**CHAPTER 16**

**In the Wake of War**

WHEN AMERICANS TURNED FROM fighting and making weapons to more constructive occupations, they transformed their agriculture, trade, manufacturing, mining, and means of communication. Immigration increased rapidly. Cities grew in size and number, exerting on every aspect of life an influence at least as pervasive as that exercised on earlier generations by the frontier. Farm production rose to new heights, invigorated by new marketing methods and the increased use of machinery. Railroad construction stimulated and unified the economy, helping to make possible still larger and more efficient industrial and agricultural enterprises. The flow of gold and silver from western mines excited people's imaginations and their avarice. More than a mere change of scale, these developments altered the structure of the economy and the society.

**The American Commonwealth**

Most students of the subject have concluded that the political history of the United States in the last quarter of the 19th century was singularly divorced from the meaningful issues of that day. When controversial measures were debated, they excited far less argument than they merited. A graduated income tax was enacted during the Civil War, repealed after that conflict, reenacted in 1894, and then declared unconstitutional in 1895 without causing much more than a ripple in the world of partisan politics. This was typical; as the English observer James Bryce noted in The American Commonwealth (1888), the politicians were "neglecting to discover and work out new principles capable of solving the problems which now perplex the country."

**"Root, Hog, or Die"**

After Appomattox, the immense resources of the United States, combined with the high value most Americans assigned to work and achievement, made the people strongly materialistic. The failures of Reconstruction seemed to make Americans even more enamored of material values. They were tired of sacrifice, eager to act for themselves, committed more strongly to a government policy of noninterference, or laissez faire. People now tolerated the grossest kind of waste and appeared to care little about corruption in high places, so long as no one interfered with their personal pursuit of profit. Mark Twain, raised in an earlier era, called this the Gilded Age, dazzling on the surface, base metal beneath.

Certain intellectual currents encouraged the exploitative drives of the people. By the 1870s Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was beginning to influence opinion in the United States. That nature had ordained a kind of inevitable progress, governed by the natural selection of the individual organisms best adapted to survive in a particular environment, seemed reasonable to most Americans, for it fitted well with their own experiences. All-out competition, unhampered by government regulations or other restrictions, would mean that only the most efficient would survive in every field of human endeavor.

Yale professor William Graham Sumner sometimes used the survival-of-the-fittest analogy in teaching undergraduates. "Professor," one student asked Sumner, "don't you believe in any government aid to industries?" "No!" Sumner replied, "it's root, hog, or die." The student persisted: "Suppose some professor of political science came along and took your job away from you. Wouldn't you be sore?" "Any other professor is welcome to try," Sumner answered promptly. "If he gets my job, it is my fault. My business is to teach the subject so well that no one can take the job away from me." Sumner's philosophy came to be known as social Darwinism, the idea that economic and social relations were governed by the Darwinian principle that unrestricted, the fittest will always survive.

Few businessmen were directly influenced by Darwin's ideas. Most accepted any aid they could get from the government. Nevertheless, most were sincere individualists. They believed in competition, being convinced that the nation would prosper most if all people were free to seek their personal fortunes by their own methods.

**The Shape of Politics**

A succession of weak presidents occupied the White House, and Congress dominated the government, the Senate generally overshadowing the House of Representatives. Critics called the Senate a "rich man's club," and it did contain many millionaires. However, the true sources of the Senate's influence lay in the long tenure of many of its members and in its reputation for wisdom, intelligence, and statesmanship.

The House of Representatives, by contrast, was one of the most disorderly and ineffectual legislative bodies in the world. An infernal din rose from the crowded chamber. Desks slammed; members held private conversations, hailed pages, shuffled from place to place, clamored for the attention of the Speaker-all while some poor orator tried to discuss the question of the moment. Speaking in the House, one writer said, was like trying to address the crowd on a passing bus from a curb in front of the Astor House in New York City.

The major political parties seldom took clearly opposing positions on the questions of the day. Democrats were separated from Republicans more by accidents of geography, religious affiliation, and ethnic background than by economic issues.

The fundamental division between Democrats and Republicans was sectional, a result of the Civil War. The South, after the political rights of blacks had been drastically circumscribed, became heavily Democratic. Most of New England was solidly Republican. Elsewhere the two parties stood in fair balance, although the Republicans tended to have the advantage.

The personalities of political leaders often dictated the voting patterns of individuals and groups. In 1892, when Grover Cleveland defeated Benjamin Harrison for president, a prominent steel manufacturer wrote to his even more prominent competitor, Andrew Carnegie, "I am very sorry for President Harrison, but I cannot see that our interests are going to be affected one way or the other." Carnegie replied, "We have nothing to fear.... Cleveland is [a] pretty good fellow. Off for Venice tomorrow."

The balance of political power after 1876 was almost perfect. Majorities in the Senate and the House fluctuated continually. Between 1876 and 1896 the "dominant" Republican party controlled both houses of Congress and the presidency at the same time for only one two-year period.

**Issues of the Gilded Age**

Four questions obsessed politicians in these years. One was the "bloody shirt." The term, which became part of the language after a Massachusetts congressman dramatically displayed the bloodstained shirt of an Ohio carpetbagger who had been flogged by terrorists in Mississippi, referred to the tactic of reminding northern voters that the men who had taken the South out of the Union had been Democrats and that they and their descendants were still Democrats. "Every man that endeavored to tear down the old flag," a Republican orator proclaimed in 1876, "was a Democrat.... The man that assassinated Abraham Lincoln was a Democrat.... Soldiers, every scar you have on your heroic bodies was given you by a Democrat." Republicans waved the bloody shirt to divert the attention of voters from their party's shortcomings, effectively obscuring the real issues of the day.

Waving the bloody shirt was related intimately to the issue of the rights of blacks. Throughout this period Republicans vacillated between trying to build up their organization in the South by appealing to black voters-which required them to make sure that blacks in the South could vote-and trying to win conservative white support by stressing economic issues such as the tariff. When the former strategy seemed wise, they waved the bloody shirt with vigor; in the latter case, they piously announced that the blacks' future was "as safe in the hands of one party as it is in the other."

The tariff was a perennial issue in post-Civil War politics. Manufacturers desired protective tariffs to keep out competing products, and a majority of their workers were convinced that wage levels would fall if goods produced by cheap foreign labor entered the United States untaxed. Many farmers supported protection, though few competing agricultural products were being imported. Congressman William McKinley of Ohio, who reputedly could make reciting a tariff schedule sound Eke poetry, stated the majority opinion in the clearest terms: High tariffs foster the growth of industry and thus create jobs. "Reduce the tariff and labor is the first to suffer," he declared.

The Democrats professed to believe in moderation, yet whenever party leaders tried to revise the tariff downward, Democratic congressmen from industrial states like Pennsylvania and New York sided with the Republicans. Every new tariff bill became an occasion for log rolling, lobbying, and outrageous politicking rather than for sane discussion and careful evaluation of the public interest.

Another political question in this period was currency reform. During the Civil War, it will be recalled, the government, faced with obligations it could not meet by taxing or borrowing, suspended specie payments and issued nearly $450 million in paper money. The greenbacks did not command the full confidence of people accustomed to money readily convertible into gold or silver. Greenbacks seemed to threaten inflation, for how could one trust the government not to issue them in wholesale lots to avoid passing unpopular tax laws? Thus when the war ended, strong sentiment developed for withdrawing the greenbacks from circulation and returning to a bullion standard.

Beginning during Reconstruction prices declined sharply. The deflation increased the real income of bondholders and other creditors but injured debtors. Farmers were hit particularly hard, for many of them had borrowed heavily during the wartime boom to finance expansion.

Here was a question of real significance, yet the major parties refused to confront it. Though the Republicans professed to be the party of sound money, most western Republicans favored expansion of the currency. And while one wing of the Democrats flirted with the Greenbackers, the conservative, or "Bourbon," Democrats favored deflation as much as Republicans did.

In 1874 a bill to increase the supply of greenbacks was defeated in a Republican-dominated Congress only by the veto of President Grant. The next year Congress voted to resume specie payments, but in order to avoid a party split on the question, the Republicans agreed to allow $300 million in greenbacks to remain in circulation and to postpone actual resumption of specie payments until 1879.

Yet another major political issue of these years was civil service reform. That the federal bureaucracy needed overhauling nearly everyone agreed. As American society grew larger and more complex, the government necessarily took on more functions. The need for professional administration increased. The number of federal employees rose from 53,000 in 1871 to 256,000 at the end of the century. Corruption flourished; waste and inefficiency were the normal state of affairs.

Every honest observer could see the need for reform, but the politicians argued that patronage was the lifeblood of politics, that parties could not function without armies of loyal political workers, and that the workers expected and deserved the rewards of office when their efforts were crowned with victory at the polls. Typical was the attitude of the New York assemblyman who, according to Theodore Roosevelt, had "the same idea about Public Life and the Civil Service that a vulture has of a dead sheep."

**Blacks After Reconstruction**

Minorities were treated with callousness and contempt in the postwar decades. That the South would deal harshly with the former slaves once federal control was relaxed probably should have been expected. President Hayes had urged blacks to trust southern whites. A new Era of Good Feelings had dawned, he announced after making a goodwill tour of the South shortly after his March 1877 inauguration. By December he was disillusioned. However, he did nothing to remedy the situation. Frederick Douglass called Hayes's policy "sickly conciliation."

Hayes's successors in the 1880s did no better. "Time is the only cure," President Garfield said, thereby confessing that he had no policy at all. President Arthur gave federal patronage to, antiblack groups in an effort to split the Democratic South. In President Cleveland's day, blacks had scarcely a friend in high places, North or South. Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur were Republicans, Cleveland a Democrat; party made little difference. Both parties subscribed to hypocritical statements about equality and constitutional rights. Neither did anything to implement them.

For a time blacks were not totally disfranchised in the South, but in the 1890s the southern states, led by Mississippi, began to deprive blacks of the vote despite the Fifteenth Amendment. Poll taxes raised a formidable economic barrier, one that also disfranchised many poor whites. Literacy tests completed the work; a number of states provided a loophole for illiterate whites by including an "understanding" clause whereby an illiterate person could qualify by demonstrating an ability to explain the meaning of a section of the state constitution when an election official read it to him. Blacks who attempted to take the test were invariably declared to have failed it.

In Louisiana 130,000 blacks voted in the election of 1896. Then the law was changed. In 1900 only 5,000 votes were cast by blacks. With unctuous hypocrisy, white southerners insisted that they loved "their" blacks dearly and wished only to protect them from "the machinations of those who would use them only to further their own base ends." "We take away the Negroes' votes," a Louisiana politician explained, "to protect them just as we would protect a little child and prevent it from injuring itself with sharp-edged tools."

Practically every Supreme Court decision after 1877 that affected blacks somehow "nullified or curtailed" their rights. The Civil Rights Cases (1883) declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional. Blacks who were refused equal accommodations or privileges by hotels, theaters, and other privately owned facilities had no recourse at law, the Court announced. The Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed their civil rights against invasion by the states, not by individuals.

In Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) the Court ruled that even in places of public accommodation, such as railroads and, by implication, schools, segregation was legal so long as facilities of equal quality were provided. "If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane." In a noble dissent in the Plessy case, Justice John Marshall Harlan protested this line of argument. "Our Constitution is color-blind," he said. "The arbitrary separation of citizens, on the basis of race . . ., is a badge of servitude wholly inconsistent with civil freedom and the equality before the law established by the Constitution." Alas, more than half a century was to pass before the Court came around to Harlan's reasoning and reversed the Plessy decision. Meanwhile, total segregation was imposed throughout the South. Separate schools, prisons, hospitals, recreational facilities, and even cemeteries were provided for blacks, and these were almost never equal to those available to whites.

Most northerners supported the government and the Court. Newspapers presented a stereotyped, derogatory picture of blacks, no matter what the circumstances. "The Negro's day is over," the tough-minded William Graham Sumner explained.

**Booker T. Washington and the Atlanta Compromise**

Since nearly all biologists, physicians, and other supposed experts on race were convinced that blacks were inferior beings, educated northerners generally accepted black inferiority as fact. James Bryce

encountered many Americans of this type and absorbed their point of view. Negroes, Bryce wrote, were docile, pliable, submissive, lustful, childish, impressionable, emotional, heedless, and "unthrifty." They had "no capacity for abstract thinking, for scientific inquiry, or for any kind of invention."

Like Bryce, most Americans did not especially wish blacks ill; they simply refused to consider them quite human and consigned them complacently to oblivion, along with the Indians. A vicious circle was established: By denying blacks decent educational opportunities and good jobs, the dominant race could use the blacks' resultant ignorance and poverty to justify the inferior facilities offered them.

Southern blacks reacted to this deplorable situation in a variety of ways. Some sought redress in racial pride and what would later be called black nationalism. A few became so disaffected that they tried to revive the African colonization movement. "Africa is our home," insisted Bishop Henry M. Turner, who had served as an army chaplain during the war and as a member of the Georgia legislature during Reconstruction; "there is no future in this country for the Negro." T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the New York Age and founder of the Afro

American League (1887), called on blacks to demand full civil rights, better schools, and fair wages and to fight against discrimination of every sort. "Let us stand up like men in our own organization," he urged. "If others use ... violence to combat our peaceful arguments, it is not for us to run away from violence."

Militancy and black separatism won few adherents in the Southern. Life was better than it had been under slavery. But the forces of repression were extremely powerful. The late 19th century saw more lynchings in the South than any other period of American history. This helps explain the tactics of Booker T. Washington, one of the most extraordinary Americans of that generation.

Washington had been born a slave in Virginia in 1856. Laboriously, he obtained an education, supporting himself while a student by working as a janitor. In 1881, with the financial help of northern philanthropists, he founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Washington's experiences convinced him that blacks must lift themselves by their own bootstraps but must also accommodate themselves to white prejudices.

In 1895 Washington made a now-famous speech to a mixed audience in Atlanta. To the blacks he said: "Cast down your bucket where you are," by which he meant stop fighting segregation and second-class citizenship and concentrate on learning useful skills. Progress up the social and economic ladder would come not from "artificial forcing" but from self improvement. He asked the whites of what he called 11 our beloved South" to lend blacks a hand in their efforts to advance themselves. If you will do so, he promised, you will be "surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen."

This so-called Atlanta Compromise delighted white southerners, but blacks responded with mixed feelings. Accepting Washington's approach might relieve them of many burdens and dangers and bring them considerable material assistance. Obsequiousness might, like discretion, be the better part of valor. But the cost was high in surrendered personal dignity and lost hopes of obtaining real justice.

Washington's career illustrates the terrible dilemma that American blacks have always faced: the choice between confrontation and accommodation. This choice was particularly difficult in the late 19th century.

Washington chose accommodation. It is easy to condemn him as a toady but difficult to see how, at that time, a more aggressive policy could have succeeded. One can even interpret the Atlanta Compromise as a subtle form of black nationalism; in a way, Washington was not urging blacks to accept inferiority and racial slurs but to ignore them. His own behavior lends force to this view, for his method of operating was indeed subtle, even devious. In public he minimized the importance of civil and political rights and accepted separate but equal facilities-if they were truly equal. Behind the scenes he lobbied against restrictive measures, marshaled large sums of money to fight test cases in the courts, and worked hard in northern states to organize the black vote and make sure that black political leaders got a share of the spoils of office.

**The West After the Civil War**

The West displayed these aspects of the age, and a number of others, in heightened form. Nearly a third of all Californians were foreign-born, as were more than 40 percent of Nevadans and over half the residents of Idaho and Arizona. There were, of course, large populations of Spanish-speaking Americans of Mexican origin all over the Southwest. Chinese and Irish laborers were pouring into California by the thousands, and there were substantial numbers of Germans, Scandinavians, and other Europeans on the high plains east of the Rockies.

Although the image of the West as the land of great open spaces is accurate enough, the region contained several bustling cities. San Francisco, with a population approaching 250,000 in the late 1870s, had long outgrown its role as a rickety boomtown. Denver, San Antonio, and Salt Lake City were smaller but growing rapidly and equally "urban."

There was, in short, no one West, no typical westerner. If the economy was predominantly agricultural, it was also commercial and entering the early stages of industrial development. The seeds of such large enterprises as Wells Fargo, Levi Strauss, and half a dozen important department store empires were sown in the immediate postwar decades.

Above all, however, the West epitomized the "every man for himself' psychology of post Reconstruction American society. In 1879 several thousand southern blacks suddenly migrated to western Kansas. When asked why, one leader replied: "The white people [in the South] treat our people so bad ... that it is impossible for them to stand it." But their treatment in Kansas was not much better. California had been a free state from the moment of its entry in the Union, but it treated its black citizens poorly, even refusing to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment.

Beginning in the mid-1850s a steady flow of Chinese immigrated to the West Coast region. About 4,000 or 5,000 a year came until the negotiation of the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, the purpose of which was to provide cheap labor for railroad construction crews. Thereafter, the annual influx more than doubled. When the railroads were completed and the Chinese began to compete with native workers, riots broke out in San Francisco. Chinese workers were called "groveling worms ... .. more slavish and brutish than the beasts that roam the fields." When the migration suddenly increased in 1882 to nearly 40,000, Congress passed a law prohibiting all Chinese immigration for ten years. Later legislation extended the ban indefinitely.

Chinese immigrants caused genuine social problems. Most did not intend to remain in the United States and therefore made little effort to accommodate themselves to American ways. But the westerners' attitude toward the Chinese differed only in degree from their attitude toward the Mexicans who flocked into the Southwest to work as farm laborers and to help build railroads.

**The Plains Indians**

"Whites," the historian Rodman Paul wrote, "did not shed their old attitudes when they crossed into a new country." Paul's generalization applies with special force to the way western whites dealt with the Indians. For 250 years the Indians had been driven back steadily, yet on the eve of the Civil War they still inhabited roughly half the United States. By the time of Hayes's inauguration, however, the Indians had been shattered as an independent people, and in another decade the survivors were penned up on reservations.

In 1860 in the deserts of the Great Basin between the Sierra and the Rockies, in the mountains themselves, and on the semiarid, grass-covered plains between the Rockies and the edge of white civilization in eastern Kansas and Nebraska, nearly a quarter of a million Indians dominated the land. By far the most important lived on the High Plains. These tribes possessed a generally uniform culture. Although they seemed the epitome of freedom, pride, and self-reliance, they had already begun to fall under the sway of white power. They eagerly adopted the products of the more technically advanced culture-cloth, metal tools, weapons, cheap decorations. However, the most important thing the whites gave them had nothing to do with technology: It was the horse.

Cortes brought the first modem horses to America in the 16th century. Multiplying rapidly thereafter, the animals soon roamed wild from Texas to the Argentine. By the 18th century the Indians of the plains had made them a vital part of their culture. Mounted Indians could run down buffalo instead of stalking them on foot. Indians on horseback could move more easily over the country and fight more effectively too. The Indians also adopted modern weapons: the cavalry sword and the rifle. Both added to their effectiveness as hunters and fighters. However, like the whites' liquor and diseases, horses and guns caused problems too. The buffalo herds began to diminish, and warfare became bloodier and more frequent.

In a familiar tragic pattern, the majority of the western tribes greeted the first whites to enter their domains in a friendly fashion. As late as the 1830s, white hunters and trappers ranged freely over most of the West, trading with the Indians and often marrying Indian women. But after the start of the gold rush, the whites began to undermine the Indian empire in the West. Deliberately, the government in Washington prepared the way. In 1851 Thomas Fitzpatrick, an Indian agent, summoned a great "council" of the tribes at Horse Creek, 37 miles east of Fort Laramie, in what is now Wyoming. The Indians respected Fitzpatrick, who had recently married a woman who was half Indian. At Horse Creek he persuaded each tribe to accept definite limits to its hunting grounds. In return the Indians were promised gifts and annual payments. This policy, known as "concentration," was designed to cut down on intertribal warfare and-far more important-to enable the government to negotiate separately with each tribe. It was the classic strategy of divide and conquer.

Although it made a mockery of diplomacy to treat Indian tribes as though they were European powers, the United States maintained that each tribe was a sovereign nation, to be dealt with as an equal in solemn treaties. Both sides knew that this was not the case. When Indians agreed to meet in council, they were tacitly admitting defeat. They seldom drove hard bargains or broke off negotiations. Moreover, tribal chiefs had only limited power; young braves frequently refused to respect agreements made by their elders.

**Indian Wars**

No sooner had the Kansas-Nebraska bill become law than the Kansas, Omaha, Pawnee, and Yankton Sioux tribes began to feel pressure for further concessions of territory. Thus it happened that in 1862, after federal troops had been pulled out of the West for service against the Confederacy, most of the plains Indians rose up against the whites. For five years intermittent but bloody clashes kept the entire area in a state of alarm.

This was guerrilla warfare, with all its horror and treachery. In 1864 a party of Colorado militia fell upon an unsuspecting Cheyenne community at Sand Creek and killed an estimated 450. "Kill and scalp all, big and little," Colonel J. M. Chivington, a minister in private life, told his men. "Nits make lice." General Nelson A. Miles called this Chivington Massacre the "foulest and most unjustifiable crime in the annals of America," but it was no worse than many incidents in earlier conflicts with Indians and not very different from what was later to occur in guerrilla wars involving American troops in the Philippines and, more recently, in Vietnam. In turn the Indians slaughtered dozens of isolated white families, ambushed small parties, and fought many successful skirmishes against troops and militia. They achieved their most notable triumph in December 1866, when the Oglala Sioux, under their great chief Red Cloud, wiped out a party of 82 soldiers under Captain W. J. Fetterman.

In 1867 the government tried a new strategy. All the plains Indians would be confined to two small reservations, one in the Black Hills of Dakota Territory, the other in Oklahoma, and be forced to become farmers. At two great conclaves held in 1867 and 1868 at Medicine Lodge Creek and Fort Laramie, the principal chiefs yielded to the government's demands. Many Indians refused to abide by these agreements. With their way of life at stake, they swept across the plains, as destructive as a prairie fire.

That a relative handful of "savages," without central leadership or plan, could hold off the cream of the army, battle-hardened in the Civil War, can be explained by the character of the vast, trackless country and the ineptness of many American commanders. Few Indian chiefs were capable of organizing a campaign. But Indians made superb guerrillas. Every observer called them, the best cavalry soldiers in the world. Armed with stubby, powerful bows capable of driving an arrow clear through a bull buffalo, they were a fair match for troops equipped with carbines and Colt revolvers. Trouble flared here one week, next week somewhere else, perhaps 500 miles away. No less an authority than General William Tecumseh Sherman testified that a mere 50 Indians could often "checkmate" 3,000 soldiers.

If one concedes that no one could reverse the direction of history or stop the invasion of Indian lands, some version of the small reservation policy would probably have been best for the Indians. Had they been guaranteed a reasonable amount of land and adequate subsidies and allowed to maintain their way of life, they might have accepted the situation and ceased to harry the whites.

Whatever chance that policy had was weakened by the government's maladministration of Indian affairs. An "Indian Ring" in the Department of the Interior systematically stole funds and supplies intended for the reservation Indians. General Sherman, in overall command of the Indian country, claimed in 1875: "We could settle Indian troubles in an hour, but Congress wants the patronage of the Indian bureau, and the bureau wants the appropriations without any of the trouble of the Indians themselves." General Sheridan, no lover of Indians, said: "We took away their country and their means of support ... and it was for this and against this that they made war. Could anyone expect less?"

President Grant wished to place the reservations under army control, but the Indians opposed this. They fared no better around army camps than on the reservations. In 1869 Congress created the nonpolitical Board of Indian Commissioners to oversee Indian affairs, but the bureaucrats in Washington stymied the commissioners at every turn.

In 1874 gold was discovered in the Black Hills Indian reservation. By the next winter thousands of miners had invaded the reserved area. Already alarmed by the approach of crews building the Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux once again went on the warpath. Joining with non treaty tribes to the west, they concentrated in the region of the Bighorn River, in southern Montana Territory.

The summer of 1876 saw three columns of troops in the field against them. The commander of one column, General Alfred H. Terry, sent ahead a small detachment of the 7th Cavalry under Colonel George A. Custer with orders to locate the Indians' camp and then block their escape route into the inaccessible Bighorn Mountains. Custer was both vain and rash, grave handicaps when fighting Indians. Grossly underestimating the number of the Indians, he decided to attack directly with his tiny force of 264 men. At the Little Bighorn late in June he found himself surrounded by 2,500 Sioux under Rain-in-the-Face and Crazy Horse. He and all his men died on the field.

Because it was so one-sided, "Custer's Last Stand" was not a typical battle, though it may be taken as symbolic of the Indian warfare of the period in the sense that it was characterized by bravery, foolhardiness, and a tragic waste of life. The battle greatly heartened the Indians, but it did not gain them their cause. That autumn, short of rations and hard-pressed by overwhelming numbers of soldiers, they surrendered and returned to the reservation.

**The Destruction of Tribal Life**

Thereafter, the fighting slackened, chiefly due to the building of the transcontinental railroads and the destruction of the buffalo. An estimated 13 to 15 million head had roamed the plains in the mid-1860s. Then the slaughter began. Thousands were butchered to feed the gangs of laborers engaged in building the Union Pacific Railroad. Thousands more fell before the guns of sportsmen. Railroads made it possible to move supplies and troops swiftly to trouble spots during conflicts with the Indians. The roads also ran excursion trains for hunters. The discovery in 1871 of a way to make commercial use of buffalo hides completed the tragedy. In the next three years about 9 million head were killed; after another decade the animals were almost extinct.

By the 1880s the advance of whites into the plains had become irresistible, and large numbers of disinterested whites believed that the only way to solve the "Indian problem" was to persuade the Indians to abandon their tribal cultures and Eve on family farms. The "wild" Indian must become a "civilized" member of "American" society.

To accomplish this goal, Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Tribal lands were to be split up into individual allotments. To keep speculators from wresting the allotments from the Indians while they were adjusting to their new way of life, the land could not be disposed of for 25 years. Funds were to be appropriated for educating and training the Indians, and those who accepted allotments and "adopted the habits of civilized life" were to be granted United States citizenship.

The sponsors of the Severalty Act thought they were effecting a fine humanitarian reform. "We must throw some protection" over the Indian, Senator Henry L. Dawes declared. "We must hold up his, hand." But the law had disastrous results in the long run. It assumed that Indians could be transformed into small agricultural capitalists by an act of Congress. It shattered what was left of the Indians' culture without enabling them to adapt to white ways. Moreover, unscrupulous white men tricked many Indians into leasing their allotments for a pittance, and local authorities often taxed Indian lands at excessive rates. In 1934, after about 86 million of the 138 million acres assigned under the Dawes Act had passed into white hands, the government returned to a policy of encouraging tribal ownership of Indian lands.

**Exploiting Mineral Wealth in the West**

Americans had long regarded the West as a limitless treasure to be grasped as rapidly as possible, and after 1865 they engrossed its riches still faster and in a wider variety of ways. From the mid-1850s to the mid-1870s thousands of prospectors fanned out through the Rockies, panning every stream and hacking furiously at every outcropping from the Fraser River country of British Columbia to Tucson in southern Arizona, from the eastern slopes of the Sierra to the Great Plains,

Gold and silver were scattered throughout the area, though usually too thinly to make mining profitable. Whenever anyone made a strike, prospectors, driven by what a critic called an "unhealthy desire" for sudden wealth, flocked to the site, drawn by rumors of streambeds gleaming with gold-rich gravel and of nuggets the size of men's fists. For a few months the area teemed with activity. Towns of 5,000 or more sprang up overnight; improvised roads were crowded with men and supply wagons. Claims were staked out along every stream and gully. Then, usually, expectations faded in the light of reality: high prices, low yields, hardships, violence, and deception. The boom collapsed, and the towns died as quickly as they had risen. A few would have found wealth, the rest only backbreaking labor and disappointment-until tales of another strike sent them dashing feverishly across the land on another golden chase.

In a sense the Denvers, Aurarias, Virginia Cities, Orofinos, and Gold Creeks of the West during the war years were harbingers of the attitudes that flourished in the East in the age of President Grant and his immediate successors. The miners enthusiastically adopted the get-rich-quick philosophy, willingly enduring privations and laboring hard, always with the objective of striking it rich. The idea of reserving any part of the West for future generations never entered their heads.

The sudden prosperity of the mining towns attracted every kind of shady character-according to one forty-niner, "rascals from Oregon, pickpockets from New York, accomplished gentlemen from Europe, interlopers from Lima and Chile, Mexican thieves, gamblers from no particular spot, and assassins manufactured in Hell." Gambling dens, dance halls, saloons, and brothels mushroomed wherever precious metal was found.

Law enforcement was a constant problem. Gold and silver dominated people's thoughts and dreams. Ostentation characterized the successful, braggadocio those who failed. During the administration of President Grant, Virginia City, Nevada, was at the peak of its vulgar prosperity. It had 25 saloons before it had 4,000 people. By the 1870s its mountainside site was disfigured by ugly, ornate mansions where successful mine operators ate from fine china and swilled champagne as though it were water.

In 1873, after the discovery of the Big Bonanza, a seam of ore more than 50 feet thick, the future of Virginia City seemed boundless. Other discoveries shortly thereafter indicated to optimists that the mining boom in the West would continue indefinitely. The finds in the Black Hills in 1875 and 1876, heralding deposits yielding eventually $100 million, led to the mushroom growth of Deadwood, home of Wild Bill Hickok, Deadwood Dick, Calamity Jane, and such lesser-known characters as California Jack and Poker Alice. New strikes in Colorado in 1876 and 1877 caused the town of Leadville to boom; in 1880 there were 30,000 people in the area. However, this was the last important flurry to ruffle the mining frontier. The West continued to yield much gold and, especially, silver, but big corporations produced nearly all of it. The mines around Deadwood were soon controlled by one large company, Homestake Mining.

This is the culminating irony of the mining frontier: Shoestring prospectors, independent and enterprising, made the key discoveries, established local institutions, and supplied the West with much of its color and folklore, but the stockholders of large corporations, many of whom had never seen a mine, made off with the lion's share of the wealth. To operate profitably, large capital investments, heavy machinery, railroads, and hundreds of hired hands were required. A typical successful mine owner was George Hearst, senator from California and father of the newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst, who, by shrewd speculations, obtained large blocks of stock in mining properties scattered from Montana to Mexico.

Though marked by violence, fraud, greed, and shattered hopes, the gold rushes caused a great increase of interest in the West. A valuable literature appeared, part imaginative, part reportorial, describing the mining camps and the life of the prospectors. These works fascinated contemporaries (as they have continued to fascinate succeeding generations when adapted to the motion picture and to television). Mark Twain's Roughing It (1872), based in part on his experiences in the Nevada mining country, is the most famous example of this literature.

Each new strike and rush, no matter how ephemeral, brought permanent settlers along with the prospectors: farmers, cattlemen, storekeepers, teamsters, lawyers, and ministers. In every mining town-along with the saloons and brothels, churches, and newspaper offices sprang up.

The mines also speeded the political organization of the West. Colorado and Nevada became territories in 1861, Arizona and Idaho in 1863, Montana in 1864. Although Nevada was admitted before it had 60,000 residents in 1864 to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment and help reelect Lincoln, most of these territories did not become states for decades. But thanks to the miners, the framework for future development was early established.

**The Land Bonanza**

While the miners were engrossing the mineral wealth of the West, other interests were snapping up the region's choice farmland. The Homestead Act of 1862 had presumably ended the reign of the speculator and the large landholder. The West, land reformers had assumed, would soon be dotted with 160-acre family farms.

They were doomed to disappointment. Most landless Americans were too poor to become farmers, even when they could obtain land free of charge. The expense of moving a family to the ever-receding frontier exceeded the means of many, and the costs of hoes and scythes, harvesting machines, fencing, and housing presented a formidable barrier. As for the industrial workers for whom the free land was supposed to provide a "safety valve," they had neither the skills nor the inclination to become farmers.

And despite the intent of the law, speculators often managed to obtain large tracts. They hired men to stake out claims, falsely swear that they had fulfilled the conditions laid down in the law for obtaining legal title, and then deed the land over to their employers.

Furthermore, 160 acres was not enough for raising livestock or for the kind of commercial agriculture that was developing west of the Mississippi. Congress made a feeble attempt to make larger holdings available to homesteaders by passing the Timber Culture Act of 1873, which permitted individuals to claim an additional 160 acres if they would agree to plant a quarter of it in trees within ten years. This law proved helpful to some farmers in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. Nevertheless, fewer than 25 percent of the 245,000 who took up land under it obtained final title to the property. Raising large numbers of seedling trees on the plains was a difficult task.

While futilely attempting to make a forest of parts of the treeless plains, the government permitted private interests to gobble up and destroy many of the great forests that clothed the slopes of the Rockies and the Sierra. The Timber and Stone Act of 1878 allowed anyone to acquire a quarter section of forest land for $2.50 an acre if it was "unfit for civilization." This laxly drawn measure enabled lumber companies to obtain thousands of acres by hiring dummy entrymen, whom they marched in gangs to the land offices, paying them a few dollars for their time after they had signed over their claims.

Had the land laws been better drafted and more honestly enforced, it is still unlikely that the policy of granting free land to small homesteaders would have succeeded. Aside from the built-in difficulties faced by small-scale agriculturalists, frontier farmers of the 1870s and 1880s had to grapple with novel problems. The soil was rich, but the climate, especially in the semiarid regions beyond the 98th meridian of longitude, made agriculture frequently difficult and often impossible. Blizzards, floods, grasshopper plagues, and prairie fires caused repeated heartaches, but periodic drought and searing summer heat were the worst hazards.

At the same time, the flat immensity of the land, combined with newly available farm machinery and the development of rail connections with the East, encouraged the growth of enormous corporation controlled "bonanza" farms. Bonanza farmers could buy supplies wholesale and obtain concessions from railroads and processors; even the biggest organizations could not cope with prolonged drought, however, and most of the bonanza outfits failed in the dry years of the late 1880s. Wise farmers who diversified their crops and cultivated their land intensively fared better in the long run, though even they could not hope to earn a profit in really dry years.

Despite the hazards of plains agriculture, the region became the breadbasket of America in the decades following the Civil War. By 1889 Minnesota topped the nation in wheat production, and ten years later four of the five leading wheat states lay west of the Mississippi. The plains also accounted for heavy percentages of the nation's other cereal crops, together with immense quantities of beef, pork, and mutton.

Like other exploiters of the nation's resources, farmers took whatever they could from the soil with little heed for preserving its fertility or preventing erosion. The consequent national loss was less apparent because it was diffuse and slow to assume drastic proportions, but it was nonetheless real.

**Western Railroad Building**

Further exploitation of land resources by private interests resulted from the government's policy of subsidizing western railroads. Here was a clear illustration of the conflict between the idea of the West as a national heritage to be disposed of to deserving citizens and the concept of the region as a cornucopia pouring forth riches to be carted off by anyone powerful and determined enough to take them. To serve the valuable national purpose, the linking of the sections by rail, the land of the West was dispensed wholesale as a substitute for cash subsidies.

Federal land grants to railroads began in 1850 with those allotted the Illinois Central, but the most lavish gifts of the public domain were those made directly to builders of intersectional trunk lines. These roads received more than 155 million acres, although about 25 million acres reverted to the government because some companies failed to lay the required miles of track. Unless the government had been willing to build the transcontinental lines itself-and this was unthinkable in an age dominated by belief in individual exploitation and wary of any activity that entrusted the spending of large sums by

politicians-some system of subsidy was essential. Private investors would not hazard the huge sums needed to lay tracks across hundreds of miles of rugged, empty country when traffic over the road could not possibly produce profits for many years.

Grants of land seemed a sensible way of financing construction. The method avoided direct outlays of public funds, for the companies could pledge the land as security for bond issues or sell it directly for cash. Moreover, land and railroad values were intimately linked in contemporary thinking. In many cases the value of the land granted might be recovered by the government when it sold other lands in the vicinity, for such properties would certainly be worth more after transportation facilities to eastern markets had been constructed.

The Pacific Railway Act of 1862 established the pattern for these grants. It gave the builders of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads 5 square miles of public land on each side of their right-of-way for each mile of track laid. The land was allotted in alternate sections, forming a pattern Eke a checkerboard, the squares of one color representing railroad property, the other government property. Presumably this arrangement benefited the entire nation, since half the land close to the railroad remained in public hands. However, whenever grants were made to railroads, the adjacent government lands were not opened to homesteaders, on the theory that free land in the immediate vicinity of a fine would prevent the road from disposing of its properties at good prices.

Historians have argued at length about the fairness of the land-grant system. No railroad corporation got rich directly from its land holdings, which sold for $2 to $5 an acre. But land-lines encouraged the growth of the West by advertising their property widely and by providing cheap transportation for settlers and shipping services for farmers. They were required by law to carry troops and handle government business free or at reduced rates, which saved the government many millions over the years. At the same time, the system imposed no effective restraints on how the railroads used the funds raised with federal aid. Being able to lay track with money obtained from land grants, the operators tended to be extravagant and often downright corrupt.

The Union Pacific built by a construction company, the Credit Mobilier, which was owned by the promoters. These men awarded themselves contracts at prices that assured the Credit Mobilier of fat profits. When Congress threatened to investigate the Union Pacific in 1868, Oakes Ames, a stockholder in both companies who was also a member of Congress, sold key congressmen and government officials over 300 shares of Credit Mobilier stock at a price far below its real value. When these transactions were exposed, the House of Representatives censured Ames, but such was the temper of the times that neither he nor most of his associates believed he had done anything wrong.

The construction of the Central Pacific in the 1860s illustrates how the system encouraged extravagance. In addition to land grants, the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific were given loans in the form of government bonds-from $16,000 to $48,000 for each mile of track laid, depending on the difficulty of the terrain. The two lines competed for the subsidies, the Central Pacific building eastward from Sacramento, the Union Pacific westward from Nebraska. Each put huge crews to work grading and laying track, bringing up supplies over the already completed road. The Union Pacific employed Civil War veterans and Irish immigrants; the Central, Chinese immigrants.

This plan favored the Union Pacific. While the Central Pacific was inching upward through the gorges and granite of the mighty Sierra, the Union Pacific was racing across the level plains. To prevent the Union Pacific from making off with most of the government aid, the Central Pacific wasted huge sums by working through the winter in the High Sierra. Often the men labored in tunnels dug through 40-foot snowdrifts to get at the frozen ground. In 1866, over the most difficult terrain, they laid 28 miles of track-at a cost of more than $280,000 a mile. Experts later estimated that 70 percent of this sum could have been saved had speed not been a factor.

But these herculean efforts paid off. The mountains were conquered, and then the crews raced across the Great Basin to Salt Lake City and beyond. The meeting of the rails-the occasion of a national celebration-took place at Promontory, north of Ogden, Utah, on May 10, 1869. The Union Pacific had built 1,086 miles of track; the Central, 689 miles.

In the long run the wasteful way in which the Central Pacific was built hurt the road severely. It was ill-constructed, over grades too steep and around curves too sharp, and burdened with debts that were too heavy. Such was the fate of nearly all the railroads constructed with the help of government subsidies. The only transcontinental built without land grants was the Great Northern, running from St. Paul, Minnesota, to the Pacific. Spending. private capital, its guiding genius, James J. Hill, was compelled to build economically and to plan carefully. As a result, his was the only transcontinental line to weather the depression of the 1890s without going into bankruptcy.

**The Cattle Kingdom**

While miners were digging out the mineral wealth of the West and railroaders were taking possession of much of its land, another group was exploiting endless acres of its grass. Columbus brought the first cattle to the New World in 1493, on his second voyage, and later conquistadors took them to every comer of Spain's

American empire. Mexico proved to be so well suited to cattle raising that herds were allowed to roam free. They multiplied rapidly, and by the late 18th century what is now southern Texas harbored enormous numbers. The beasts interbred with nondescript "English" cattle, brought into the area by settlers from the United States, to produce the Texas longhorn. Hardy, wiry, ill-tempered, and fleet, with horns often attaining a spread of 6 feet, these animals were far from ideal as beef cattle and almost as hard to capture as wild horses. But they existed in southern Texas by the million, most of them unowned.

The lack of markets and transportation explains why Texas cattle were regarded so lightly. But conditions were changing. Industrial growth in the East was causing an increase in the urban population and a consequent rise in the demand for food. At the same time, the expansion of the railroad network made it possible to move cattle cheaply over long distances. As the iron rails inched across the plains, astute cattlemen began to do some elementary figuring. Longhorns could be had locally for $3 or $4 a head. In the northern cities they would bring ten times that much, perhaps even more. Why not round them up and herd them northward to the railroads, allowing them to feed along the way on the abundant grasses of the plains?

In 1866 a number of Texans drove large herds northward toward Sedalia, Missouri, railhead of the Missouri Pacific. This route took the herds through wooded and settled country and across Indian reservations, provoking many difficulties. At the same time, Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving drove 2,000 head through New Mexico Territory to Colorado.

The next year the drovers, inspired by an Illinois cattle dealer named Joseph G. McCoy and other entrepreneurs, led their herds north across unsettled grasslands to the Kansas Pacific line at Abilene, Kansas, which McCoy described as "a very small, dead place." They earned excellent profits, and during the next five years about 1.5 million head made the "long drive" over the Chisholm Trail to Abilene, where they were sold to ranchers, feedlot operators, and eastern meat packers. Other shipping points sprang up as the railroads pushed westward.

The technique of the long drive, which involved guiding herds of 2,000 to 3,000 cattle slowly across as much as a thousand miles of country, produced the American cowboy, hero of song, story, and film. Half a dozen of these men could control several thousand steers. Mounted on wiry ponies, they would range alongside the herd, keeping the animals on the move but preventing stampedes, allowing them time to rest yet steadily pressing them toward the yards of Abilene.

Cattle towns such as Abilene had their full share of saloons, gambling dens, and "dance houses" patronized by cowboys and by other transients bent on having a good time. Most were young, male, and single. Violence punctuated their activities, but tales of individual desperadoes and gangs of outlaws "shooting up" cattle towns and terrorizing honest citizens are fictitious. Police forces were well organized. Indeed, "respectable" town residents tended to urge leniency for lawbreakers because of the money they and their fellows brought to the towns.

**Open-Range Ranching**

Soon cattlemen discovered that the hardy Texas stock could survive the winters of the northern plains. Attracted by the apparently limitless forage, they began to bring up herds to stock the vast regions where the buffalo had so recently roamed. By 1880 some 4.5 million head had spread across the sea of grass that ran from Kansas to Montana and west to the Rockies.

The prairie grasses offered cattlemen a bonanza almost as valuable as the gold mines. Open-range ranching required actual ownership of no more than a few acres along some watercourse. In this semiarid region, control of water enabled a rancher to dominate all the surrounding area back to the divide separating his range from the next stream without investing a cent in the purchase of land. His cattle, wandering freely on the public domain, fattened on grass owned by all the people, to be turned into beefsteak and leather for the profit of the rancher.

Ordinarily, a group of ranchers acted together, obtaining legal title to the lands along the bank of a stream and grazing their cattle over the area drained by it. The herds became thoroughly intermixed, each owner's being identified by a brand mark. Every spring and fall the ranchers staged a great roundup, driving in all the cattle to a central place, separating them by brand marks, culling steers for shipment to market, and branding new calves.

With the demand for meat rising and transportation cheap, princely fortunes could be made in a few years. Capitalists from the East and from Europe began to pour funds into the business. Eastern "dudes" like Theodore Roosevelt, a young New York assemblyman who sank over $50,000 in his Elk horn Ranch in Dakota Territory in 1883, bought up cattle as a sort of profitable hobby. (Roosevelt, clad in buckskin and bearing a small arsenal of rifles and six-shooters, made quite a splash in Dakota Territory, but not as a rancher.) Soon large outfits such as the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company dominated the business, just as large companies had taken over most of the important gold and silver mines.

**Barbed-Wire Warfare**

The leading ranchers banded together in cattlemen's associations to deal with overcrowding and with such problems as quarantine regulations, water rights, and thievery, functions that would better have been performed by the government. To keep other ranchers' cattle from the sections of the public domain they considered their own, the associations and many individuals began to fence huge areas. This was possible only because of the invention in 1874 of barbed wire by Joseph F. Glidden. By the 1880s thousands of miles of the new fencing had been strung across the plains, often across roads and in a few cases around entire communities. "Barbed-wire wars" resulted, fought by rancher against rancher, cattleman against sheepman, herder against farmer.

By stringing so much wire, the cattlemen were unwittingly destroying their own way of doing business. On a truly open range, cattle could fend for themselves, instinctively finding water during droughts, drifting safely downwind before blizzards. Barbed wire prevented their free movement. During winter storms these slender strands became as lethal as high-tension wires; the drifting cattle piled up against them and died by the thousands. "The advent of barbed wire," Walter Prescott Webb wrote in his classic study The Great Plains (1931), "brought about the disappearance of the open, free range and converted the range country into the big-pasture country."

The boom times were ending. Overproduction was driving down the price of beef; expenses were on the rise; many sections of the range were overgrazed. The dry summer of 1886 left the stock in poor condition. Winter that year arrived early and with unparalleled fury. Blizzards raged, and temperatures plummeted far below zero. Cattle crowded into low places only to be engulfed in giant snowdrifts; barbed wire took a fearful toll. When spring finally came, between 80 and 90 percent of all cattle on the range were dead.

That cruel winter finished open-range cattle raising. The large companies were bankrupt; many independent operators, Roosevelt among them, became discouraged and sold out. When the industry revived, it was on a smaller, more efficiently organized scale. Cattle raising, like mining before it, ceased to be an adventure in rollicking individualism and became a business.

By the late 1880s the bonanza days of the West were over. No previous frontier had caught the imagination of Americans so completely as the Great West, with its heroic size, its awesome emptiness,

its massive, sculptured beauty. Now the frontier was no more. Big companies were taking over all the West's resources. The nation was becoming more powerful, richer, larger, its economic structure more

complex and diversified as the West yielded its treasures. But the East, especially eastern industrialists and financiers, increasingly dominated the economy of the nation.

**CHAPTER 17**

**An Industrial Giant**

WHEN THE CIVIL WAR BEGAN, THE country's industrial output, though increasing, did not approach that of major European powers. By the end of the century the United States had become far and away the colossus among world manufacturers, dwarfing the production of Great Britain and Germany. The world had never seen such rapid economic growth. The output of goods and services in the country (the gross national product, or GNP) increased by 44 percent between 1874 and 1883 and continued to expand in succeeding years.

**Industrial Growth: An Overview**

American manufacturing flourished for many reasons. New natural resources were discovered and exploited steadily, thereby increasing opportunities. These opportunities in turn attracted the brightest and most energetic of a vigorous and expanding population. The growth of the country added constantly to the size of the national market, and high tariffs shielded that market from foreign competition. The dominant spirit of the time encouraged businessmen to maximum effort by emphasizing progress, glorifying material wealth, and justifying aggressiveness. European immigrants provided the additional labor needed by expanding industry; 2.5 million arrived in the 1870s, twice that number in the 1880s.

It was a period of rapid advances in basic science, and technicians created a bountiful harvest of new machines, processes, and power sources that increased productivity and created new industries. In agriculture there were better harvesters, binding machines, and combines that could thresh and bag 450 pounds of grain a minute. An 1886 report of the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics claimed that "new machinery has displaced fully 50 percent of the muscular labor formerly required to do a given amount of work in the manufacture of agricultural implements." As a result of improvements in the milling of grain, packaged cereals appeared on the American breakfast table. The commercial canning of food expanded rapidly. The perfection of the typewriter by the Remington Company in the 1880s revolutionized the way office work was performed.

**Railroads: The First Big Business**

The railroads were probably the most significant element in American economic development, railroad executives the most powerful people in the country. Railroads were important first as an industry in themselves. Less than 35,000 miles of track existed when Lee laid down his sword at Appomattox. In 1875 railroad mileage exceeded 74,000, and the skeleton of the network was complete. By 1900 the nation had 193,000 miles of track.

The emphasis in railroad construction after 1865 was on organizing integrated systems. The lines had high fixed costs: taxes, interest on their bonds, maintenance of track and rolling stock, salaries of office personnel. A short train with half-empty cars required almost as many workers and as much fuel to operate as a long one jammed with freight or passengers. To earn profits, the railroads had to carry as much traffic as possible. They therefore spread out feeder lines to draw business to their main lines the way the root network of a tree draws water into its trunk.

Before the Civil War, as we have seen, passengers and freight could travel by rail from beyond Chicago and St. Louis to the Atlantic Coast, but only after the war did true interregional trunk lines appear. In 1861, for example, the New York Central ran from Albany to Buffalo. One could proceed from Buffalo to Chicago, but on a different company's trains. In 1867 the Central passed into the hands of "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt, who had made a large fortune in the shipping business. In 1873 he integrated the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern into his empire, two years later the Michigan Central. At his death in 1877 the Central operated a network of more than 4,500 miles of track between New York City and most of the principal cities of the Middle West.

While Vanderbilt was putting together the New York Central complex, Thomas A. Scott was fusing roads to Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Chicago to his Pennsylvania Railroad, which linked Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. In 1871 the Pennsylvania obtained access to New York; it soon reached Baltimore and Washington. By 1869 another important system, the Erie, extended from New York to Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. Soon thereafter it too tapped the markets of Chicago and other principal cities. In 1874 the Baltimore and Ohio also obtained access to Chicago. The transcontinental were trunk fines from the start; the emptiness of the western country would have made short lines unprofitable, and builders quickly grasped the need for direct connections to eastern markets and thorough integration of feeder lines.

The dominant system builder of the Southwest was Jay Gould. With millions acquired in shady railroad and stock market ventures, Gould invaded the West in the 1870s, buying 370,000 shares of Union Pacific stock. He took over the Kansas Pacific, running from Denver to Kansas City, which he consolidated with the Union Pacific, and the Missouri Pacific, a line from Kansas City to St. Louis, which he expanded through mergers and purchases into a 5,300-mile system. Often Gould put together such properties merely to unload them on other railroads at a profit, but his grasp of the importance of integration was sound.

In the Northwest, Henry Villard, a German born ex-newspaperman, constructed another great complex based on his control of the Northern Pacific. James J. Hill controlled the Great Northern system, still another western network. The trunk lines interconnected and thus had to standardize many of their activities. The present system of time zones was developed in 1883 by the roads. The standard track gauge (4 feet 81/2 inches) was established in 1886. Standardized signal systems and even standard methods of accounting were essential to the effective functioning of the network.

The lines sought to work out fixed rates for carrying different types of freight, charging more for valuable manufactured goods than for bulky products like coal or wheat, and they agreed to permit rate concessions to shippers when necessary to avoid hauling empty cars. To enforce cooperation, they founded regional organizations such as the Eastern Trunk Line Association and the Western Traffic Association.

The railroads stimulated the economy indirectly. Like foreign commerce and the textile industry in earlier times, they served as a "multiplier," speeding development. In 1869 they bought $41.6 million worth of cars and locomotives; in 1889, $90.8 million. Their purchases created thousands of jobs and led to countless technological advances.

Because of their voracious appetite for traffic, railroads in sparsely settled regions and in areas with undeveloped resources devoted much money and effort to stimulating local economic growth. The Louisville and Nashville, for instance, was a prime mover in the expansion of the iron industry in Alabama in the 1880s.

To speed the settlement of new regions, the land-grant railroads sold land cheaply and on easy terms, for sales meant future business as well as current income. They offered reduced rates to travelers interested in buying farms and set up "bureaus of immigration" that distributed elaborate brochures describing the wonders of the new country. Their agents greeted immigrants at the great eastern ports and tried to steer them to railroad property. Overseas branches advertised the virtues of American farmland.

Technological advances in railroading accelerated economic development in complex ways. In 1869 George Westinghouse invented the air brake. By enabling an engineer to apply the brakes to all cars simultaneously (formerly each car had to be braked separately by its own conductor or brakeman), this invention made possible revolutionary increases in the size of trains and the speed at which they could safely operate. The sleeping car, invented in 1864 by George Pullman, now came into its own.

To pull the heavier trains, more powerful locomotives were needed. They in turn produced a call for stronger and more durable rails to bear the additional weight. Steel, itself reduced in cost because of technological developments, supplied the answer, for steel rails outlasted iron many times despite the use of much heavier equipment.

**Iron, Oil, and Electricity**

The transformation of iron manufacturing affected the nation almost as much as railroad development. Output rose from 920,000 tons in 1860 to 10.3 million tons in 1900, but the big change came in the development of ways to mass-produce steel. Steel was expensive to manufacture until the invention in the 1850s of the Bessemer process, perfected independently by Henry Bessemer, an Englishman, and

William Kelly of Kentucky. The Bessemer process and the open-hearth method, a slower but more precise technique that enabled producers to sample the molten mass and thus control quality closely, were introduced commercially in the United States in the 1860s. In 1870 some 77,000 tons of steel were manufactured; by 1900, nearly 11.4 million tons.

Such growth would have been impossible but for the huge supplies of iron ore in the United States and the coal necessary to fire the furnaces that refined it. In the 1870s the great iron fields rimming Lake Superior began to yield their treasures. The enormous iron concentrations of the Mesabi region made a compass needle spin like a top. Mesabi ores could be mined with steam shovels, almost like gravel. Pittsburgh, surrounded by vast coal deposits, became the iron and steel capital of the country, the Minnesota ores reaching it by way of steamers on the Great Lakes and rail lines from Cleveland.

The petroleum industry expanded even more swiftly than iron and steel. Edwin L. Drake drilled the first successful well in Pennsylvania in 1859. During the Civil War, production ranged between 2 and 3 million barrels a year. By 1890 the figure had leaped to about 50 million barrels.

Before the invention of the gasoline engine and the automobile, the most important petroleum product was kerosene, which was burned in lamps. By the early 1870s, refiners had learned how to "crack" petroleum by applying high temperatures to the crude oil in order to rearrange its molecular structure, thereby increasing the percentage of kerosene yielded. By-products such as naphtha, gasoline (used in vaporized form as an illuminating gas), rhigolene (a local anesthetic), cymogene (a coolant for refrigerating machines), and many lubricants and waxes began to appear on the market. At the same time, a great increase in the supply of crude oil especially after the German-born chemist Herman Frasch perfected a method for removing sulfur from low-quality petroleum-drove prices down. These circumstances put a premium on refining efficiency. Larger plants using expensive machinery and employing skilled technicians became more important.

Two other important new industries were the telephone and electric light businesses. Both were typical of the period, being products of technical advances and intimately related to the growth of a high-speed, urban civilization that put great stress on communication. The telephone was invented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell, who had been led to the study of acoustics through his interest in the education of the deaf. The invention soon proved its practical value. By 1900 there were almost 800,000 phones in the country, twice the total for all of Europe. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company, a consolidation of over 100 local systems, dominated the business.

When Western Union, the telegraph company, realized the importance of the telephone, it tried for a time to compete with Bell by developing a machine of its own. The man it commissioned to devise this machine was Thomas A. Edison, but Bell's patents proved unassailable. Edison had already made a number of contributions toward solving what he called the "mysteries of electrical force," including a multiplex telegraph capable of sending four messages over a single wire at the same time. At Menlo Park, New Jersey, he built the prototype of the modern research laboratory, where specific problems could be attacked on a mass scale by a team of trained specialists.

Edison's most significant achievement was unquestionably his perfection of the incandescent lamp, or electric fight bulb. Others before Edison had experimented with the idea of producing light by passing electricity through a filament in a vacuum. Always, however, the filaments quickly burned out. Edison tried hundreds of fibers before producing, in 1879, a carbonized filament that would glow brightly in a vacuum tube for as long as 170 hours without crumbling.

In 1882 his Edison Illuminating Company opened a power station in New York and began to supply current for lighting to 85 consumers. Soon central stations were springing up everywhere until, by 1898, there were about 3,000 in the country.

Electricity was soon used to produce power as well as fight. The substitution of electricity for steam power in factories was as liberating as that of steam for waterpower before the Civil War. Small, safe electric motors replaced dangerous and cumbersome mazes of belts and wheels.

**Competition and Monopoly: The Railroads**

During the post-Civil War era, expansion in industry went hand in hand with concentration. The principal cause of this trend, aside from the obvious economies resulting from large-scale production and the growing importance of expensive machinery, was the downward trend of prices after 1873. The deflation, caused mainly by the failure of the money supply to keep pace with the rapid increase in the volume of goods produced, lasted until 1896 or 1897.

Falling prices kept a steady pressure on profit margins, and this led to increased production and thus to intense competition for markets. According to contemporary economists, competition advanced the public interest by keeping prices low and assuring the most efficient producer the largest profit. Up to a point, it accomplished these purposes in the years after 1865, but it had side effects that injured both the economy and society as a whole. Railroad managers, for instance, found it impossible to enforce "official" rate schedules and maintain their regional associations once competitive pressures mounted. In 1865 it had cost from 96 cents to $2.15 per 100 pounds, depending on the class of freight, to ship goods from New York to Chicago. In 1888 rates ranged from 35 cents to 75 cents.

Competition cut deeply into railroad profits, causing the fines to seek desperately to increase volume. They did so chiefly by reducing rates still more, on a selective basis. They gave rebates (secret reductions below the published rates) to large shippers in order to capture their business. In the 1870s the New York Central regularly reduced the rates important shippers were charged by 50 to 80 percent. One large Utica dry goods merchant received a rate of 9 cents while others paid 33 cents.

Railroad officials disliked rebating but found no way to avoid the practice. In extreme cases the railroads even gave large shippers drawbacks, which were rebates on the business of the shippers' competitors! Besides rebating, railroads battled directly with one another in ways damaging both to themselves and to the public. To make up for losses forced on them by competitive pressures, railroads charged higher rates at way points along their tracks where no competition existed. Frequently it cost more to ship a product a short distance than a longer one. Rochester, New York, was served only by the New York Central. In the 1870s it cost 30 cents to transport a barrel of flour from Rochester to New York City, a distance of 350 miles. At the same time, flour could be shipped from Minneapolis to New York, a

distance of well over 1,000 miles, for only 20 cents a barrel.

Although cheap transportation stimulated the economy, few persons benefited from cutthroat competition. Small shippers-and all businessmen in cities and towns with limited rail outlets-suffered; railroad discrimination speeded the concentration of industry in large corporations located in major centers. The instability of rates even troubled interests like the middle western flour millers who benefited from the competitive situation, for it hampered planning. Nor could manufacturers who received rebates be entirely happy, since few could be sure that some other producer was not getting a larger reduction.

Probably the worst sufferers were the roads themselves. The loss of revenue resulting from rate cutting, combined with inflated debts, put most of them in grave difficulty when faced with a downturn in the business cycle. In 1876 two-fifths of all railroad bonds were in default; three years later 65 lines were bankrupt. Wits called Samuel J. Tilden, the 1876 Democratic presidential candidate, the "Great Forecloser" because of his work reorganizing bankrupt railroads at this time. Since the public would not countenance bankrupt railroads going out of business, these companies were placed in the hands of court-appointed receivers. The receivers, however, seldom provided efficient management and had no funds at their disposal for new equipment.

During the 1880s the major roads responded to these pressures by building or buying lines in order to create interregional systems. These were the first giant corporations, capitalized in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Their enormous cost led to another wave of bankruptcies when a depression struck in the 1890s. The consequent reorganizations brought most of the big systems under the control of financiers, notably J. Pierpont Morgan, and such other private bankers as Kuhn, Loeb of New York and Lee, Higginson of Boston. The economic historian A. D. Noyes described in 1904 what the bankers did: "Bondholders were requested to scale down interest charges, receiving new stock in compensation.... [The bankers] combined to guarantee that the requisite money should be raised. . . . Fixed charges were diminished and a sufficient fund for road improvement and new equipment was provided."

Critics called the reorganizations "Morganizations." Representatives of the bankers sat on the board of every line they saved, and their influence was predominant. They consistently opposed rate wars, rebating, and other competitive practices. In effect, control of the railroad network became centralized, even though the companies maintained their separate existences and operated in a seemingly independent manner. When Morgan died in 1913, "Morgan men" dominated the boards of the New York Central, the Erie, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe; and many other lines.

**Competition and Monopoly: Steel**

The iron and steel industry was also intensely competitive. Despite the trend toward higher production, demand varied erratically from year to year, even from month to month. In good times producers built new facilities, only to suffer heavy losses when demand declined. The forward rush of technology put a tremendous emphasis on efficiency; expensive plants quickly became obsolete. Improved transportation facilities allowed manufacturers in widely separated places to compete with one another.

The kingpin of the industry was Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie was born in Scotland and came to the United States in 1848 at the age of 12. His first job, as a bobbin boy in a cotton mill, brought him $1.20 a week, but his talents fitted the times perfectly, and he rose rapidly: to Western Union messenger boy, to telegrapher, to private secretary, to railroad manager. He saved his money, made some shrewd investments, and by 1868 had an income of $50,000 a year.

At about this time he decided to specialize in the iron business. Carnegie possessed great talent as a salesman, boundless faith in the future of the country, an uncanny knack of choosing topflight subordinates, and enough ruthlessness to survive in the iron and steel jungle. Where other steelmen built new plants in good times, he preferred to expand in bad times, when it cost far less to do so. During the 1870s, he later recalled, "many of my friends needed money.... [11 bought out five or six of them. That is what gave me my leading interest in this steel business."

Carnegie grasped the importance of technological improvements. He was also a driver of men and a merciless competitor. When a plant manager announced, "We broke all records for making steel last week," Carnegie replied, "Congratulations! Why not do it every week?" By 1890 the Carnegie Steel Company dominated the industry, and its output increased nearly tenfold during the next decade. Profits soared. Alarmed by Carnegie's increasing control of the industry, the makers of finished steel products such as barbed wire and tubing began to combine and to consider entering the primary field. Carnegie, his competitive temper aroused, threatened to turn to finished products himself. A colossal steel war seemed imminent.

However, Carnegie longed to retire to devote himself to philanthropic work. He believed that wealth entailed social responsibilities and that it was a disgrace to die rich. When J. P. Morgan approached him through an intermediary with an offer to buy him out, he assented readily. In 1901 Morgan put together United States Steel, the "world's first billion dollar corporation." This combination included all the Carnegie properties, the Federal Steel Company (Carnegie's largest competitor), and such important fabricators of finished products as the American Steel and Wire Company, the American Tin Plate Company, and the National Tube Company. Vast reserves of Minnesota iron ore and a fleet of Great Lakes ore steamers were also included. U.S. Steel was capitalized at $1.4 billion, about twice the value of its component properties but not necessarily an overestimation of its profit-earning capacity. The owners of Carnegie Steel received $492 million, of which $250 million went to Carnegie himself.

**Competition and Monopoly: Oil**

The pattern of fierce competition leading to combination and monopoly is well illustrated by the history of the petroleum industry. Irresistible pressures pushed the refiners into a brutal struggle to dominate the business. Production of crude oil, subject to the uncertainties of prospecting and drilling, fluctuated constantly and without regard for need. In general, output surged far ahead of demand. By the 1870s the largest oil-refining center was Cleveland, chiefly because the New York Central and Erie railroads competed fiercely for its oil trade and the Erie Canal offered an alternative route. The Standard Oil Company of Cleveland, founded in 1870 by a 31-year-old merchant named John D. Rockefeller, emerged as the giant among the refiners. Rockefeller exploited every possible technical advance and employed fair means and foul to persuade competitors either to sell out or to join forces. By 1879 he controlled 90 percent of the nation's oil-refining capacity, along with a network of oil pipelines and large reserves of petroleum in the ground.

Standard Oil emerged victorious in the competitive wars because Rockefeller and his associates were the toughest and most imaginative fighters as well as the most efficient refiners in the business. In addition to obtaining from the railroads a 10 percent rebate and drawbacks on its competitors' shipments, Standard Oil cut prices locally to force small independents to sell out or face ruin. The company employed spies to track down the customers of independents and offer them oil at bargain prices. Bribery was also a Standard practice; the reformer Henry Demarest Lloyd quipped that the company had done everything to the Pennsylvania legislature except refine it.

Although a bold planner and a daring taker of necessary risks, Rockefeller was far too orderly and astute to enjoy the free-swinging battles that plagued his industry. He sought efficiency, order, and stability. His forte was meticulous attention to detail: Stories are told of his ordering the number of drops of solder used to seal oil cans reduced from 40 to 39 and of his insisting that the manager of one of his refineries account for 750 missing barrel bungs. Not miserliness but a profound grasp of the economies of large-scale production explains this behavior. He competed ruthlessly, not primarily to crush other refiners but to persuade them to join with him, to share the business peaceably and rationally so that all could profit.

Having achieved his monopoly, Rockefeller stabilized and structured it by creating a new type of business organization, the trust. Standard Oil was an Ohio corporation, prohibited by local law from owning plants in other states or holding stock in out-of state corporations. As Rockefeller and his associates took over dozens of companies with facilities scattered across the country, serious legal and managerial difficulties arose. How could these many organizations be integrated with Standard OR of Ohio?

A rotund, genial little Pennsylvania lawyer named Samuel C. T. Dodd came up with an answer to this question in 1879. The stock of Standard of Ohio and of all the other companies that the Rockefeller interests had swallowed up was turned over to nine trustees, who were empowered to "exercise general supervision" over all the properties. Stockholders received in exchange trust certificates, on which dividends were paid. This seemingly simple device brought order to the petroleum business. Competition almost disappeared; prices steadied; profits skyrocketed.

From the company's point of view, monopoly was not the purpose of the trust-that had been achieved before the device was invented. Centralization of the management of diverse and far-flung operations in the interest of efficiency was its chief function. Standard Oil headquarters in New York became the brain of a complex network where information from salaried managers in the field was collected and digested, where top managerial decisions were made, and whence orders went out to armies of drillers, refiners, scientists, and salesmen.

**Competition and Monopoly: Retailing and Utilities**

The pattern of competition leading to dominance by a few great companies was repeated in many other businesses. The period saw the growth of huge department stores by merchants such as Alexander T. Stewart in New York, John Wanamaker in Philadelphia, and Marshall Field in Chicago. In life insurance, an immense expansion took place. High-pressure salesmanship prevailed; agents gave rebates to customers by shaving their own commissions; companies stole crack agents from their rivals and raided new territories. By 1900, three giants dominated the industry-Equitable, New York Life, and Mutual Life, each with approximately $1 billion of insurance in force.

The telephone and electric fighting industries were also plagued by competition. Bell and Edison had to fight mighty court battles to protect their patents. Western Union hired Edison himself in a futile effort to get around Bell's telephone patents. In 1892 Edison merged with his most powerful competitor to form General Electric. It and the Westinghouse Company thereafter dominated in business.

**Americans' Reactions to Big Business**

The expansion of industry and its concentration in fewer and fewer hands changed the way many people felt about the role of government in economic and social affairs. The fact that Americans disliked powerful governments in general and strict regulation of the economy in particular had never meant that they objected to all government activity in the economic sphere. Banking laws, tariffs, internal improvement legislation, and the granting of public land to railroads are only the most obvious of the economic regulations enforced in the 19th century by both the federal government and the states. Americans saw no contradiction between government activities of this type and the free enterprise philosophy, for such laws were intended to release human energy and thus increase the area in which freedom could operate. Tariffs stimulated industry and created new jobs, railroad grants opened up new regions for development, and so on.

The growth of huge industrial and financial organizations and the increasing complexity of economic relations frightened people yet made them at the same time greedy for more of the goods and services the new society was turning out. To many, the great new corporations and trusts resembled Frankenstein's monster-marvelous and powerful but a grave threat to society. The astute James Bryce described the changes in The American Commonwealth (1888):

Modern civilization ... has become more exacting. It discerns more benefits which the organized Power of government can secure, and grows more anxious to attain them. Men live fast, and are impatient of the slow working of natural laws. ... Unlimited competition seems to press too hard on the weak. The power of groups of men organized by incorporation as joint-stock companies, or of small knots of rich men acting in combination, has developed with unexpected strength in unexpected ways, overshadowing individuals and even communities, and showing that the very freedom of association which men sought to secure by law... may, under the shelter of the law, -ripen into a new form of tyranny.

To some extent public fear of the industrial giants reflected concern about monopoly. If Standard Oil dominated oil refining, it might raise prices inordinately at vast cost to consumers. Although in isolated cases monopolists did raise prices unreasonably, generally they did not. On the contrary, prices tended to fall until by the 1890s a veritable "consumer's millennium" had arrived.

Far more important in causing resentment was the fear that the monopolists were destroying economic opportunity and threatening democratic institutions. It was not the wealth of tycoons like Carnegie and Rockefeller and Morgan so much as their influence that worried people. In the face of the growing disparity between rich and poor, could republican institutions survive?

Some observers believed either autocracy or a form of revolutionary socialism to be almost inevitable. In 1890 former president Hayes pondered "the wrong and evils of the money-piling tendency of our country, which is changing laws, government, and morals and giving all power to the rich" and decided that he was going to become a "nihilist." John Boyle O'Reilly, a liberal Catholic journalist, wrote in 1886: "There is something worse than Anarchy, bad as that is; and it is irresponsible power in the hands of mere wealth." William Cook, a New York lawyer, warned in The Corporation Problem (1891) that "colossal aggregations of capital" were "dangerous to the republic."

As criticism mounted, business leaders rose to their own defense. Rockefeller described in graphic terms the chaotic conditions that plagued the oil industry before the rise of Standard Oil: It seemed absolutely necessary to extend the market for oil... and also greatly improve the process of refining so that oil could be made and sold cheaply, yet with a profit. We proceeded to buy the largest and best refining concerns and centralized the administration of them with a view to securing greater economy and efficiency. Carnegie, in an essay published in 1889, insisted that the concentration of wealth was necessary if humanity was to progress, softening this "Gospel of Wealth" by insisting that the rich must use their money in the manner "best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community."

**Reformers: George, Bellamy, Lloyd**

The voices of the critics were louder, if not necessarily more influential. In 1879 Henry George published Progress and Poverty, a forthright attack on the maldistribution of wealth in the United States. George argued that labor was the true and only source of capital. Observing the speculative fever of the West, which enabled landowners to reap profits merely by holding property while population increased, George proposed a property tax that would confiscate this "unearned increment." The value of land depended on society and should belong to society. This "single tax," as others called it, would bring in so much money that no other taxes would be necessary, and the government would have plenty of funds to establish new schools, museums, theaters, and other badly needed social and cultural services. Though the single tax was never adopted, George's ideas attracted enthusiastic attention. Single tax clubs sprang up throughout the nation, and Progress and Poverty became a best-seller.

Even more spectacular was the reception afforded Looking Backward, 2000-1887 a utopian novel written in 1888 by Edward Bellamy. This book, which sold over a million copies in its first few years, described a future America that was completely socialized, all economic activity carefully planned. Bellamy suggested that the ideal socialist state, in which all citizens shared equally, would arrive without revolution or violence. The trend toward consolidation would continue, he predicted, until one monster trust controlled all economic activity. At this point everyone would realize that nationalization was essential.

A third influential attack on monopoly was that of Henry Demarest Lloyd, whose Wealth Against Commonwealth (1894) denounced the Standard Oil Company. Lloyd's forceful, uncomplicated arguments and his copious references to official documents made Wealth Against Commonwealth utterly convincing to thousands.

The popularity of these publications indicates that the trend toward monopoly in the United States worried many people. But despite the drastic changes suggested in their pages, none of these writers questioned the underlying values of the middle class majority. They insisted that reform could be accomplished without serious inconvenience to any individual or class.

Nor did most of their millions of readers seriously consider trying to apply the reformers' ideas. The national discontent was apparently not as profound as the popularity of these works might suggest. If John D. Rockefeller became the bogeyman of American industry because of Lloyd's attack, no one prevented him from also becoming the richest man in the United States.

**Reformers: The Marxists**

By the 1870s the ideas of Marxian socialists were beginning to penetrate the United States, and in 1877 a Marxist Socialist Labor party was founded. Laurence Gronlund in The Cooperative Commonwealth (1884) made the first serious attempt to explain Marx's ideas to Americans.

Capitalism, Grordund claimed, contained the seeds of its own destruction. The state ought to own all the means of production, middlemen were "parasites," speculators "vampires ... .. Capital and Labor," he wrote in one of the rare humorous lines in his book, "are just as harmonious as roast beef and a hungry stomach." Gronlund expected the millennium to arrive in an orderly manner.

The leading voice of the Socialist Labor party, Daniel De Leon, was a different type. He was born in the West Indies and in the 1870s emigrated to the United States, where he was progressively attracted by the ideas of Henry George, then Edward Bellamy, and finally Marx. Ordinarily mild-mannered and kindly, when he put pen to paper, he became a doctrinaire revolutionary. He insisted that industrial workers could improve their lot only by adopting socialism and joining the Socialist Labor party. He paid scant attention, however, to the practical needs or even to the opinions of rank-and-file working people. The labor historian Philip Taft aptly characterized him as a "verbal revolutionary."

**Government Reactions to Big Business: Railroad Regulation**

Political action to check big business came first on the state level and dealt chiefly with the regulation of railroads. Although a number of New England states established railroad commissions before the Civil War, strict regulation was largely the result of agitation by western farm groups, principally the

National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry. The Grange, founded in 1867 by Oliver H. Kelley, was created to provide social and cultural benefits for isolated rural communities. As it spread and grew in influence, the movement became political too. "Granger" candidates won control of a number of state legislatures in the West and the South. Railroad regulation invariably followed.

The Illinois Granger laws were typical. They established "reasonable maximum rates" and outlawed "unjust discrimination." The legislature also and set up a commission to enforce the laws and punish violators. The railroads protested, insisting that they were being deprived of property without due process of law. In Munn v. Illinois (1877), a case that involved the owner of a grain elevator who refused to comply with a state warehouse act, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of this kind of law. Any business that served a public interest, such as a railroad or a grain warehouse, was subject to state control, the justices ruled. Legislatures might fix maximum charges; if the charges seemed unreasonable, the parties concerned should direct their complaints to the legislatures or to the voters, not to the courts.

Regulation of the railroad network by the individual states was inefficient, and in some cases the commissions were incompetent and even corrupt. When the Supreme Court, in the Wabash case (1886), declared unconstitutional an Illinois regulation outlawing long and short-haul inequalities, federal action became necessary. The Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad had charged 25 cents per 100 pounds for shipping goods from Gilman, Illinois, to New York City but only 15 cents from Peoria, which was 86 miles farther from New York. Illinois judges had held this to be illegal, but the Supreme Court decided that Illinois could not regulate interstate shipments.

Congress in 1887 filled the gap by passing the Interstate Commerce Act. All charges made by railroads "shall be reasonable and just," the act stated. Rebates, drawbacks, inconsistent rates, and other competitive practices were declared unlawful, and so were their monopolistic counterparts, pools and traffic-sharing agreements. Railroads were required to publish schedules of rates and were forbidden to change them without due public notice. Most important, the law established the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), the first federal regulatory board, to supervise the affairs of railroads, investigate complaints, and issue cease and desist orders when the roads acted illegally.

The Interstate Commerce Act broke new ground, yet it was neither radical nor particularly effective. Its terms were contradictory some having been designed to stimulate competition, others to penalize it. The chairman of the commission soon characterized the law as an "anomaly." It sought, he said, to "enforce competition" at the same time that it outlawed "the acts and inducements by which competition is ordinarily effected." The new commission had less power than the law seemed to give it. It could not fix rates, only take the roads to court when it considered rates unreasonably high. Such cases could be extremely complicated; applying the law was "like cutting a path through a jungle." With the truth so hard to determine and the burden of proof on the commission, the courts in nearly every instance decided in favor of the railroads.

Nevertheless, by describing so clearly the right of Congress to regulate private corporations engaged in interstate commerce, the Interstate Commerce Act challenged the philosophy of laissez-faire. Later legislation made the commission more effective. The commission also served as the prototype for a host of similar federal administrative authorities, such as the Federal Communications Commission (1934).

**Government Reactions to Big Business: The Sherman Antitrust Act**

As with railroad legislation, the first antitrust laws originated in the states, but they were southern and western states with relatively little industry, and most of the statutes were vaguely worded and ill-enforced. Federal action came in 1890 with the passage of the Sherman Antitrust Act. Any combination "in the form of trust or otherwise" that was "in restraint of trade or commerce among the several states, or with foreign nations" was declared illegal. Persons forming such combinations were subject to fines of $5,000 and a year in jail. Individuals and businesses suffering losses because of actions that violated the law were authorized to sue in the federal courts for triple damages.

Whereas the Interstate Commerce Act sought to outlaw the excesses of competition, the Sherman Act was supposed to restore competition. If businessmen joined together to "restrain" (monopolize) trade in a particular field, they should be punished, and their deeds undone. But the Sherman Act was rather loosely worded-Thurman Arnold, a modem authority, once said that it made it "a crime to violate a vaguely stated economic policy." Critics have argued that the congressmen were more interested in quieting the public clamor for action against the trusts than in actually breaking up any of the new combinations. This was certainly one of their objectives. However, they were trying to solve a new problem and were not sure how to proceed. A law with teeth too sharp might do more harm than good. Most Americans assumed that the courts would deal with the details, as they always had in common-law matters.

In fact the Supreme Court quickly emasculated the Sherman Act. In United States v. E. C. Knight Company (1895) it held that the American Sugar Refining Company had not violated the law by taking over a number of important competitors. Although the Sugar Trust now controlled about 98 percent of all sugar refining in the United States, it was not restraining trade. "Doubtless the power to control the manufacture of a given thing involves in a certain sense the control of its disposition," the Court said in one of the great judicial understatements of all time. "Although the exercise of that power may result in bringing the operation of commerce into play, it does not control it, and affects it only incidentally and indirectly."

If the creation of the Sugar Trust did not violate the Sherman Act, it seemed unlikely that any other combination of manufacturers could be convicted under the law. But in several cases in 1898 and 1899 the Supreme Court ruled that agreements to fix prices or divide markets did violate the act. These decisions precipitated a wave of outright mergers in which a handful of large corporations swallowed up hundreds of smaller ones. Presumably mergers were not illegal. When, Andrew Carnegie was asked by a committee of the House of Representatives some years after his retirement to explain how he had dared participate in the formation of the U.S. Steel Corporation, he replied: "Nobody ever mentioned the Sherman Act to me, that I remember."

**The Union Movement**

At the time of the Civil War, most union members were cigarmakers, printers, carpenters, and other skilled artisans. Aside from ironworkers, railroad workers, and miners, few industrial laborers were organized. Nevertheless, the union was the workers' response to the big corporation: a combination designed to eliminate competition for jobs and to provide efficient organization for labor.

After 1865 the growth of national craft unions, which had been stimulated by labor dissatisfaction during the Civil War, quickened perceptibly. In 1866 a federation of these organizations, the National Labor Union, was founded, but most of its leaders were out of touch with the practical needs and aspirations of workers. They opposed the wage system, strikes, and anything that increased the laborers' sense of being members of the working class.

Far more remarkable was the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 by Philadelphia garment workers. Its head, Uriah S. Stephens, was a reformer of wide interests. He and his successor, Terence V. Powderly, supported political objectives that had no direct connection with working conditions, such as currency reform and the curbing of land speculation. They rejected the idea that workers must resign themselves to remaining wage earners. "There is no good reason," Powderly wrote in his autobiography, 11 why labor cannot, through cooperation, own and operate mines, factories, and railroads." The leading Knights saw no contradiction between their denunciation of "soulless" monopolies and "drones" like bankers and lawyers and their talk of "combining all branches of trade in one common brotherhood." Such muddled thinking led the Knights to attack the wage system and to frown on strikes as "acts of private warfare."

If the Knights had one foot in the past, they also had one foot in the future. They rejected the traditional grouping of workers by crafts and developed a concept closely resembling modern industrial unionism. They welcomed blacks (though mostly in segregated locals), women, and immigrants, and they accepted unskilled workers as well as artisans. The eight-hour day was one of their basic demands.

The growth of the union, however, had little to do with ideology. As late as 1879 it had fewer than 10,000 members. But between 1882 and 1886 successful strikes by local "assemblies," including one against the hated Jay Gould's Missouri Pacific Railroad, brought recruits by the thousands. The membership passed 110,000 in 1885 and the next year soared beyond the 700,000 mark. Alas, sudden prosperity was too much for the Knights. Its national leadership was unable to control local groups. A number of poorly planned strikes failed dismally, and the public was alienated by sporadic acts of violence and intimidation. Disillusioned recruits began to drift away.

Circumstances largely fortuitous caused the collapse of the organization. By 1886 the movement for the eight-hour day had gained wide support among workers. In Chicago, a center of the eight-hour movement, about 80,000 workers were involved, and a small group of anarchists was trying to take advantage of the excitement to win support. When a striker was killed in a fracas at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, the anarchists called a protest meeting on May 4, at Haymarket Square. Police intervened to break up the meeting, and someone-whose identity has never been established-hurled a bomb into their ranks. Seven policemen were killed and many others injured.

**The American Federation of Labor**

Organized labor, especially the Knights, suffered heavily as a result of the Haymarket bombing. No tie with the Knights could be established, but the union had been closely connected with the eight-hour agitation, and the public tended to associate that with violence and radicalism. Its membership declined dramatically until soon the union ceased to exist.

Its place was taken by the American Federation of Labor, a combination of national craft unions established in 1886. Its principal leaders, Adolph Strasser and Samuel Gompers of the Cigarmakers Union, concentrated on organizing skilled workers and fighting for "bread and butter" issues such as higher wages and shorter hours. "Our organization does not consist of idealists," Strasser explained to a congressional committee. "We do not control the production of the world. That is controlled by the employers.... I look first to cigars."

The AFL accepted the fact that most workers would remain wage earners all their lives and tried to develop in them a sense of common purpose and pride in their skills and station. Rank-and-file AFL members were naturally eager to win wage increases and other benefits, but most also valued their unions for the companionship they provided, the sense of belonging to a group. In other words, despite statements such as Strasser's, unions, in and out of the AFL, were a kind of club as well as a means of defending and advancing their members' material interests.

The, chief weapon of the federation was the strike. "I have my own philosophy and my own dreams," Gompers once told a left-wing French politician, "but first and foremost I want to increase the workingman's welfare year by year.... The French workers waste their economic force by their political divisions."

Gompers's approach to labor problems produced solid, if unspectacular, growth for the AFL. Unions with a total of about 150,000 members formed the federation in 1886. By 1892 the membership had reached 250,000, and in 1901 it passed the million mark.

**Labor Militancy Rebuffed**

The stress of the AFL on the strike weapon reflected the increasing militancy of labor. Workers felt themselves threatened by the growing size and power of their corporate employers, the substitution of machines for human skills, and the invasion of foreign workers willing to accept substandard wages. The average employer behaved like a tyrant when dealing with workers. He discharged any who tried to organize unions; he hired scabs to replace ' e strikers; he frequently failed to provide the most rudimentary protections against injury on the job. Most employers would not bargain with labor collectively.

The industrialists of the period were not all ogres; they were as alarmed by the rapid changes of the times as their workers, and since they had more at stake materially, they were probably more frightened by the uncertainties. Deflation, technological change, and intense competition kept even the most successful under constant pressure. Their thinking was remarkably confused. They considered workers who joined unions "disloyal," yet at the same time they treated labor as a commodity to be purchased as cheaply as possible. When labor was scarce, employers resisted demands for higher wages by arguing that the price of labor was controlled by its productivity; when it was plentiful, they justified reducing wages by referring to the law of supply and demand.

Thus capital and labor were often spoiling for a fight. In 1877 a great railroad strike convulsed much of the nation. It began on the Baltimore and Ohio system in response to a wage cut and spread until about two-thirds of the railroad mileage of the country had been shut down. Violence broke out; rail yards were put to the torch. Frightened businessmen formed militia companies to patrol the streets of Chicago and other cities. Eventually, President Hayes sent federal troops to restore order, and the strike collapsed.

The disturbances of 1877 were a response to a business slump, those of the next decade a response to good times. Twice as many strikes occurred in 1886 as in any previous year. The situation was so disturbing that President Grover Cleveland, in the first presidential message devoted to labor problems, urged Congress to create a voluntary arbitration board to aid in settling labor disputes-a remarkable suggestion for a man of Cleveland's conservative, laissez-faire approach to economic issues.

In 1892 a violent strike broke out among silver miners at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and a far more important clash shook Andrew Carnegie's Homestead steel plant near Pittsburgh when strikers attacked 300 private guards brought in to protect strikebreakers. The Homestead affair was part of a struggle between capital and labor in the steel industry. The steelmen insisted that the workers were holding back progress by resisting technological advances, while the workers believed that the company was refusing to share the fruits of more efficient operation fairly. The defeat of the 24,000-member Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers destroyed unionism as an effective force in the steel industry and set back the progress of organized labor all over the country.

As in the case of the Haymarket bombing, the activities of radicals on the fringe of the dispute turned the public against the steelworkers. The boss of Homestead was Henry Clay Frick, a tough-minded foe of unions. Frick made the decision to bring in strikebreakers and to employ Pinkerton detectives to protect them. During the course of the strike, Alexander Berkman, an anarchist unconnected with the union, burst into Frick's office and shot him. Frick was only slightly wounded, but the attack brought him much sympathy and unjustly discredited the strikers.

The most important strike of the period took place in 1894. It began when the workers at George Pullman's Palace Car factory outside Chicago walked out in protest against wage cuts. Some Pullman workers belonged to the American Railway Union, headed by Eugene V. Debs, and the union voted to refuse to handle trains with Pullman cars. The resulting strike tied up trunk lines running in and out of Chicago. The railroad owners appealed to President Cleveland to send troops to preserve order. On the pretext that the soldiers were needed to ensure the movement of the mails, Cleveland agreed. When Debs defied a federal injunction to end the walkout, he was jailed for contempt, and the strike was broken.

**Whither America, Whither Democracy?**

Each year more of the nation's wealth and power seemed to fall into fewer hands. As with the railroads, other industries were coming to be influenced, if not completely dominated, by bankers. The firm of J. P. Morgan and Company controlled many railroads; the largest steel, electrical, agricultural machinery, rubber, and shipping companies; two life insurance companies; and a number of banks. By 1913 Morgan and the Rockefeller National City Bank group between them could name 341 directors to 112 corporations worth over $22.2 billion. The "Money Trust," a loose but potent fraternity of financiers, seemed fated to become the ultimate monopoly.

Centralization increased efficiency in industries that used expensive machinery to turn out goods for the masses and for markets where close coordination of output, distribution, and sales was important. The public benefited immensely from the productive efficiency of the new empires. Living standards rose. But the trend toward giantism raised doubts. With ownership falling into fewer hands, what would be the ultimate effect of big business on American democracy? What did it mean for ordinary people when a few tycoons possessed huge fortunes and commanded such influence even on Congress and the courts?

The crushing of the Pullman strike demonstrated the power of the courts to break strikes by issuing injunctions. And the courts seemed concerned only with protecting the interests of the rich and powerful. Particularly ominous for organized labor was the fact that the federal government based its request for the injunction that broke the strike on the Sherman Antitrust Act, arguing that the American Railway Union was a combination in restraint of trade.

While serving his sentence for contempt, Eugene Debs was visited by a number of prominent socialists who sought to convert him to their cause. One gave him a copy of Karl Marx's Capital, which he found too dull to finish, but he did read Looking Backward and Wealth Against Commonwealth. In 1897 he became a socialist.

**CHAPTER 18**

**American Society in the Industrial Age**

The industrialization that followed the Civil War profoundly affected every aspect of American life. New machines, improvements in transportation and communication, the appearance of the great corporation with its uncertain implications for the future-all made deep impressions on the economy and on the social and cultural development of the nation.The growth of cities and the influx of tens of thousands of non-English-speaking immigrants who knew little about urban life had large effects on the lives of all Americans.

**Middle-Class Life**

In so large and diverse a country as the United States, it is hard to generalize about how people lived and worked. Some, as we have just seen, became fabulously wealthy in the new industrial society, in no small part because neither the federal government nor the states taxed their incomes. Members of the professions and the shopkeepers, small manufacturers, skilled craftsmen, and established farmers that made up the middle class lived in varying degrees of comfort. A family with an annual income of $1,000 in the 1880s would have no need to skimp on food, clothing, or shelter.

In such families, husbands and wives continued to maintain their separate spheres, the men going off to their shops and offices, the women devoting their main energies to supervising or caring for children and household. Middle-class women maintained the trend toward having fewer children. Much stress was placed on their being "little ladies and gentlemen," meaning having good manners and doing what their elders told them to do. This was the height of Victorian prudery, so in most families "young people" (today we call them teenagers) were closely chaperoned when in the company of "members of the opposite sex."

**Wage Earners**

Wage earners felt the full force of the industrial tide, being affected in countless ways, some beneficial, others not. As manufacturing and mining became more important, the number of workers in these fields multiplied rapidly: from 885,000 in 1860 to more than 3.2 million in 1890. More efficient methods of production enabled them to increase their output, making possible a rise in their standard of living. The working day was shortening perceptibly. In 1860 the average had been 11 hours, but by 1880 only one worker in four labored more than ten hours, and radicals were beginning to talk about eight hours as a fair day's work.

Skilled industrial workers-such as railroad engineers and conductors, machinists, and iron molders-were quite well off. But unskilled laborers could still not earn enough to maintain a family decently by their own efforts alone.

James H. Ducker's Men of the Steel Rails throws much light on working conditions and workers' attitudes. Laborers were paid from $1.00 to $1.25 a day, whereas engineers received three times that amount or more. In addition, many of the better-paid workers picked up additional sums by renting spare rooms to other workers.

Railroad management tried to discipline the labor force by establishing rules, but it had difficulty enforcing them. Drunkenness on the job was a constant problem. Many conductors were said to be "color blind," referring to their inability to tell the difference between the road's money and their own. Transient workers, called "boomers," had "a deserved reputation as rowdies," Ducker reports. Many other workers, of course, were law-abiding, hardworking family men.

Industrialization created other problems. By and large, skilled workers, always better off than the unskilled, improved their positions relatively, despite the increased use of machinery. Furthermore, when machines took the place of skilled humans, jobs became monotonous. Mechanization undermined both the artisans' pride and their bargaining power vis-A-vis their employers. Machines more than workers controlled the speed of work and its duration. The time clock regulated the labor force more rigidly than the most exacting foreman. The pace of work increased; so did the danger involved in working around heavy, high-speed machinery.

As businesses grew larger, personal contact between employer and hired hand tended to disappear. Relations between them became more businesslike, even ruthless. But large enterprises usually employed a higher percentage of managerial and clerical workers than smaller companies, thus providing opportunities for blue-collar workers to rise in the industrial hierarchy.

Another problem for workers was that industrialization tended to accentuate swings of the business cycle. On the upswing, something approaching full employment existed, but in periods of depression, unemployment affected workers without regard for their individual abilities.

**Working Women**

Women continued to make up a significant part of the industrial working force, but now many more of them were working outside their homes. At least half of all working women were domestic servants; textile mills and the "sewing trades" accounted for a large percentage of the rest. In all fields women were paid substantially lower wages than men.

Women found many new types of work in these years, a fact commented on by the New York Times as early as 1869. They made up the overwhelming majority of salespersons and cashiers in the big new department stores. Managers considered women more polite, easier to control, and more honest than male workers, all qualities of value in the huge emporiums. Over half of the more than 1,700 employees in A. T. Stewart's New York store were women.

Educated, middle-class women also dominated the new field of nursing. Nursing seemed the perfect female profession, since it required the same characteristics that women were thought to have by nature: selflessness, cleanliness, kindliness, tact, sensitivity, and submissiveness to male control. "Since God could not care for all the sick, he made women to nurse," one purported authority pontificated. Why it had not occurred to the Lord to make more women physicians, or for that matter members of other prestigious professions like law and the clergy, this man did not explain, probably because it had not occurred to him either.

Middle-class women did replace men as teachers in most of the nation's grade schools, as clerks and secretaries, and as operators of the new typewriters in government departments and business offices. Most men with the knowledge of spelling and grammar that these positions required had better opportunities and were uninterested in office work, so women high school graduates, of whom there was an increasing number, filled the gap.

Both department store clerks and "typewriters" (as they were called) earned more money than unskilled factory workers. According to one advertisement of the period, "No invention has opened for women so broad and easy an avenue to profitable and suitable employment." However, managerial posts in these fields remained almost exclusively in the hands of men.

**Farmers**

Long the backbone of American society, independent farmers and their agricultural way of life were rapidly being left behind in the race for wealth and status. The number of farmers and the volume of agricultural production continued to rise, but agriculture's relative place in the national economy was declining. Industry was expanding far faster, and the urban population, quadrupling in the period, would soon overtake and pass that of the countryside.

Along with declining income, farmers suffered a decline in status. Compared to middle-class city dwellers, they seemed provincial and behind the times. People in the cities began to refer to farmers as "rubes ... .. hicks," and "hayseeds" and to view them with bemused tolerance or even contempt.

This combination of circumstances angered and frustrated farmers. Waves of radicalism swept the agricultural regions, giving rise to demands for social and economic experiments that played a major role in breaking down rural laissez-faire prejudices.

Not all farmers were affected by economic developments in the same way. Because of the steady decline of the price level, those in newly settled regions were usually worse off than those in older areas, since they had to borrow money to get started and were therefore burdened with fixed interest charges that became harder to meet each year. In the 1870s farmers in Illinois and Iowa suffered most-which accounts for the strength of the Granger movement in that region.

By the late 1880s farmers in the old Middle West had also become better established. Even when prices dipped and a general depression gripped the country, they were able to weather the bad times by taking advantage of lower transportation costs, better farm machinery, and new fertilizers and insecticides to increase output and by shifting from wheat to corn, oats, hogs, and cattle, which had not declined so drastically in price.

On the agricultural frontier from Texas to the Dakotas and through the states of the old Confederacy, farmers were less fortunate. The burdens of the crop lien system kept thousands of southern farmers in penury, while on the plains life was a succession of hardships. The first settlers in western Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas took up land along the rivers and creeks where they found enough timber for home building, fuel, and fencing. Later arrivals had to build houses of the tough prairie sod and depend on hay, sunflower stalks, and buffalo dung for fuel.

Frontier farm families had always had to work hard and endure the hazards of storm, drought, and insect plagues, along with isolation and loneliness. But all these burdens were magnified on the prairies and the High Plains. Life was particularly hard for farm women, who in addition to child care and housework performed endless farm chores-milking cows, feeding livestock, raising vegetables, and so on. "I . . . am set and running every morning at half-past four o'clock, and run all day, often until half-past eleven P.m.," one farm woman explained. "Is it any wonder I have become, slightly demoralized?"

On the plains, women also had to endure drab, cheerless surroundings without the companionship of neighbors or the respites and stimulations of social life. After the writer Hamlin Garland's mother read the grim discussions of women's lot in his book, Main-Travelled Roads, she wrote him: "You might have said more, but I'm glad you didn't. Farmers' wives have enough to bear as it is."

**Working-Class Family Life**

Social workers who visited the homes of industrial laborers in this period reported enormous differences in the standard of living of people engaged in the same line of work, differences related to such variables as health, intelligence, the wife's ability as a homemaker, and pure luck. Some families spent most of their income on food; others saved substantial sums even when earning no more than $400 or $500 a year.

Consider the cases of two Illinois coal miners, hardworking union men with large families, each earning $1.50 a day in 1883. One was out of work nearly half the year; his income in 1883 was only $250. He, his wife, and their five children existed almost exclusively on a diet of bread and salt meat. Nevertheless, as an investigator reported, their two room tenement home was neat and clean, and three of the children were attending school.

The other miner, father of four children, worked full time and brought home $420 in 1883. He owned a six-room house and an acre of land, where the family raised vegetables.Their food bill for the year was more than ten times that of the family just described. These two admirable families were probably similar in social attitudes and perhaps in political loyalties but were possessed of very different standards of living.

The cases of two families headed by railroad brakemen provide a different kind of contrast. One man brought home only $360 to house and feed a wife and eight children. Here is the report of a state official who interviewed the family: "Clothes ragged, children half-dressed and dirty. They all sleep in one room.... The entire concern is as wretched as could be imagined. Father is shiftless.... Wife is without ambition or industry."

The other brakeman and his wife had only two children, and he earned $484 in 1883. They owned a well-furnished house, kept a cow, and raised vegetables for home consumption. Though far from rich, they managed to put aside enough for insurance, reading matter, and a few small luxuries.

**Working-Class Attitudes**

Social workers and government officials made many efforts in the 1880s and 1890s to find out how working people felt about all sorts of matters connected with their jobs. Their reports reveal a wide spectrum of opinion. To the question asked of two Wisconsin carpenters, "What new laws, in your opinion, ought to be enacted?" one replied, "Keep down strikes and rioters. Let every man attend to his own business." But the other answered, "Complete nationalization of land and all ways of transportation. Burn all government bonds. A graduated income tax.... Abolish child labor and [pass] any other act that capitalists say is wrong."

Every variation of opinion between these extremes was expressed by working people. In 1881 a woman textile worker in Lawrence, Massachusetts, said to an interviewer: "If you will stand by the mill, and see the people coming out, you will be surprised to see the happy, contented look they all have."

Despite such remarks and the general improvement in living standards, it is clear from the many bitter strikes of the period that there was a great deal of dissatisfaction among industrial workers. Writing in 1885, the labor leader Terence V. Powderly reported that "a deep-rooted feeling of discontent pervades the masses." A few years later a Connecticut official conducted an informal survey of labor opinion in the state and found a "feeling of bitterness" and "distrust of employers" to be endemic.

The discontent had many causes. For some workers, poverty was still the chief problem, but for others, rising aspirations triggered discontent. Workers were confused. They wanted to believe their bosses and the politicians when those worthies voiced the old slogans about a classless society and the community of interest of capital and labor. "Our men," William Vanderbilt of the New York Central said in 1877, "feel that, although I . . . may have my millions and they the rewards of their daily toil, still we are about equal in the end. If they suffer, I suffer, and if I suffer, they cannot escape." "The poor," another conservative spokesman said a decade later, "are not poor because the rich are rich." Instead "the service of capital" softened their lot and gave them many benefits. Statements such as these, though self-serving, were essentially correct. The rich were growing richer, more people were growing rich, and ordinary workers were better off too. However, the gap between the very rich and the ordinary citizen was widening.

**Mobility: Social, Economic, and Educational**

To study mobility in a large industrial country is extraordinarily difficult. Census records show that there was considerable geographic mobility in urban areas throughout the last half of the 19th century and into the 20th. In most cities this mobility was accompanied by some economic and social improvement. On the average, about a quarter of the manual laborers traced rose to middle-class status during their lifetimes, and the sons of manual laborers were still more likely to improve their place in society.

Progress was primarily the result of the economic growth the nation was experiencing and of the energy and ambition of the people, native-born and immigrant alike, who were pouring into the cities in such numbers.

The public education system gave an additional boost to the upwardly mobile. The history of American education after about 1870 reflects the impact of social and economic change. Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and others had laid the foundations for state-supported school systems, but most of these systems became compulsory only after the Civil War, when the growth of cities provided the concentration of population and financial resources necessary for economical mass education. In the 1860s about half the children in the country were getting some formal education, but this did not mean that half the children were attending school at any one time. Sessions were short, especially in rural areas. President Calvin Coolidge noted in his autobiography that the one-room school he attended in rural Vermont in the 1880s was open only when the twenty-odd students were not needed in the fields.

Attendance in the public schools increased from 6.8 million in 1870 to 15.5 million in 1900. A typical elementary school graduate, at least in the cities, could count on having studied, besides the traditional "three Rs," history, geography, a bit of science, drawing, and physical training. But fewer than half a million of these graduates went on to high school; secondary education was still assumed to be only for students with special abilities or whose families were well off.

Industrialization created demands for vocational and technical training; both employers and unskilled workers quickly grasped the possibilities. In 1880 Calvin M. Woodward opened the Manual Training School in St. Louis, and soon a number of similar schools were offering courses in carpentry, metalwork, sewing, and other crafts. By 1890 fully 36 cities had established vocational public high schools.

Because manual training attracted the backing of industrialists, organized labor was at first suspicious of the new trend. One union leader called trade schools "breeding schools for scabs and rats." Fortunately, the usefulness of such training soon became evident to the unions; by 1910 the AFL was lobbying side by side with the National Association of Manufacturers for more trade schools.

More than the absence of real opportunity, the unrealistic expectations inspired by the rags-to-riches myth probably explain why so many workers, even when expressing dissatisfaction with life as it was, continued to subscribe to such middle-class values as hard work and thrift. They simply continued to hope.

**The "New" Immigration**

Industrial expansion increased the need for labor, and this in turn stimulated immigration. Between 1866 and 1915 about 25 million foreigners entered the United States. Industrial growth alone does not explain the influx. The launching of the 19,000-ton English steamship Great Eastern in 1858 opened a new era in transatlantic travel, and competition soon made the crossing cheap as well as safe and rapid. Improved transportation produced unexpected and disruptive changes in the economies of many European countries. Cheap wheat from the United States, Russia, and other parts of the world poured into Europe, bringing disaster to farmers from England and the Scandinavian countries to Italy and Greece.

The spreading industrial revolution and the increased use of farm machinery led to the collapse of the peasant economy of central and southern Europe. Political and religious persecutions pushed still others into the migrating stream. But the main reason for emigrating remained the desire for economic betterment.

While immigrants continued to people the farms of America, industry absorbed an ever-increasing number of them. In 1870 one industrial worker in three was foreign-born. When congressional investigators examined 21 major industries early in the new century, they discovered that well over half of the labor force had been born outside the United States.

Before 1882, when-in addition to the Chinese-criminals, idiots, lunatics, and persons liable to become public charges were excluded, entry into the United States was almost unrestricted. Indeed, until 1891 the Atlantic Coast states, not the federal government, exercised whatever controls were imposed on newcomers. On average only 1 immigrant in 50 was rejected.

Private agencies, philanthropic and commercial, served as a link between the new arrivals and employers looking for labor. Numerous nationality groups assisted (and sometimes exploited) their compatriots by organizing "immigrant banks" that recruited labor in the old country, arranged transportation, and then housed the newcomers in boardinghouses in the United States while finding them jobs. The padrone system of the Italians and Greeks was typical. The padrone, a sort of contractor who agreed to supply gangs of unskilled workers to companies for a lump sum, usually signed on immigrants unfamiliar with American wage levels at rates that assured him a healthy profit.

Beginning in the 1880s, the spreading effects of industrialization in Europe caused a shift in the sources of immigration from northern and western to southern and eastern sections of the Continent. In 1882, when 789,000 immigrants entered the United States, more than 350,000 came from Great Britain and Germany, only 32,000 from Italy, and fewer than 17,000 from Russia. In 1907-the all-time peak year, with 1,285,000 immigrants-Great Britain and Germany supplied fewer than half as many as they had 25 years earlier, while Russia and Italy were supplying 11 times as many as before.

**The Old Immigrants and the New**

The new immigrants, like the "old" Irish of the 1840s and 1850s, were mostly peasants. They seemed more than ordinarily clannish; southern Italians typically called all people outside their families forestieri, "foreigners." Old-stock Americans thought them harder to assimilate, and in fact many were. Some Italian immigrants, for example, had come to the United States only to earn enough money to buy a farm back home. Such people made hard and willing workers but were not much concerned with being part of an American community.

The "birds of passage" formed a substantial minority, but the immigrants who saved in order to bring wives and children or younger brothers and sisters to America were more typical. They were almost desperately eager to become Americans, though of course they retained and nurtured much of their traditional culture.

Cultural differences among immigrants were often large and had important effects on their relations with native-born Americans and with other immigrant groups. Italians who settled in the city of Buffalo, the historian Virginia Yans-McLaughlin has shown, adjusted relatively smoothly to urban industrial life because of their close family and kinship ties. Polish immigrants in Buffalo, having different traditions, found adjustment more difficult.

German-American and Irish-American Catholics had different attitudes that caused them to clash over such matters as the policies of the Catholic University in Washington. Controversies erupted between Catholic and Protestant German-Americans, between Greek-Americans supporting different political factions in their homeland, and many other immigrant groups.

Confused by such differences and conflicts, many Americans of longer standing concluded, wrongly but understandably, that the new immigrants were incapable of becoming good citizens and hence should be kept out. Reformers were worried by the social problems that arose when so many poor immigrants flocked into cities already bursting at the seams. The directors of charitable organizations that bore the burden of aiding the most unfortunate of the immigrants were soon complaining that their resources were being exhausted by the needs of the flood.

Social Darwinists and people obsessed with pseudoscientific ideas about "racial purity" also found the new immigration alarming. Misunderstanding the findings of the new science of genetics, they attributed the social problems associated with mass immigration to supposed physiological characteristics of the newcomers. Forgetting that earlier Americans had accused pre-Civil War Irish and German immigrants of similar deficiencies, they decided that the peoples of southern and eastern Europe were racially (and therefore permanently) inferior to "Nordic" and "Anglo-Saxon" types and ought to be kept out.

Workers, fearing the competition of people with low living standards and no bargaining power, spoke out against the "enticing of penniless and unapprised immigrants ... to undermine our wages and social welfare." Some corporations, especially in fields like mining, which employed large numbers of unskilled workers, made use of immigrants as strikebreakers, and this particularly angered union members.

Employers were not disturbed by the influx of people with strong backs willing to work hard for low wages. Nevertheless, by the late 1880s many of them were alarmed about the supposed radicalism of the immigrants. The Haymarket bombing focused attention on the handful of foreign-born extremists in the country and loosed a flood of unjustified charges that "anarchists and communists" were dominating the labor movement. Nativism, which had waxed in the 1850s under the Know-Nothing banner and waned during the Civil War, now flared up again. Denunciations of "long-haired, wild-eyed, bad-smelling, atheistic, reckless foreign wretches," of "Europe's human and inhuman rubbish," of the 11 cutthroats of Beelzebub from the Rhine, the Danube, the Vistula and the Elbe" crowded the pages of the nation's press.

The nativists denounced Catholics and other minority groups for more than their immigrant status. The largest nativist organization of the period, the American Protective Association, founded in 1887, existed primarily to resist what its members called the "Catholic menace." The Protestant majority treated new immigrants as underlings, tried to keep them out of the best jobs, and discouraged their efforts to climb the social ladder. This prejudice functioned only at the social and economic levels. But nowhere in America did prejudice lead to interference with religious freedom in the narrow sense. And neither labor leaders nor important industrialists, despite their misgivings about immigration, took a broadly antiforeign position.

After the Exclusion Act of 1882 and an almost meaningless 1885 ban on importing contract labor, no further restrictions were imposed on immigration until the 20th century. Strong support for a literacy test for admission developed in the 1890s, pushed by a new organization, the Immigration Restriction League. Since there was much more illiteracy in the southeastern quarter of Europe than in the northwestern, such a test would discriminate without seeming to do so on national or racial grounds. A literacy test bill passed both houses of Congress in 1897, but President Cleveland vetoed it.

**The Expanding City and Its Problems**

Americans who favored restricting immigration made much of the fact that so many of the newcomers crowded into the cities, aggravating problems of housing, public health, crime, and immorality. Immigrants concentrated in the cities because the jobs created by expanding industry were located there. So, of course, did native-born Americans; the proportion of urban dwellers had been steadily increasing since about 1820.

After 1890 the immigrant concentration became even denser. The new migrants from eastern and southern Europe lacked the resources to travel to the agriculturally developing regions (to say nothing of the sums necessary to acquire land and farm

equipment). As the concentration progressed, it fed on itself, for all the eastern cities developed many ethnic neighborhoods, in each of which immigrants of one particular nationality congregated. Lonely, confused, often unable to speak English, the Italians, the Greeks, the Polish and Russian Jews, and other immigrants tended to settle where their predecessors had settled.

Most newcomers intended to become "good Americans," to be absorbed in the famous American "melting pot." But they also wanted to maintain their traditional culture. They supported "national" churches, schools, newspapers, and clubs. Each great American city became a Europe in microcosm where it sometimes seemed that every language in the world but English could be heard. New York, the great entry port, had Italian, Polish, Greek, Jewish, Bohemian quarters-and even a Chinatown.

Although ethnic neighborhoods were crowded, unhealthy, and crime-ridden and many of the residents were desperately poor, they were also places where hopes and ambitions were fulfilled, where people worked hard and endured hardships to improve their own lot and that of their children.

Observing the immigrants' attachment to "foreign" values and institutions, numbers of native born citizens accused the newcomers of resisting Americanization and blamed them for urban problems. The immigrants were involved in these problems, but the rapidity of urban expansion explains the troubles associated with city life far better than the high percentage of foreigners.

**The Urban Infrastructure**

The cities were suffering from growing pains. Sewer and water facilities frequently could not keep pace with skyrocketing needs, fire protection became increasingly inadequate, garbage piled up in the streets faster than it could be carted away, and the streets themselves crumbled beneath the pounding of heavy traffic. Urban growth proceeded with such speed that new streets were laid out more rapidly than they could be paved. Chicago, for example, had more than 1,400 miles of dirt streets in 1890.

People poured into the great cities faster than housing could be built to accommodate them. The influx into areas already densely packed in the 1840s became unbearable as rising property values and the absence of zoning laws conspired to make builders use every possible foot of space, squeezing out light and air ruthlessly in order to wedge in a few additional family units.

Substandard living quarters aggravated other evils such as disease and the disintegration of family life, with its attendant mental anguish, crime, and juvenile delinquency. The bloody New York City riots of 1863, though sparked by dislike of the Civil War draft and of blacks, reflected the bitterness and frustration of thousands jammed together amid filth

and threatened by disease. A citizens' committee seeking to discover the causes of the riots expressed its amazement after visiting the slums "that so much misery, disease, and wretchedness can be huddled together and hidden ... unvisited and unthought of, so near our own abodes." New York City created the Metropolitan Health Board in 1866, and a state tenement house law the following year made a feeble beginning at regulating city housing. Another law in 1879 placed a limit on the percentage of lot space that could be covered by new construction and established minimum standards of plumbing and ventilation.

Despite these efforts at reform, in 1890 more than 1.4 million persons were living on Manhattan Island, and in some sections the population density exceeded 900 persons per acre. Jacob Riis, a reporter, captured the horror of these crowded warrens in his classic study of life in the slums, How the Other Half Lives (1890): Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble... Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is ... 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 enters these stairs comes from the hall-door that is forever slamming... The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access-and all be poisoned alike by their summer stenches... Here is a door. Listen! That short, hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail what do they mean? ... The child is dying of measles. With half a chance it might have lived,but it had none. That dark bedroom killed it.

The unhealthiness of the tenements was notorious; in 1900 three out of five babies born in one poor district of Chicago died before their first birthday. Equally frightening was the impact of overcrowding on the morals of the tenement dweller. The number of prison inmates in the United States increased by 50 percent in the 1880s, and the homicide rate nearly tripled, most of the rise occurring in cities. Driven into the streets by the squalor of their homes, slum youths formed gangs. From petty thievery and shoplifting they graduated to housebreaking, bank robbery, and murder.

Slums bred criminals-the wonder was that they bred so few. They also drove well-to-do residents into exclusive neighborhoods and to the suburbs. From Boston's Beacon Hill and Back Bay to San Francisco's Nob Hill, the rich retired into great cluttered mansions and ignored conditions in the poorer parts of town.

**Modernizing the Cities**

As American cities grew larger and more crowded, thereby aggravating a host of social problems, practical forces operated to bring about improvements. Once the relationship between polluted water and disease was fully understood, everyone saw the need for decent water and sewage systems. Though some businessmen profited from corrupt dealings with the city machines, more of them wanted efficient and honest government in order to reduce their tax bills. City dwellers of all classes resented dirt, noise, and ugliness, and in many communities public spirited groups formed societies to plant trees, clean up littered areas, and develop recreational facilities. When one city undertook improvements, others tended to follow suit, spurred on by local pride and the booster spirit.

Gradually, the basic facilities of urban living were improved. Streets were paved, first with cobblestones and wood blocks and then with smoother, quieter asphalt. Gaslight, then electric arc lights, and finally Edison's incandescent lamps brightened the cities after dark, making law enforcement easier, stimulating night life, and permitting factories and shops to operate after sunset.

Urban transportation underwent tremendous changes. Until the 1880s, horse-drawn cars were the main means of urban transportation. But horsecars had drawbacks. Enormous numbers of horses were needed, and feeding and stabling the animals was costly. Their droppings (10 pounds per day per horse) became a major source of urban pollution. That is why the invention of the electric trolley car in the 1880s put an end to horsecar transportation. Trolleys were cheaper and less unsightly than horsecars and quieter than steam-powered trains. By 1895 some 850 lines were busily hauling city dwellers over 10,000 miles of track, and mileage more than tripled in the following decade. As with other new enterprises, control of street railways quickly became centralized until a few big operators controlled the trolleys of more than 100 eastern cities and towns.

Streetcars changed the character of big-city life. Before their introduction, urban communities were limited by the distances people could conveniently walk to work. The "walking city" could not easily extend more than 21/2 miles from its center. Streetcars increased this radius to 6 miles or more, which meant that the area of the city expanded enormously. Dramatic population shifts resulted as the better-off moved from the center in search of air and space, abandoning the crumbling, jam-packed older neighborhoods to the poor. Thus economic segregation speeded the growth of ghettos. Older peripheral towns that had maintained some of the self contained qualities of village life were swallowed up,

becoming metropolitan centers. The village of Medford, Massachusetts, had 11,000 residents in 1890 when the first trolley line from Boston reached it. By 1905 its population was 23,000.

As time passed, each new area, originally peopled by rising economic groups, tended to become crowded and then to deteriorate. By extending their tracks beyond the developed areas, the streetcar companies further speeded suburban growth because they assured developers and home buyers of efficient transportation to the center of town. By keeping fares low the lines also enabled poor people to "escape" to the countryside on holidays. As Kenneth T. Jackson explains in Crabgrass Frontier, "First, streetcar lines were built out to existing villages.... These areas subsequently developed into large communities. Second the tracks actually created residential neighborhoods where none existed before." In Los Angeles, Henry E. Huntington built his Pacific Electric Railway primarily to aid in selling homesites on land he had bought for a song before the tracks were laid. "For the first time in the history of the world," Jackson writes, the combined activities of builders, trolley operators, and real estate developers made it possible for middle-class families "to buy a detached home on an accessible lot in a safe and sanitary environment."

Advances in bridge design, notably John A. Roebling's perfection of the steel-cable suspension bridge, aided the ebb and flow of metropolitan populations. The Brooklyn Bridge, described by a poet as "a weird metallic Apparition . . . the cables, like divine messages from above ... cutting and dividing into innumerable musical spaces the nude immensity of the sky," was Roebling's triumph. Completed in 1883 at a cost of $15 million, it was soon carrying more than 33 million passengers a year over the East River between Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Even the high cost of urban real estate, which spawned the tenement, produced some beneficial results in the long run. Instead of crowding squat structures cheek by jowl on 25-foot lots, architects began to build upward. The introduction of iron skeleton construction, which freed the walls from bearing the immense weight of a tall building, was the work of a group of Chicago architects including William Le Baron Jenney, John A. Holabird, Martin Roche, John W. Root, and Louis H. Sullivan. Jenney's Home Insurance Building, completed in 1885, was the first metal-frame edifice. Height alone, however, did not satisfy these innovators; they sought a form that would reflect the structure and purpose of their buildings. Their leader was Louis Sullivan. Architects must discard "books, rules, precedents, or any such educational impedimenta" and design functional buildings, he argued. Sullivan's Wainwright Building in St. Louis and his Prudential Building in Buffalo, both completed in the early 1890s, combined beauty, modest construction costs, and efficient use of space in pioneering ways. Soon a "race to the skies" was on in the cities, and the words skyscraper and skyline entered the language.

The remarkable White City built for the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 by Daniel H. Burnham, with its broad vistas and acres of open space, led to a City Beautiful movement, the most lasting result of which was the development of many public parks. But efforts to relieve congestion in slum districts made little headway.

**Leisure Activities: More Fun and Games**

By bringing together large numbers of people, cities permitted many kinds of social activity that were difficult or impossible in rural areas. Cities remained unsurpassed as centers of artistic and intellectual life. New York saw the founding of the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1870, the Metropolitan Opera in 1883. Boston's Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1870 and the Boston Symphony in 1881. Other cities were equally hospitable to such endeavors.

Less sophisticated forms of recreation also flourished in urban environments. Saloons-seemingly on every street comer-were strictly male working-class institutions, usually decorated with pictures and other mementos of sports heroes, the bar perhaps under the charge of a retired pugilist. For workingmen, the saloon was a kind of club, a place to meet friends, exchange news and gossip, gamble, and eat as well as drink. The gradual reduction of the workday left men with more free time, which may explain the proliferation of saloons and the popularity of vaudeville and burlesques (these last described by one straight-laced critic as a "disgraceful spectacle of padded legs juggling and tight laced wriggling").

Opposition to sports as a frivolous waste of valuable time was steadily evaporating, replaced among the upper and middle classes by the realization that games like golf and tennis were "healthy occupations for mind and body." Bicycling became a fad, both as a means of getting from place to place and as a form of exercise and recreation.

Many of the new streetcar companies built picnic grounds and amusement parks at the ends of their lines. Thousands seeking to relax flocked to these "trolley parks" to enjoy a fresh-air meal or patronize the shooting galleries, merry-go-rounds, and "freak shows."

The postwar era also saw the development of spectator sports, again because cities provided the concentrations of population necessary to support them. Curious relationships developed between upper- and working-class interests and between competitive sports as pure enjoyment for players and spectators and sports as something to bet on. Horse racing had strictly upper-class origins, but racetracks attracted huge crowds of ordinary people more intent on picking a winner than on improving the breed.

Professional boxing was in a sense a hobby of the rich, who sponsored favorite gladiators, offered prizes, and often wagered large sums on the matches. But the audiences were made up overwhelmingly of young working-class males. The gambling and also the brutality of the bloody, bare-knuckle character of the fights led many communities to outlaw boxing.

The first widely popular pugilist was the legendary "Boston Strong Boy," John L. Sullivan, who became heavyweight champion in 1882. Sullivan's idea of fighting, according to his biographer, "was simply to hammer his opponent into unconsciousness." He became an international celebrity and made and lost large sums of money. Yet boxing remained a raffish, clandestine occupation. One of Sullivan's important fights took place in France, on the estate of Baron Rothschild, yet when it ended both he and his opponent were arrested.

Three major team games-baseball, football, and basketball-took their modern form during the last quarter of the century. Organized baseball teams, in most cases made up of upper-class amateurs, had emerged in the 1840s, and gained widespread popularity during the Civil War, as a major form of camp recreation for the troops.

The first professional team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, paid players between $800 and $1,400 for the season. In 1876, teams in eight cities formed the National League. The American League was founded in 1901. After a brief rivalry, the two leagues made peace in 1903, the year of the first World Series. Organized play led to codification of the rules and improvements in technique and strategy, for example, the development of "minor" leagues, impartial umpires calling balls and strikes and ruling on close plays, the use of catcher's masks and padded gloves, and the invention of various kinds of curves and other erratic pitches. As early as the 1870s, baseball was being called "the national game." Despite its urban origins, its broad green fields and dusty base paths gave the game a rural character that has only recently begun to fade.

Nobody "invented" baseball, but both football and basketball owe their present form to individuals. In 1891, while a student at a YMCA school, James Naismith attached peach baskets to the edge of an elevated running track in the gymnasium and drew up what are still the basic rules of basketball. The game was popular from the start, but since it was played indoors, it was not an important spectator sport until much later.

Football evolved out of English rugby. For many ,decades it remained almost entirely a college sport, played by upper and middle-class types. The first intercollege football game was held in 1869 (Princeton defeated Rutgers), and by the 1880s college football had become extremely popular.

Much of the game's modern form was the work of Walter Camp, the athletic director and football coach at Yale. Camp cut the size of teams from 15 to 11 players, and he invented the scrimmage fine, the four-down system, and the key position of quarterback. Camp's prestige was such that when he named his first All America team after the 1889 season, no one challenged his judgment. Camp claimed that amateur sports like football taught the value of hard work, cooperation, and fair play, but he was no angel, recruiting players who could not meet Yale's academic standards and finding ways of lining his players' pockets. All the problems that emphasis on athletic achievement poses for modern institutions of higher education existed in microcosm well before 1900.

Spectator sports had little appeal to women for many decades, and few women participated in organized athletics. Sports were "manly" activities; a women might ride a bicycle or play croquet and perhaps a little tennis, but to express interest in excelling in a sport was considered unfeminine.

**Religious Responses to Industrial Society**

The modernization of the great cities was not solving most of the social problems of the slums. As this fact became clear, a number of urban religious leaders began to take a hard look at the situation. Traditionally, American churchmen had insisted that where sin was concerned, there were no extenuating circumstances. To the well-to-do they preached the virtues of thrift and hard work; to the poor they extended the possibility of a better existence in the next world; to all they stressed taking responsibility for one's own behavior-and thus for one's own salvation. Such a point of view brought meager comfort to residents of slums. Consequently, the churches lost influence in the poorer sections. Furthermore, as better-off citizens followed the streetcar lines out from the city centers, their church leaders followed them.

An increasing proportion of the residents of the blighted districts were Catholics, and the Roman church devoted much effort to distributing alms, maintaining homes for orphans and old people, and other forms of social welfare. But church leaders seemed unconcerned with the social causes of the blight; they were deeply committed to the idea that sin and vice were personal, that poverty was an act of God. They deplored the rising tide of crime, disease, and destitution among their co-religionists, yet they failed to see the connection between these evils and the squalor of the slums.

The Catholic hierarchy tended to be at best neutral toward organized labor. Cardinal James Gibbons spoke favorably of the Knights of Labor in 1886 after the Haymarket bombing, but he took a dim view of strikes. The clergy's attitude changed somewhat after Pope Leo XIII issued his encyclical Rerum novarum (1891), which criticized the excesses of capitalism, defended the right of labor to form unions, and stressed the duty of government to care for the poor. Workers were entitled to wages that would guarantee their families a reasonable and frugal comfort, Leo declared. Concrete action by American Catholic leaders, however, was slow in coming.

The conservatism of most Protestant and Catholic clergymen did not prevent some earnest preachers from working directly to improve the lot of the city poor. Some followed the path blazed by Dwight L. Moody, a lay evangelist who conducted a vigorous campaign in the 1870s to persuade the denizens of the slums to cast aside their sinful ways. He went among them full of enthusiasm and God's love and made an impact no less powerful than that of George Whitefield during the Great Awakening of the 18th century or Charles Grandison Finney in the first part of the 19th. The evangelists founded mission schools in the slums and were prominent in the establishment of the Young Men's Christian Association (1851) and the Salvation Army (1880).

The evangelists paid little heed to the causes of urban poverty and vice, but a number of Protestant clergymen who had become familiar with the terrible problems of the slums began to preach the so-called Social Gospel, which focused on improving living conditions rather than on saving souls. If people were to lead pure lives, they must have food, decent homes, and opportunities to develop their talents. Social Gospelers advocated child labor legislation, the regulation of big corporations, and heavy taxes on incomes and inheritances.

The most influential preacher of the Social Gospel was probably Washington Gladden. At first Gladden, who was raised on a farm, had opposed all government interference in social and economic affairs, but his experiences as a minister in Springfield, Massachusetts, and Columbus, Ohio, exposed him to the realities of fife in industrial cities, and his views changed. In Applied Christianity (1886) he defended labor's right to organize and strike and denounced the idea that supply and demand should control wage rates. He favored factory inspection laws, strict regulation of public utilities, and other reforms.

Gladden never questioned the basic values of capitalism. By the 1890s a number of ministers had gone all the way to socialism. The Reverend William D. P. Bliss of Boston, for example, believed in the kind of welfare state envisioned by Edward Bellamy in Looking Backward. In addition to nationalizing industry, Bliss and other Christian Socialists advocated government unemployment relief programs, public housing and slum clearance projects, and other measures designed to aid the city poor.

**The Settlement Houses**

A number of earnest souls began to grapple with slum problems by organizing what were known as settlement houses. These were community centers located in poor districts that provided guidance and services to all who would use them. The settlement workers, most of them idealistic, well-to-do young people, lived in the houses and were active in neighborhood affairs.

The prototype of the settlement house was London's Toynbee Hall, founded in the early 1880s; by the turn of the 20th century, 100 such houses had been established in America, the most famous being Jane Addams's Hull House in Chicago (1889), Robert A. Woods's South End House in Boston (1892), and Lillian Wald's Henry Street Settlement in New York (1893).

Though some men were active in the movement, the most important settlement house workers were women fresh from college-the first generation of young women to experience the trauma of having developed their abilities only to find that society offered few opportunities to use them. The settlements provided an outlet for their hopes and energies. A reformer who visited Hull House around the turn of the century described the residents as "strong-minded energetic women, bustling about their various enterprises" and "mild-mannered men who slide from room to room apologetically."

Settlement workers explained American ways to the immigrants. Unlike most charity workers, who acted out of a sense of upper-class responsibility toward the unfortunate, they expected to benefit themselves by experiencing a way of life different from their own. Lillian Wald, a nurse by training, explained the concept succinctly in The House on Henry Street (1915): "We were to live in the neighborhood.... identify ourselves with it socially, and, in brief, contribute to it our citizenship."

Settlement workers soon discovered that practical problems absorbed most of their energies. They agitated for tenement house laws, regulation of the labor of women and children, and better schools. They established playgrounds in the slums, along with libraries, classes in arts and crafts, social clubs, and day nurseries. In Chicago, Jane Addams provided classes in music and art and maintained an excellent "little theater" group. Hull House soon boasted a gymnasium, a day nursery, and several social clubs. Addams also campaigned tirelessly for improved public services and for social legislation of all kinds. A few critics considered the settlement houses mere devices to socialize the unruly poor, but almost everyone appreciated their virtues. By the end of the century even the Catholics, slow to take up practical social reform, were joining the movement, partly because they were losing communicants to socially minded Protestant churches.

With all their accomplishments, the settlement houses seemed to be fighting a losing battle. "Private beneficence," Jane Addams wrote, "is totally inadequate to deal with the vast numbers of the city's disinherited." The slums, fed by an annual influx of hundreds of thousands, blighted new areas faster than settlement house workers could clean up old ones. It became increasingly apparent that the wealth and authority of the state must be brought to bear to keep abreast of the problem.

**Civilization and Its Discontents**

As the 19th century died, a majority of Americans-especially the comfortably well-off, the residents of small towns, the shopkeepers, many farmers, and some skilled workers-remained uncritical admirers of their civilization. However, blacks, immigrants, and others who failed to share equitably in the good things of life, along with a growing number of humanitarian reformers, found much to lament in their increasingly industrialized society. Giant monopolies flourished despite federal restrictions. The gap between rich and poor appeared to be widening, while the slum spread its poison and the materially successful made a god of their success. Human values seemed in grave danger of being crushed by impersonal forces typified by the great corporations.

In 1871 Walt Whitman, usually so full of extravagant praise for everything American, had called his fellow countrymen the "most materialistic and money-making people ever known.... I say we had best look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness of heart than at present."

By the late 1880s a well-known journalist could write to a friend: "The wheel of progress is to be run over the whole human race and smash us all." Others noted an alarming jump in the national divorce rate and an increasing taste for all kinds of luxury. "People are made slaves by a desperate struggle to keep up appearances," a Massachusetts commentator declared, and the economist David A. Wells expressed concern over statistics showing that heart disease and mental illness were on the rise. These "diseases of civilization," Wells explained, were 14 one result of the continuous mental and nervous activity which modem high-tension methods of business have necessitated."

Of course, intellectuals tend to be critical of the world they five in; Thoreau denounced materialism and the worship of progress in the 1840s as vigorously as any late-19th-century prophet of gloom. But the voices of the dissatisfied were rising. Despite the many benefits that industrialization had made possible, it was by no means clear around 1900 that the American people were really better off under the new dispensation.