

Responses to Industrialism

READING 1

It is idle to talk of a peaceful strike. None such has ever occurred. All combinations to interfere with perfect freedom in the proper management and control of one's lawful business, to dictate the terms upon which such business shall be conducted by means of threats, are within the condemnation of the law.

Farmer's Loan and Trust v. Northern Pacific, 1894

READING 2

Combinations are reappearing on all sides....They all do something to raise prices, or hold them up, and they wind up with banquets for which we pay....

The coal combination was investigated by the New York legislature in 1878, after the combination had raised the prices of coal in New York to double what they had been....The committee found that coal could be laid down on the dock, after paying all charges, for an average of \$3.20 a ton. It was at that time retailing in the city for \$4.90 to \$5.25 a ton....

Our industries, from railroads to working men, are being organized to prevent milk, nails, lumber, freights, labor, soothing syrup, and all these other things from becoming too cheap....

If the tendency to combination is irresistible, control of it is imperative. Monopoly and anti-monopoly, odious as these words have become to the literary ear, represent the two great tendencies of our time: monopoly, the tendency to combination; anti-monopoly, the demand for social control of it.

Henry Demarest Lloyd, 1884

READING 3

The enormous increase in productive power which has marked the present century...has no tendency to extirpate poverty or to lighten the burdens of those compelled to toil....In factories where labor-saving machinery has reached its most wonderful development, little children are at work...amid the greatest accumulations of wealth, men die of starvation, and puny infants suckle dry breasts; while everywhere the greed of gain, the worship of wealth, shows the force of the fear of want....

In the United States it is clear that squalor and misery, and the vices and crimes that spring from them, everywhere increase as the village grows to the city....So long as the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury and make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want, progress is not real and cannot be permanent....The ideas that there is a necessary conflict between capital and labor, that machinery is an evil, that competition must be restrained and interest abolished, that wealth may be created by the issue of money, that it is the duty of government to furnish capital or furnish work, are rapidly making way among the great body of the people....Is there not growing up among us [wealthy men] who have all the power without any of the virtues of aristocracy? We have simple citizens who

control thousands of miles of railroad, millions of acres of land, the means of livelihood of great numbers of men; who name the Governors of sovereign States as they name their clerks, choose Senators as they choose attorneys....

Henry George, Progress and Poverty, 1879

READING 4

But now comes a harder question. How is this growing wealth divided? Is it rightly or wrongly divided?...During the past fourteen years the wealth of this nation has increased much faster than the population, but the people who work for wages are little if any better off than they were fourteen years ago....

What has the Christian moralist to say about this state of things? He is bound to say that it is a bad state of things, and must somehow be reformed....Christianity...ought with all its emphasis to say to society: "Your present industrial system, which fosters enormous inequalities, which permits a few to heap up most of the gains of this advancing civilization, and leaves the many without any substantial share in them, is an inadequate and inequitable system, and needs important changes to make it the instrument of righteousness."

This is not saying that Christians should ask the state to take the property of the rich and distribute it among the poor....There are, however, one or two things, that he will insist upon as the immediate duty of the state. Certain outrageous monopolies exist that the state is bound to crush....Another gigantic public evil that the state must exterminate is that of gambling in stocks and produce.

Congregationalist Minister Washington Gladden, 1886

READING 5

It is hardly disputed that capital, under our modern industrial system, is receiving more than a just share of the fruits of labor, and the laborer is receiving relatively less and less of the profits of his toil....It is to the interest of capital, when it releases itself from moral and social obligations and looks only to its own increase, to keep a huge class of unemployed men who must work or starve. The present industrial system could not exist were it not for the fact that the great multitudes of the unemployed have been brought to this country, systematically and purposely, for the sake of reducing wages and producing a state of poverty....

The state must be redeemed from the worship of property and from commercial theories of government....A baseless assumption which the state must correct is, that employers have an economic right to employ and discharge from the individual standpoint, with only a money obligation to employees, and no responsibility to society....No industrial concern has a right to receive the benefits of society without bearing commensurate responsibilities.

Congregationalist Minister George D. Herron, 1893

READING 6

Section 1. Every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several states, or with foreign nations, is hereby declared to be illegal.

Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890

READING 7

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...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....We have formed the Knights of Labor with a view of securing the organization and direction by cooperative effort, of the power of the industrial classes....

To secure to the toilers a proper share of the wealth that they create; more of the leisure that rightfully belongs to them.... The establishment of cooperative institutions, productive and distributive. The reserving of the public lands--the heritage of the people--for the actual settlers;--not another acre for railroads or speculators. 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....The prohibition of the employment of children in workshops, mines, and factories before attaining their fourteen year. To abolish the system of letting out by contract the labor of convicts in our prisons and reformatory institutions. To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work. The reduction of the hours of labor to eight per day....

Constitution of the Knights of Labor, 1878

READING 8

Just as religion has fettered the human mind, and as property, or the monopoly of things, has subdued and stifled man's needs, so has the state enslaved his spirit...."All government in essence," says Emerson, "is tyranny."...In every instance its aim is the absolute subordination of the individual.

Emma Goldman, Anarchism, 1910

READING 9

Dynamite!...Stuff several pounds of this sublime stuff into an inch pipe (gas or water pipe), plug up both ends, insert a cap with a fuse attached, place this in the immediate vicinity of a lot of rich loafers who live by the sweat of other people's brows, and light the fuse. A most cheerful and gratifying result will follow....A pound of this good stuff beats a bushel of ballots all hollow--and don't you forget it!

The Alarm, 1885

READING 10

Now one of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than any other type. The man who is mentally alert and intelligent is for this very reason entirely unsuited to what would, for him, be the grinding monotony of work of this character. Therefore the workman who is best suited to handling pig iron is unable to understand the real science of doing this class of work. He is so stupid that the word "percentage" has no meaning to him, and he must consequently be trained by a man more intelligent than himself into the habit of working in accordance with the laws of this science before he can be successful.

Frederick Winslow Taylor on the principles of scientific management, 1911

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. On what grounds do critics complain about the emerging industrial order? How valid do you find their criticism?
2. What do the quotations suggest should be the proper role of government in the economy?
3. Is bigness in industry the result of manipulation or the natural workings of economic laws? Is bigness in industry bad and if so, why?
4. Big business's critics accused it of financial trickery, political corruption, the unscrupulous exercise of monopoly power, inhumanity toward labor, and disregard for the consumer. Defenders stressed big business's innovations--economies of scale, vertical and horizontal integration, rationalization of American industry, technical innovation, and promotion of efficient organization, capitalization, and research. Which argument do you find more persuasive?