a load of coal for the building the children, only too pleased to have a chance to yell and get into mischief, hooted at the drivers, finally going to the extent of throwing stones at them. It was only by the aid of parents that the police at last were able to put a stop to these outbreaks.

But far the greatest blow our cause received was the discovery that some of our leaders were engaged in the most disreputable mode of life. They spent nights in low resorts and spent money freely in entertaining women of the vilest character. On top of all this it was openly charged that some of these officers had been receiving money from certain employers, either for the purpose of calling a strike or to

Chas. E. Campbell

settle one. The only offset to these damaging stories lay in the fact that the paying employers were equally to blame.

1/2/1900
Palmer not good
 As already stated, many of us are opposed to violence and to the destruction of property. ~~I, for one, think the cause of unionism has~~ received a blow that will take some time to recover from. These lawless acts were practiced by a bad element in our own ranks, I am sorry to say, but were largely participated in by a lot of hoodlums, who took advantage of conditions to defy the law. Teamsters are not all angels, any more than are all men engaged in other lines of work, but in our ranks we have some good law-abiding citizens, who will compare favorably with the best. We have been charged with things of which I feel sure none of us have been guilty. For instance, we have been charged with throwing acid on horses driven by non-union drivers. I would not be afraid to wager my life that no teamster worthy the name ever did such a dastardly thing. Why, we fairly love horses, and I know if anybody attempted to hurt my horses I would be down off my wagon in a jiffy with my coat off ready to fight. I cannot deny that acid "eggs" were thrown at horses at times, but it couldn't have been done by teamsters.

It has been said that driving a team is not a trade and that teamsters should not be classed as trade unionists. It may not be a trade in the sense that, say, carpenter work or printing is, but still a good teamster must possess certain qualifications that every ordinary "laborer" does not possess. In our union a member must serve three years before he can receive the highest wages of the scale. He must read and write and know the city thoroughly. He must know what to do in an emergency if anything happens to his horse or wagon. His horse may pick up a nail, take sick, go lame, or show distress from any cause. If the driver is capable he knows what to do for the time being. If the harness break or the wagon meet with an accident, he must be able to patch up the one and make shift with the other.

I heard of a non-union driver, during the early days of the strike, who broke a shaft by running into something way out on the southside. When a crowd gathered around and laughed at his mishap, he seemed to be perfectly helpless. He simply took to his heels and left his wagon on the hands of his police guard. The officer had to tie up the shaft with a strap, take the outfit to a neighboring livery stable and telephone for

another driver. I also heard that the darky driver had collected \$40 on a C.O.D. before the accident.

I refer to this incident to indicate the difference between trained and trusty drivers and pick-ups.

From present indications the strike soon will be over. I am both sorry and glad—sorry that it was so badly managed, but glad that we will have the chance to get work again at living wages. I am quite sick of living on the "benefit."

Some of us, most likely, will not get our old jobs back in a hurry, but then—well, we'll have to make the best of it.

Chicago, Ill.

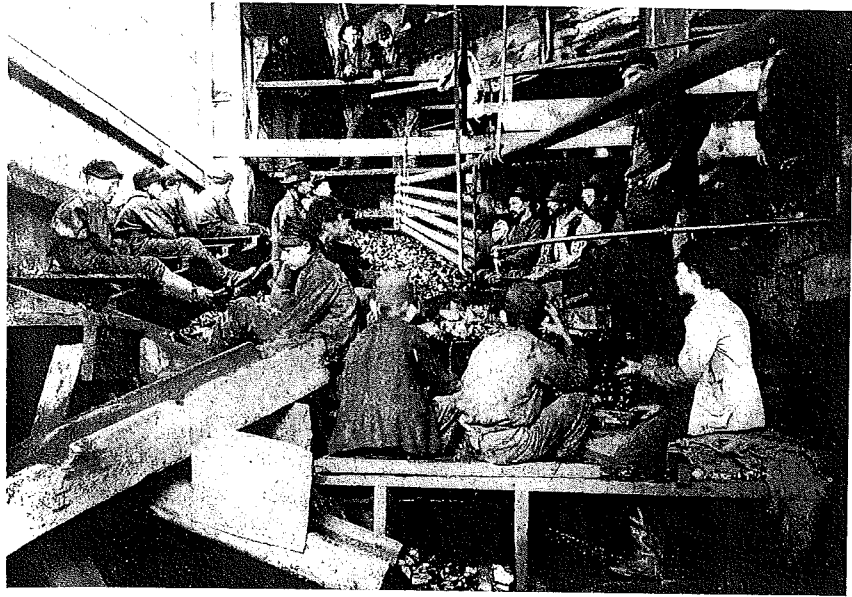
ers who promised to regulate the a conviction of the grafting boss lifornia governorship in 1910 on Pacific Railroad.

facing American society at the eater diversity of reformers, and al—solutions than any other: the h became a third major theme of entration of economic power had ssage of the Sherman Anti-Trust at to be more symbolic than effec-

nd its abuse offered a dilemma for were available, but of these, two port: letting business work out its z-faire, or adopting a socialist pro- nicipal level, however, the socialist d in public utilities and transporta- lism—but otherwise was not seri-. The other choices were either to : belief that restoring old-fashioned omic abuses, or to accept big busi- nomies of scale, but to regulate it to

i of small firms proved unworkable, mbinations was complex and diffi- :oward regulation rather than disso- nt regulation and “stabilization” won /ho, whatever respect they paid to ed not to face it in practice. As time s often came under the influence or ed to regulate. Railroad men, for in- te knowledge of the intricate details rem the advantage over the outsiders erstate Commerce Commission.

ortant feature of the progressive spirit ustice, which motivated diverse ac-

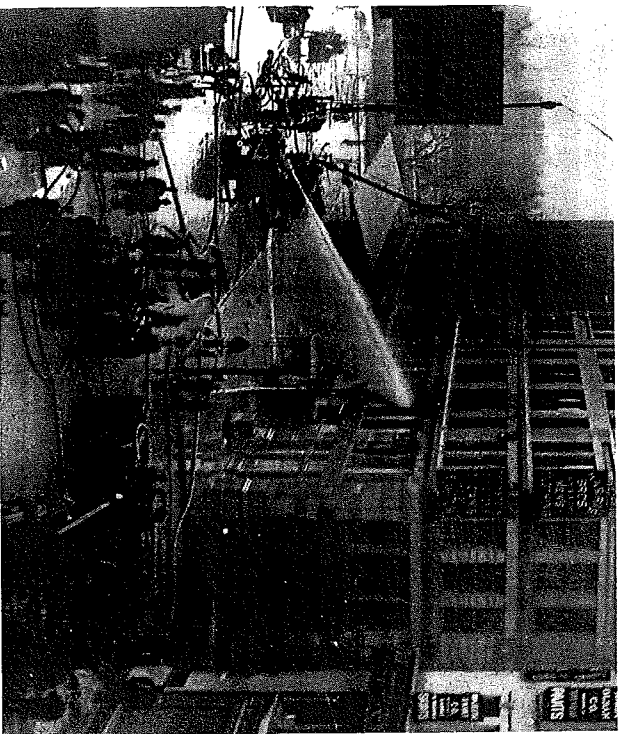


Kohinore Mine, Pennsylvania, 1891. Child labor was rampant until the progressive National Child Labor Committee spearheaded a movement to prohibit employing young children.

tions—from private charities to campaigns against child labor and liquor. The settlement house movement of the late nineteenth century had spawned a corps of social workers and genteel reformers devoted to the uplift of slum dwellers. But with time it became apparent that social evils extended beyond the reach of private charities and demanded the power of the state.

Labor legislation was perhaps the most significant reform to emerge from the drive for social justice. The National Child Labor Committee, organized in 1904, led a movement for laws banning the still widespread employment of young children. Through publicity, the organization of state and local committees, and a telling documentation of the evils of child labor by the photographer Lewis W. Hine, the committee within ten years brought about legislation in most states banning the labor of underage children (the minimum age varied from twelve to sixteen) and limiting the working hours of older children.

Closely linked with the child-labor reform movement was a concerted effort to regulate the hours of work for women. Spearheaded by Florence Kelley, the head of the National Consumers League, this pro-



Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire, New York City, 1911.

gressive crusade prompted the passage of state laws to ameliorate the distinctive hardships that long working hours imposed on women who were wives and mothers. Many states also outlawed night work and labor in dangerous occupations for both women and children. But numerous exemptions and inadequate enforcement often virtually nullified the laws.

The Supreme Court pursued a curiously erratic course in ruling on state labor laws. It upheld a Utah law limiting the working day in mining and smelting to eight hours as a proper exercise of the state police power to protect the health and safety of workers. In *Lochner v. New York* (1905), however, the Court voided a ten-hour day because it violated workers' "liberty of contract" to accept any terms they chose. But in *Muller v. Oregon* (1908), the high court upheld a ten-hour law for women largely on the basis of sociological data regarding the effects of long hours on the health and morals of women. In *Bunting v. Oregon* (1917), the Court accepted a ten-hour day for both men and women, but held out for twenty more years against state minimum-wage laws.

Legislation to protect workers against avoidable accidents gained impetus from disasters such as the 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist

Company in New York in which 146 people, mostly women, died for want of adequate exits. They either were trapped on the three upper floors of a ten-story building, or they plunged to the street below. Stricter building codes and factory inspection acts followed. One of the most important advances along these lines was the series of workers' compensation laws enacted after Maryland led the way in 1902. Accident insurance systems replaced the old common-law principle that an injured worker was entitled to compensation only if he could prove employer negligence, a costly and capricious procedure from which the worker was likely to win nothing or, as often happened, excessive awards from overly sympathetic juries.

PROHIBITION For many progressive activists the cause of liquor prohibition was a fifth area for action. Opposition to strong drink was an ideal cause in which to merge the older private ethics with the new social ethics. Given the moral disrepute of saloons, prohibitionists could equate the "liquor traffic" with progressive suspicion of bossism and "special interests." When reform pressures mounted, prohibition offered an easy outlet, bypassing the complexities of corporate regulation.



A temperance meeting in Kansas, late nineteenth century.

Labor and the Republic

As Mitchell's remark suggests, more than at almost any other moment in American history, public discourse in the late nineteenth century fractured along class lines. And from the labor movement arose a sustained assault on the understanding of freedom grounded in Social Darwinism and liberty of contract. Caught between nostalgia for the era of small production and frank acknowledgment of the triumph of the factory and the wage labor system, labor reformers of the Gilded Age were attracted to a wide array of programs, from the eight-hour day to public employment in hard times, currency reform, anarchism, socialism, and the creation of a vaguely defined "cooperative commonwealth." But uniting these various plans and panaceas was an "ideology of disinheritance," the conviction that new social conditions amounted to a loss of Americans' birthright of freedom. In the course of its campaigns, labor developed a full-blown critique of the prevailing definition of liberty. Americans, declared Terence V. Powderly, head of the era's largest labor organization, the Knights of Labor, were not "the free people that we imagine we are."¹⁶

Emancipation cast a long shadow over labor reform discourse in the Gilded Age. Like the courts and Social Darwinists, labor spoke the language of free labor and claimed the mantle of the struggle against slavery—partly as a continuation of prewar rhetoric and partly because the slavery metaphor offered an effective way of appealing to the reform-minded middle class. "The laborer," wrote eight-hour reformer Ira Steward, "instinctively feels that something of slavery still remains, or that something of freedom is yet to come." Although, by and large, the labor movement did little to address the problems of the former slaves or to identify with them as dispossessed laborers, it adopted and expanded the Reconstruction language of equal citizenship. "Under the guise of republican freedom," claimed Florence Kelley in 1889, "we have degenerated into a nation of mock citizens." Only when the "social structure" conformed to the egalitarian ideals embodied in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, proclaimed a Boston labor newspaper, could genuine freedom be secured. Labor spokesmen referred to the Thirteenth Amendment as a "glorious labor amendment" that enshrined the dignity of labor in the Constitution and whose prohibition of involuntary servitude was violated by court injunctions undermining the right to strike. Reaching back across the divide of the Civil War, labor defined employers as a new "slave power," called for the "emancipation and enfranchisement of all who labor," and spoke of an "irrepressible conflict between the wage system of labor and the republican system

of government." Concentrated capital, warned George E. McNeill, a shoemaker and woolmill operative who became one of the movement's most eloquent writers, had become "a greater power than that of the State." The remedy was not to return to the days of the small-scale craftsman, but to "engraft republican principles into our industrial system," by guaranteeing a basic set of economic rights for all Americans.¹⁷

Through the 1880s, the "abolition of the wage system" remained the stated goal of labor organizations. When congressional committees in the late 1870s and early 1880s traveled the country taking testimony on "the relations of capital and labor," they encountered a steady stream of complaints from labor leaders and ordinary workers—low wages, the power of monopolies, grinding poverty—summarized in the reinvigorated language of "wage slavery." One correspondent of a labor newspaper presented American development as a saga of successive forms of slavery: feudalism, chattel slavery, and wage labor, all members of the same "species."

The growing number of women working for wages in dire circumstances were also described as suffering from a new form of slavery. In 1888, the *Chicago Times* published a remarkable series of articles by reporter Nell Cusack under the title "City Slave Girls," exposing wretched working conditions in the city's factories and sweatshops. The articles unleashed a flood of letters to the editor from women workers themselves, many of whom employed the language of liberty. Domestic service was especially singled out as "a slave's life," as one woman put it, with "long hours, late and early, seven days in the week, bossed and ordered about as niggers before the war." Many complained about sexual abuse on the job—another analogy to chattel slavery—while rejecting the widespread opinion that work outside the home inevitably injured a woman's virtue. The problem, "A Working Woman" observed, was not immorality, but insufficient pay and inadequate job opportunities. Why, she wondered, "in this free country have not women the right to choose their own avocations?" So widespread, on both sides of the Atlantic, was the rhetoric of wage slavery that when the English economic historian John K. Ingram published his *History of Slavery and Serfdom* in 1895, he felt compelled to include an appendix on the "lax" uses of the word "slavery," foremost among them its application to wage workers.¹⁸

But more than reiterating the venerable idea that wage labor was incompatible with freedom, labor offered a powerful critique of a contract ideology that justified increasing inequality in the name of liberty. In *Capital*, Karl Marx, whose works were now beginning to circulate in the United States, had ridiculed the essence of liberty of contract thought—the assumption of equality in the

In Rock Springs, Wyoming, in the summer of 1885, whites attacked five hundred Chinese miners, massacring twenty-eight of them in cold blood.

The new immigrants became laborers, housepainters, stonecutters, ditchdiggers. They were often imported en masse by contractors. One Italian man, told he was going to Connecticut to work on the railroad, was taken instead to sulfate mines in the South, where he and his fellows were watched over by armed guards in their barracks and in the mines, given only enough money to pay for their railroad fare and tools, and very little to eat. He and others decided to escape. They were captured at gunpoint, ordered to work or die; they still refused and were brought before a judge, put in manacles, and, five months after their arrival, finally dismissed. "My comrades took the train for New York. I had only one dollar, and with this, not knowing either the country or the language, I had to walk to New York. After forty-two days I arrived in the city utterly exhausted."

Their conditions led sometimes to rebellion. A contemporary observer told how "some Italians who worked in a locality near Deal Lake, New Jersey, failing to receive their wages, captured the contractor and shut him up in the shanty, where he remained a prisoner until the county sheriff came with a posse to his rescue."

A traffic in immigrant child laborers developed, either by contract with desperate parents in the home country or by kidnapping. The children were then supervised by "padrones" in a form of slavery, sometimes sent out as beggar musicians. Proves of them roamed the streets of New York and Philadelphia.

As the immigrants became naturalized citizens, they were brought into the American two-party system, invited to be loyal to one party or the other, their political energy thus siphoned into elections. An article in *L'Italia*, in November 1894, called for Italians to support the Republican party.

When American citizens of foreign birth refuse to ally themselves with the Republican Party, they make war upon their own welfare. The Republican Party stands for all that the people fight for in the Old World. It is the champion of freedom, progress, order, and law. It is the steadfast foe of monarchical class rule.

There were 5½ million immigrants in the 1880s, 4 million in the 1890s, creating a labor surplus that kept wages down. The immigrants were more controllable, more helpless than native workers; they were

culturally displaced, at odds with one another, therefore useful as strike-breakers. Often their children worked, intensifying the problem of an oversized labor force and joblessness; in 1880 there were 1,118,000 children under sixteen (one out of six) at work in the United States. With everyone working long hours, families often became strangers to one another. A pants presser named Morris Rosenfeld wrote a poem, "My Boy," which became widely reprinted and recited:

I have a little boy at home,
A pretty little son;
I think sometimes the world is mine
In him, my only one....

'Tis dawn my labor drives me forth;
'Tis night when I am free;
A stranger am I to my child,
And stranger my child to me....

Women immigrants became servants, prostitutes, housewives, factory workers, and sometimes rebels. Leonora Barry was born in Ireland and brought to the United States. She got married, and when her husband died she went to work in a hosiery mill in upstate New York to support three young children, earning 65 cents her first week. She joined the Knights of Labor, which had fifty thousand women members in 192 women's assemblies by 1886. She became "master workman" of her assembly of 927 women, and was appointed to work for the Knights as a general investigator, to "go forth and educate her sister working-women and the public generally as to their needs and necessities." She described the biggest problem of women workers: "Through long years of endurance they have acquired, as a sort of second nature, the habit of submission and acceptance without question of any terms offered them, with the pessimistic view of life in which they see no hope." Her report for the year 1888 showed: 537 requests to help women organize, 100 cities and towns visited, 1,900 leaflets distributed.

In 1884, women's assemblies of textile workers and hatmakers went on strike. The following year in New York, cloak and shirt makers, men and women (holding separate meetings but acting together), went on strike. The *New York World* called it "a revolt for bread and butter." They won higher wages and shorter hours.

That winter in Yonkers, a few women carpet weavers were fired for joining the Knights, and in the cold of February, 2,500 women walked

out and picketed the mill. Only seven hundred of them were members of the Knights, but all the strikers soon joined. The police attacked the picket line and arrested them, but a jury found them not guilty. A great dinner was held by working people in New York to honor them, with two thousand delegates from unions all over the city. The strike lasted six months, and the women won some of their demands, getting back their jobs, but without recognition of their union.

What was astonishing in so many of these struggles was not that the strikers did not win all that they wanted, but that, against such great odds, they dared to resist, and were not destroyed.

Perhaps it was the recognition that day-to-day combat was not enough, that fundamental change was needed, which stimulated the growth of revolutionary movements at this time. The Socialist Labor party, formed in 1877, was tiny, and torn by internal arguments, but it had some influence in organizing unions among foreign workers. In New York, Jewish socialists organized and put out a newspaper. In Chicago, German revolutionaries, along with native-born radicals like Albert Parsons, formed Social Revolutionary clubs. In 1883, an anarchist congress took place in Pittsburgh. It drew up a manifesto:

... All laws are directed against the working people... Even the school serves only the purpose of furnishing the offspring of the wealthy with those qualities necessary to uphold their class domination. The children of the poor get scarcely a formal elementary training, and this, too, is mainly directed to such branches as tend to producing prejudices, arrogance, and servility; in short, want of sense. The Church finally seeks to make complete idiots out of the mass and to make them forego the paradise on earth by promising a fictitious heaven. The capitalist press, on the other hand, takes care of the confusion of spirits in public life... The workers can therefore expect no help from any capitalistic party in their struggle against the existing system. They must achieve their liberation by their own efforts. As in former times, a privileged class never surrenders its tyranny, neither can it be expected that the capitalists of this age will give up their rulership without being forced to do it....

The manifesto asked "equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race." It quoted the *Communist Manifesto*: "Workmen of all lands, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win!"

In Chicago, the new International Working People's Association had five thousand members, published newspapers in five languages, organized mass demonstrations and parades, and through its leadership in

strikes was a powerful influence in the twenty-two unions that made up the Central Labor Union of Chicago. There were differences in theory among all these revolutionary groups, but the theorists were often brought together by the practical needs of labor struggles, and there were many in the mid-1880s.

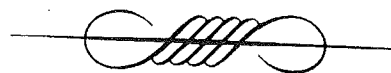
In early 1886, the Texas & Pacific Railroad fired a leader of the district assembly of the Knights of Labor, and this led to a strike which spread throughout the Southwest, tying up traffic as far as St. Louis and Kansas City. Nine young men recruited in New Orleans as marshals, brought to Texas to protect company property, learned about the strike and quit their jobs, saying, "as man to man we could not justifiably go to work and take the bread out of our fellow-workmen's mouths, no matter how much we needed it ourselves." They were then arrested for defrauding the company by refusing to work, and sentenced to three months in the Galveston county jail.

The strikers engaged in sabotage. A news dispatch from Atchison, Kansas:

At 12:45 this morning the men on guard at the Missouri Pacific roundhouse were surprised by the appearance of 35 or 40 masked men. The guards were corralled in the oil room by a detachment of the visitors who stood guard with pistols... while the rest of them thoroughly disabled 12 locomotives which stood in the stalls.

In April, in East St. Louis, there was a battle between strikers and police. Seven workmen were killed, whereupon workers burned the freight depot of the Louisville & Nashville. The governor declared martial law and sent in seven hundred National Guardsmen. With mass arrests, violent attacks by sheriffs and deputies, no support from the skilled, better-paid workers of the Railway Brotherhoods, the strikers could not hold out. After several months they surrendered, and many of them were blacklisted.

By the spring of 1886, the movement for an eight-hour day had grown. On May 1, the American Federation of Labor, now five years old, called for nationwide strikes wherever the eight-hour day was refused. Terence Powderly, head of the Knights of Labor, opposed the strike, saying that employers and employees must first be educated on the eight-hour day, but assemblies of the Knights made plans to strike. The grand chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers opposed the eight-hour day, saying "two hours less work means two hours more loafing about the corners and two hours more for drink," but railroad workers did not agree and supported the eight-hour movement.



HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

The same economic forces which created unprecedented fortunes had another side. The new, more capital intensive industries prevented many from taking advantage of the emerging opportunities. With businesses determined to secure a profit and a government that refused to intervene, large numbers of Americans had increasingly less control over their lives, working longer hours in more dangerous jobs for comparatively less pay. The response of American workers varied, though many sought to change the system through collective action such as labor unions and political parties. The following documents provide a glimpse of some of the conditions which these workers faced and also chronicles their responses.

135

"THE STORY OF A SWEATSHOP GIRL" (1902)

The adaptation of machines to methods of production brought changes to the workforce as well as to how goods were made. The garment industry was among those businesses affected by the change. The development of standard clothing sizes, the use of the electrically powered sewing machine, and the availability of low-wage workers allowed for the mass production of inexpensive clothes for both men and women. In most instances garment businesses were located in cities. Often taking over a floor or floors of a former warehouse, numerous workers and machines were crammed into these floors, creating crowded and dangerous work conditions that became known as the "sweatshop." The workforce was usually young females, often recent immigrants, as the garment trades offered women one of the few sources of income outside the home. These women assembled parts of clothing, performing the same sewing task repetitiously for hours on end. In 1902, Sadie Frowne, a Polish immigrant, told her story as a sweatshop girl to a reporter from the news magazine The Independent. Excerpts of her account follow.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Describe Frowne's work and the conditions of her employment.

How does she view this work?

How could such a situation exist?

Why does she indicate that she belongs to a union, but is "not a Socialist or an Anarchist"?

What does this document reveal about labor in this time period?

unt Fanny had always been anxious for me to get an education, as I did not know how to read or write, and she thought that was wrong. Iols are different in Poland from what they are in this country, and I was Iys too busy to learn to read and write. So when mother died I thought I Id try to learn a trade and then I could go to school at night and learn to k the English language well.

I went to work in Allen street (Manhattan) in what they call a sweat y, making skirts by machine. I was new at the work and the foreman led me a great deal.

Now, then," he would say, "this place is not for you to be looking around attend to your work. That is what you have to do."

Id not know at first that you must not look around and talk, and I made y mistakes with the sewing, so that I was often called a "stupid animal." made \$4 a week by working six days in the week. For there are two Sab s here—our own Sabbath, that comes on a Saturday, and the Christian ath that comes on Sunday. It is against our law to work on our own Sab , so we work on their Sabbath....

vo years ago I came to this place, Brownsville, where so many of my le are, and where I have friends. I got work in a factory making under s—all sorts of cheap undershirts, like cotton and calico for the summer woolen for the winter, but never the silk, satin or velvet undershirts. I ed \$4.50 a week and lived on \$2 a week, the same as before....

isn't piecework in our factory, but one is paid by the amount of work ; just the same. So it is like piecework. All the hands get different unt, some as low as \$3.50 and some of the men as high as \$16 a week. factory is in the third story of a brick building. It is in a room twenty feet and fourteen broad. There are fourteen machines in it. I and the daugh f the people with whom I live work two of these machines. The other ators are all men, some young and some old....

get up at half-past five o'clock every morning and make myself a cup of e on the oil stove. I eat a bit of bread and perhaps some fruit and then go rk. Often I get there soon after six o'clock so as to be in good time, tho actory does not open till seven. I have heard that there is a sort of clock calls you at the very time you want to get up, but I can't believe that use I don't see how the clock would know.

t seven o'clock we all sit down to our machines and the boss brings to one the pile of work that he or she is to finish during the day, what they n English their "stint." This pile is put down beside the machine and as

soon as a skirt is done it is laid on the other side of the machine. Sometimes the work is not all finished by six o'clock and then the one who is behind must work overtime. Sometimes one is finished ahead of time and gets away at four or five o'clock, but generally we are not done till six o'clock. The machines go like mad all day, because the faster you work the more money you get. Sometimes in my haste I get my finger caught and the needle goes right through it. It goes so quick, tho, that it does not hurt much. I bind the finger up with a piece of cotton and go on working. We all have accidents like that. Where the needle goes through the nail it makes a sore finger, or where it splinters a bone it does much harm. Sometimes a finger has to come off. Generally, tho, one can be cured by a salve.

All the time we are working the boss walks about examining the finished garments and making us do them over again if they are not just right. So we have to be careful as well as swift. But I am getting so good at the work that within a year I will be making \$7 a week, and then I can save at least \$3.50 a week. I have over \$200 saved now.

The machines are all run by foot power, and at the end of the day one feels so weak that there is a great temptation to lie right down and sleep. But you must go out and get air, and have some pleasure. So instead of lying down I go out, generally with Henry. Sometimes we go to Coney Island, where there are good dancing places, and sometimes we go to Ulmer Park to picnics....

I am going back to night school again this winter. Plenty of my friends go there. Some of the women in my class are more than forty years of age. Like me, they did not have a chance to learn anything in the old country. It is good to have an education; it makes you feel higher. Ignorant people are all low. People say now that I am clever and fine in conversation.

We have just finished a strike in our business. It spread all over and the United Brotherhood of Garment Workers was in it. That takes in the cloak-makers, coatmakers, and all the others. We struck for shorter hours, and after being out four weeks won the fight. We only have to work nine and a half hours a day and we get the same pay as before. So the union does good after all in spite of what some people say against it—that it just takes our money and does nothing.

I pay 25 cents a month to the union, but I do not begrudge that because it is for our benefit. The next strike is going to be for a raise of wages, which we all ought to have. But tho I belong to the Union I am not a Socialist or an Anarchist. I don't know exactly what those things mean. There is a little expense for charity, too. If any worker is injured or sick we all give money to help....

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THE CREDIT SYSTEM OF THE SOUTH (1894)

The Civil War destroyed the slave-based, plantation system of the South and brought revolutionary economic adjustments for both whites and African Americans. Mann

of Philadelphia! allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment
of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work. Especially let
a petition. Men may settle this and other questions at the ballot-box
have no such right; it is only through petitions that you can reach the
e. It is therefore peculiarly your duty to petition. Do you say, "It does
' The South already turns pale at the number sent. They have read the
f the proceedings of Congress, and there have seen that among others
were very many from the women of the North on the subject of slavery.
has called the attention of the South to the subject. How could we expect
done more as yet? Men who hold the rod over slaves, rule in the coun-
ation; and they deny our right to petition and to remonstrate against
of our sex and of our kind. We have these rights, however, from our God
let us exercise them: and though often turned away unanswered, let us
over the influence of importunity upon the unjust judge, and act according
at that the South look with jealousy upon our measures shows that they
al. There is, therefore, no cause for doubting or despair, but rather
ing.

• • •

It was to overcome this prejudice that such high wages had been offered to women that they might be induced to become mill-girls, in spite of the opprobrium that still clung to this "degrading occupation." At first only a few came; for, though rewarded by the high wages to be regularly paid in "cash," there were many who

still preferred to go on working at some more genteel employment at seventy-five cents a week and their board.

But in a short time the prejudice against the factory labor wore away, and the Lowell mills became filled with blooming and energetic New England women. They were naturally intelligent, had mother-wit, and fell easily into the ways of their new life. They soon began to associate with those who formed the community in which they had come to live, and were invited to their houses. They went to the same church, and sometimes married into some of the best families. Or if they returned to their secluded homes again, instead of being looked down upon as "factory girls" by the squire's or lawyer's family, they were more often welcomed as coming from the metropolis, bringing new fashions, new books, and new ideas with them.

In 1831 Lowell was little more than a factory village. Several corporations were started, and the cotton-mills belonging to them were building. Help was in great demand; and the stories were told all over the country of the new factory town, and the high wages that were offered to all classes of work-people,—stories that reached the ears of mechanics' and farmers' sons, and gave new life to lonely and dependent women in distant towns and farmhouses. Into this Yankee El Dorado, these needy people began to pour by the various modes of travel known to those slow old days. The stage-coach and the canal-boat came every day, always filled with the new recruits for this army of useful people. The mechanic and machinist came, each with his home-made chest of tools, and oftentimes his wife and little ones. The widow came with her little flock of scanty housekeeping goods to open a boarding-house or variety store, and so provided a home for her fatherless children. Many farmers' daughters came to earn money to complete their wedding outfit, or buy the bride's share of housekeeping articles.

Women with past histories came, to hide their griefs and their identity, and to earn an honest living in the "sweat of their brow." Single young men came, full of hope and life, to get money for an education, or to lift the mortgage from the home-farm. Troops of young girls came by stages and baggage-wagons, men often being employed to go to other States and to Canada, to collect them at so much a head, and deliver them to the factories. . . .

These country girls had queer names, which added to the singularity of their appearance. Samantha, Triphena, Plunny, Kezia, Aseneth, Elgardy, Leah, Ruhamah, Lovey, Almaretta, Sarepta, and Florilla were among them.

Their dialect was also very peculiar. On the broken English and Scotch of their ancestors was ingrafted the nasal Yankee twang; so that many of them, when they had just come down, spoke a language almost unintelligible. But the severe discipline and ridicule which met them was as good as a school education, and they were soon taught the "city way of speaking" . . .

One of the first strikes of the cotton-factory operatives that ever took place in

this country was that in Lowell, in October, 1836. When it was announced that wages were to be cut down, great indignation was felt, and it was decided to strike, en masse. This was done. The mills were shut down, and the girls went in procession from their several corporations to the "grove" on Chapel Hill, and listened to "incendiary" speeches from early labor reformers.

One of the girls stood on a pump, and gave vent to the feelings of her companions in a neat speech, declaring that it was their duty to resist all attempts at cutting down the wages. This was the first time a woman had spoken in public in Lowell, and the event caused surprise and consternation among her audience.

Cutting down the wages was not their only grievance, nor the only cause of this strike. Hitherto the corporations had paid twenty-five cents a week towards the board of each operative, and now it was their purpose to have the girls pay the sum; and this, in addition to the cut in wages, would make a difference of at least one dollar a week. It was estimated that as many as twelve or fifteen hundred girls turned out, and walked in procession through the streets. . . .

My own recollection of this first strike (or "turn out" as it was called) is very vivid. I worked in a lower room, where I had heard the proposed strike fully, if not vehemently, discussed; I had been an ardent listener to what was said against this attempt at "oppression" on the part of the corporation, and naturally I took sides with the strikers. When the day came on which the girls were to turn out, those in the upper rooms started first, and so many of them left that our mill was at once shut down. Then, when the girls in my room stood irresolute, uncertain what to do, asking each other, "Would you?" or "Shall we turn out?" and not one of them having the courage to lead off, I, who began to think they would not go out, after all their talk, became impatient, and started on ahead, saying, with childish bravado, "I don't care what you do, I am going to turn out, whether any one else does or not;" and I marched out, and was followed by the others.

As I looked back at the long line that followed me, I was more proud than I have ever been at any success I may have achieved.

...

In 1845, Margaret Fuller published the groundbreaking work *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, an expanded version of an essay she had written for *The Dial* in 1843, called "The Great Lawsuit—Man versus Men; Woman versus Women." The book, part of which is excerpted here, had a profound impact on the women's rights movement in the United States.

Elite members

In addition to this
packet, please also
annolight pgs 21-22
and 24 in your reader

McGee

would have liked. The wealthy could play Follow the Leader, but it was not at all clear that the rest of the nation was ready to follow along. Driven by the industrial revolution, America had grown enormously in territory, population, and wealth in the nineteenth century. The United States was not one nation but several; it was a land divided by region, race, and ethnicity. And it was a land still deeply split by class conflict. The upper class remained a controversial group engineering a wrenching economic transformation, accumulating staggering fortunes, and pursuing notorious private lives. Just three months later another party—this one in New York City—highlighted the precariousness of upper-class authority at the close of the nineteenth century.

While McKinley and Bryan battled for the presidency, Cornelia Bradley Martin had been plotting her own coup in the social wars of New York's rich. She and her husband, Bradley, were no newcomers to the ranks of wealthy Manhattan. Cornelia's father had been a millionaire merchant in New York; Bradley's, a banker from a fine Albany family. Though wealthy, their parents had lived by the old Victorian virtues. Cornelia's father, it was said, had been "domestic in his tastes"; Bradley's father, who early practiced "absolute self-denial," "never lost an opportunity of instilling" in his sons "ideas of the importance of work and one's duty towards others in every-day life." Cornelia and Bradley, married in 1869, had moved away from the old values. One sign of the change was their surname, which somewhere along the line borrowed Bradley's first name, occasionally added a hyphen, and doubled from "Martin" to "Bradley-Martin." Another was Cornelia's collection of jewelry, which included pieces from the French crown jewels, most notably a ruby necklace that had belonged to Marie Antoinette. Never "domestic" in their tastes, the Bradley Martins had become well known in New York social circles, especially for their renowned parties in 1885 and 1890.³

In the depression winter of 1897, Cornelia arranged a costume ball at the Waldorf Hotel that would, she hoped, eclipse not only her previous efforts but also Alva Vanderbilt's famous ball of 1883, widely recognized as the greatest party in the history of the city. Cornelia was not bashful about her intentions. For weeks before the ball, her secretary made sure that the papers got all the details. Yet the publicity was not quite what Cornelia had expected. Across the country, preachers and editorial writers argued over the propriety of a party that would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars amid the worst depression in the nation's history. At the fashionable St. George's

Episcopal Church in New York, rector Dr. William Rainsford urged his congregation, which included financier J. P. Morgan, to forgo the ball. "Never were the lines between the two classes—those who have wealth and those who envy them—more distinctly drawn," Rainsford warned. "[S]uch elaborate and costly manifestations of wealth would only tend to stir up . . . widespread discontent" and "furnish additional texts for sermons by the socialistic agitators." "Every thoughtful man," agreed a parishioner, "must have seen signs of friction between the upper ten and the lower. Whatever tends to increase it, as very elaborate social affairs may, can well be spared now." The pastor of Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, where John D. Rockefeller worshipped, preached that wealth should be used for philanthropy. Undeterred, Cornelia went ahead. Her supporters claimed that the expenditures for the ball would stimulate the economy.⁴

Some invited guests decided not to attend. But about six or seven hundred turned up, in costume, when the great night came on February 10. Bradley dressed as a member of the court of Louis XV. Cornelia, despite her Marie Antoinette necklace, dressed as another luckless queen, Mary Stuart. Like a queen, the hostess greeted her guests from a raised dais "beneath a canopy of rare tapestries." There were mirrors, tables laden with food, "a wild riot of roses," and "mimic woodland bowers." The scene "reproduced the splendour of Versailles in New York, and I doubt if even the Roi Soleil himself ever witnessed a more dazzling sight," Bradley's brother, Frederick Townsend Martin, remembered. "The power of wealth with its refinement and vulgarity was everywhere. It gleamed from countless jewels, and it was proclaimed by the thousands of orchids and roses, whose fragrance that night was like incense burnt on the altar of the Golden Calf." Royalty was everywhere, too—"perhaps a dozen" Marie Antoinettes came to the ball. Amid all the bewigged and bejeweled royalty, a reporter noted, there were hardly any American costumes. Only one or two George Washingtons reminded the guests of their republican origins. Outside, about 250 police closed the sidewalks to pedestrians and braced for trouble. While his wife danced inside, Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt directed his men as they watched for anyone "likely to prove dangerous from an anarchistic viewpoint."⁵

The revolutionary moment never came, but Cornelia's triumph turned into disaster anyway. Across the country, elite opinion condemned the Bradley Martins. The *Chicago Tribune* gave its verdict by quoting Shakespeare's

Puck: "What fools these mortals be." Worse, New York City itself suddenly became inhospitable. Municipal officials, noting Bradley's opulence, raised his property taxes. The members of the city's elite clubs pronounced the Bradley Martins' ball "magnificent" but "stupid." Unlike Marie Antoinette and Mary Stuart, Cornelia kept her head, but she and Bradley soon left the United States to begin a self-imposed exile. Selling their mansion in Manhattan, the Bradley Martins bought a new place in London, where their daughter had married Lord Craven a few years before. In 1899, they returned briefly to New York to give a defiant farewell dinner party at the Waldorf at the cost of \$116 a plate. From then on, the Bradley Martins divided their time between London and Balmacaan, Bradley's estate in Scotland. They left behind a bemused Frederick Townsend Martin. Years later he still could not understand why all this had happened. After all, the ball had helped the economy because "many New York shops sold out brocades and silks which had been lying in their stock-rooms for years." "I cannot conceive," Frederick wrote sadly, "why this entertainment should have been condemned."⁶

If McKinley's victory emphasized the strength of the "upper ten," the Bradley Martins' ball epitomized their weakness. Absurd as it was, the affair highlighted the cultural isolation and internal division that plagued the wealthy. The industrial upper class upheld a set of values at odds with those of other classes. Approaching life so differently from the rest of America, the rich could not command respect from farmers and workers. Even among themselves, the "upper ten" disagreed how best to live their lives and secure their future. The party did not last very long at all.



Cornelia Bradley Martin staged her costume ball when class differences were more pronounced than at any time in the history of industrial America. The end of the nineteenth century saw more than just "signs of friction between the upper ten and the lower": wage workers, farmers, and the rich were alien to one another. That sense of strangeness was not only a matter of obvious differences in material circumstances. By choice and by necessity, America's social classes lived starkly divergent daily lives and invoked different and often conflicting values to guide, explain, and justify their ways of life. The classes held distinctive views on fundamental issues of human existence: on the nature of the individual; on the relationship between the individual and

society; on the roles of men, women, children, and the family; and on the relative importance of work and pleasure. What would become the Progressive Era—an extraordinary explosion of middle-class activism—began as an unprecedented crisis of alienation amid the extremes of wealth and poverty in America.

In a land of some 76 million people, the "upper ten" were no more than a tiny minority, a mere sliver of the nation. Wealthy capitalists, manufacturers, merchants, landowners, executives, professionals, and their families made up not "ten," but only 1 or 2 percent of the population. These were the people who owned the majority of the nation's resources and expected to make the majority of its key decisions. They could be found in cities, towns, and rural estates across the country. Their ranks included the nation's roughly four thousand millionaires, fabulously rich by almost any standard. Their most visible and most powerful members were the two hundred or so families worth at least \$20 million, fortunes with few parallels in history. Concentrated in the Northeast and especially New York State, theirs were the famous names of American capitalism—Vanderbilt, Whitney, Carnegie, Harriman, and Morgan. Probably the greatest fortune of them all—a billion dollars by 1913—belonged to John D. Rockefeller, the leader of Standard Oil.⁷

Membership in the upper ten was never only a matter of precise calculation in dollars; it was also a matter of origins, experience, and outlook. Wealthy Americans shared several attributes that made them a homogenous and distinctive group, similar to one another and different from the rest of the population. In an increasingly diverse nation of new and old immigrants, the upper class came mostly from English stock, from families long in America. In a largely Protestant land, they belonged, by birth or conversion, to the smaller, most fashionable Protestant denominations—Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregational. With only occasional exceptions, they came from middle- and upper-class origins. Hardly any matched Andrew Carnegie's storied rise from rags to riches, from working-class bobbin boy in a textile factory to multimillionaire steel baron. While fewer than 10 percent of the population had even graduated from high school, many of the upper ten had gone to college or professional school.⁸

Above all, the upper ten shared a fundamental understanding about the nature of the individual. Glorifying the power of individual will, the wealthy held to an uncompromising belief in the necessity of individual freedom. To

Andrew Carnegie, "Individualism" was the very "foundation" of the human race. "Only through exceptional individuals, the leaders, man has been able to ascend," Carnegie explained. "[It] is the leaders who do the new things that count, all these have been Individualistic to a degree beyond ordinary men and worked in perfect freedom; each and every one a character unlike anybody else; an original, gifted beyond most others of his kind, hence his leadership." It was just this strong-willed sense of her "exceptional" individuality that inspired Cornelia Bradley Martin's idea for a ball; and it was just this sense of her right to "perfect freedom" that enabled her to stick to her plans in the face of so much condemnation.⁹

The upper ten attributed the hardships of the poor not to an unfair economic system but to individual shortcomings. The remedy was individual regeneration rather than government action. "[The] failures which a man makes in his life are due almost always to some defect in his personality, some weakness of body, or mind, or character, will, or temperament," wrote John D. Rockefeller. "The only way to overcome these failings is to build up his personality from within, so that he, by virtue of what is within him, may overcome the weakness which was the cause of the failure." Individualism, moreover, helped the wealthy resolutely deny the existence of social classes, despite all the signs of friction around them. "The American Commonwealth is built upon the individual," explained the renowned corporate lawyer and U.S. Senator Chauncey Depew of New York. "It recognizes neither classes nor masses."¹⁰

Upper-class individualism was more than just a crude version of "might makes right." These men and women had grown up in a land dedicated to individualism. In the Revolutionary era, the nation's sacred documents—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—proclaimed the dignity and worth of the individual. By the nineteenth century, that notion was so powerful and so distinctively American that the visiting French observer Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term *individualism* to describe it. The relentless spread of capitalism reaffirmed the individualist creed, but with a new emphasis on each person's ownership of his or her labor. By midcentury, this reworked individualism drove the abolitionist assault on slavery and spurred the Northern war against the South. Individualism justified the emerging factory system, built on individual workers' free exchange of their labor for wages. Individualism provided the core of the

Victorian culture that taught middle-class men self-discipline and self-reliance in the struggle for success. "Take away the spirit of Individualism from the people," warned Wall Street veteran Henry Clews, "and you at once eliminate the American spirit—the love of freedom,—of free industry,—free and unfettered opportunity,—you take away freedom itself!"¹¹

Ironically, the wealthy themselves challenged freedom and individualism by creating the nation's pioneering big businesses, the giant trusts and corporations that employed the first white-collar "organization men." There were even a few "organization men" among the upper ten. William Ellis Corey, the second president of United States Steel, "is part of the mechanism itself," wrote an observer early in the twentieth century. "He feels himself to be a fraction, rather than a unit. His corporation is an organism like a human body, and he is the co-ordinating function of its brain."¹²

Yet, men like Corey were unusual. For one thing, many of the wealthy did not share his familiarity with corporate life. In the industrial city of Baltimore, sixth largest in the nation in 1900, only about one-fifth of leading businessmen had made their careers as bureaucrats. Of the 185 leaders of the largest American firms between 1901 and 1910, just under half were career bureaucrats, men who had never had their own businesses. But even business leaders accustomed to bureaucracy tended to see themselves as individual units rather than fractions of some larger whole. Railroad executives, members of the nation's pioneering corporate hierarchies, still rejoiced in "competitive individualism" after decades of collective enterprise. Such people may have felt a special tie to their organizations, but that did not prevent them from feeling superior to everybody else. William Ellis Corey was, after all, United States Steel's "brain," rather than one of its lesser organs. James Stillman, the leader of New York's National City Bank, thought of his firm as a god and sometimes as "our mother." Yet, the obedience Stillman owed his god and his mother did not keep him from being "lordly in his manner."¹³

The aristocratic and even regal bearing, with its assumption of individual prerogative, came easily for the men and women of the upper ten. There were all those kings and queens at the Bradley Martin ball. There was the financier E. H. Harriman, who "had the philosophy, the methods of an Oriental monarch." His niece, Daisy Harriman, recalled visiting him in his library one evening. "Daisy, I have a new plaything," he told her. "I have just bought the Erie [railroad] for five million dollars. I think I will call them up now."¹⁴