

Wealth Against Commonwealth By Henry Demarest

Posted on September 5, 2019

Step 1

Henry Demarest's publication "Wealth against Commonwealth" is a whistle-blower to all the wrongs that could be attributed to the monopolistic corporations dominating the market, hence lacking an overall regulatory body. As such, corporations had the free will to alter their prices and practice restrictive measures to maintain their monopoly. This was the period dating back to after the American Civil War. The American industry exponentially grew during this period, which was spearheaded by several factors. When the railroad systems got set up in America, they opened up the entire country for industrial exploitation. It was projected that opportunities would now spread out through the states, with standards of living improving for the majority of the community. Other industries developed as a result of this, such as electricity firms, oil refineries, steel plants, and telegraphic companies.

These, however, were organized in such a way that they utilized the application of trusts and pools. This strategy followed the principles of the Darwinian Theory of society that called for the utmost acquisition of wealth to be concentrated amongst the smallest number of individuals possible. This created huge monopolies that strived to exploit fully human labor at minimal cost. Through labor policies and institutional bureaucracies, such schemes were made practical, making corporations a system for the elite in society. The Wealth Against Commonwealth by Henry Demarest tries to highlight these loopholes to create awareness in society concerning the wrongs. He offers no real solutions or the next course of action for the common man in the period but does his best to expose the knowledge of the oppressive economic structure to the public.

Tracing the background of the writer, he is a journalist by profession, and it is in his place to act as a whistle-blower. His publication to demonize monopolies comes at a very strategic period when slavery had just been abolished, and relating these corporations to the institution goes a long way to serve his purpose. He builds up a very compelling account for anyone exposed to these circumstances to relate to.

Step 2

The main argument raised by the author pertains to how the big businesses and not the government hurt the economy of the entire nation. According to Henry Demarest Lloyd, the corporations at the top are so much greedy and keep coming for everything that the poor majorities have. Despite the ability

of worldly riches to sustain us all, these tycoons want to keep everything to themselves to the extent that there is no longer any wealth left behind for the poor to share amongst themselves. If, by any chance, the process of civilization is destroyed, it would be at the hands of the “Great Money-makers” who have become monopolies that run businesses only to serve their own selfish needs. On realizing the prevalence of this trend by the rich, Henry, in his book *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, bombards the evil businesses that want to take control and regulate the prices of commodities in the market. That said, the author employs literary analysis such as logos, pathos, and ethos to highlight how equality between classes can be addressed. In his opinion, directly aiding an individual to become wealthy doesn’t enhance their position in society; rather, it only makes matters worse by dispersing the wealth of others. It would be much more prudent if similar assistance was offered in the form of education so that all individuals can help themselves. Otherwise, in all justice and reasons, eager men will always rise above the others.

Step 3

In this particular timeline, the greatest political achievement was the abolishment of slavery as an economic institution in America. This was ratified in the thirteenth amendment adopted in 1865, which called for the whole freedom of people of African descent under the pretext that man was born equal. This was in the spirit that no one man should profit themselves from the complete sweat of the other without mutual benefit to the two factions. The publication *Wealth Against Commonwealth* was made at a time when national institutions were being discouraged from cultivating profits off people’s backs.[1] As such, the monopolies worked in an exploitative model that did not consider the well-being of the labor force. In the Gilded period, working conditions were very unfavorable. Due to the effects of the Civil War, there was an excess of unskilled labor, and corporations developed long working schedules under adverse conditions such as those subjected to slavery. Henry states that “they are gluttons of luxury and power, rough, socialized, believing that man should be kept terrorized.” By this, he alludes to the terrorizing of slaves that was being extended in the new industrial sector by the monopolies.

The reconstruction era in the United States saw the nation grow to be the top industrial capitalist nation in the entire world. The reconstruction, despite its unprecedented scale, was faced with a couple of challenges, one of them being that the working class demanded more in the share profits generated by the companies.[2] Secondly, the nature of competition between the existing firms was unhealthy for the market. These were some of the concerns raised in the primary source, which were largely attributed to the capitalistic nature of the economy, which allowed for the accumulation of wealth as well as practicing restrictive measures so as to hoard the market for greater profitability. The nature of the monopolies was first shielded from competing with one another by the steep charges imposed on them by the railway system. The government did not offer a regulatory board, and thus, companies would limit production so as to generate demand, which would be met with the supply of overpriced goods. This was good for business as it kept desirable profit margins, but the system exploited the laborer and the consumer.

This generated activism, which was rampant among journalists and political free thinkers. The dream for a better country that encompassed basic freedoms for its citizenry was pursued by the people agitating for reforms like Henry Demarest. The wealth against the commonwealth coincides with different activist agendas aimed at improving the systems in the country.[3] The Gilded Period denotes the timeline in America after the Civil War when America's industry seemed to thrive from a physical appeal, but the living conditions of the people worsened. Historians argue that these were the formative years of the country's dynamic industry and, as such, provided a learning platform for better management in the future.

This period was also marked by the many reforms that happened, especially in the political and socioeconomic sectors. This was in the instance of the Civil Service Act that was implemented in the period to check the government's excesses by cross-examining candidates for government posts with strategic tests to articulate their integrity. Also, the interstate act of commerce was adopted to curb the corruption in the railway system, which restricted small firms from sending their commodities. Later, the Sherman Act of Antitrust was articulated so as to eradicate the control of the market by monopolies.[4] The wealth against the commonwealth fits well in the political and social climate of the day, exposing the monopolies to the people ignorant of their operations as well as pressing for reforms in the gilded timeline.

These actions did not come without their set of blowbacks, especially to the people. There was increased violence, especially from the labor force to their employers, and race struggles reached new heights, with states like Tennessee reviving their Ku Klux Klan movement. The farmers also adopted a militant approach due to the heavy debts they faced because they lacked an elaborate distribution of income generated from their output. They pressed the government for urgent reforms in taxation rates and added to the money disposable for the farmer.

These agitations are essential to note as they echo the same message as in the primary source. The state of affairs was largely influenced by the monopolies. The resources and wealth generated by these corporations were strategically used to maintain a status quo in the country with less intrusion of the government in industrial affairs.

Step 4

The development of ideologies such as Social Darwinism, as well as the emergence of monopolies, came after the opportunity presented itself in the decades after the Civil War. The American industry expanded drastically when railroads became the first big business. The construction of railroads meant that the steel, electric power, oil refining, and telegraph line industries required a new form of organization and management in the form of trust and pools. It is at this point that monopolies developed to endorse the acquisition of great wealth.

The huge industrial class and the political institutions seemed to be in cahoots against the working

class. The copious wealth of the corporations was a direct threat to the commonwealth of the general population, as expressed by Henry Demarest. In this timeline, the corporations are seen to have concentrated their power over the governing bodies and, hence, are able to manipulate the system with corruption.[5] This is highly undesirable as the common man is left vulnerable and exploited. At a time when liberties are being sorted for the minority, the oppressed and institutionalized wealth against the commonwealth serves as an ideal publication to unmask the wrongs in the American industry during the reconstruction era.

The book *Wealth against Commonwealth* by Henry Demarest was written at this time to fight against this oppression. That said, the historical significance of this writing is that it echoed the pleas and gave insight into what individuals from the other end felt with regard to the emergence of the various industries and the ways in which they were managed. Not everything was as smooth as it sounded. To make matters worse, the government had lost control of the few minority leaders who were now on the verge of becoming leaders who controlled the wealth of nations.

To present his argument, the author appeals to logic, perceived character, and emotions of the audience. The use of the three literal techniques of logos, pathos, and ethos makes the readers directly relate to whatever was happening at the time when the book was written.[6] With respect to logos, Henry encapsulates the actions and dealings of the big corporations, which are achieved without any form of government interference. He also uses logic when he observes there have always been enough resources to cater to all. From then on, the author uses logical appeal to show the reader that the establishment of monopolies is an evil that is deeply rooted in the nation, as compared to any other form of public power. According to him, while liberty promotes wealth, wealth destroys liberty.

The author relates to the emotions and feelings of the readers using pathos when he illustrates how the privileged take advantage of the underprivileged. In such a monopolistic country, when middle-class individuals work, the high cuts are shared among the tycoons while the poor continue to die due to hunger and starvation. By creating such an image, we are able to familiarize ourselves with the toils and hustles that the less fortunate go through on a daily basis while the “captains of the industry” continue to enjoy the fruits of other people’s efforts. The author observes that there are enough riches for all people to enjoy and live in a Utopia. As much as this is the case, some people are too greedy and only desire to control all these riches for their selfish interests. In truism, the majority are not able to afford anything, whereas the minority possess too much of everything such that they are even willing to sell part of it.

Onwards, appeal to ethos is evident in the way the author describes the need for government intervention to control and regulate the monopolies. The tone that Henry uses in this description signifies a concerned person. He is concerned about how a few individuals can sink the whole nation due to their lack of humanity.[7] Indeed, civilization will not only be destroyed by barbarians but by greedy individuals with extreme appetites and who know no limits to their actions.[8] These minority groups are considered public enemies due to the continued use of fear to control the lives of the

majority. Their actions can only be termed as criminal, deceitful, and murderous and, as such, should be suppressed by holding a mindset that seeks to stop people from blindly following the principles set by the minority group.

From the precedent, it is clear that Henry's arguments were convincing and depicted the government as lacking control over the monopolies that run and control the wealth of nations. There was no way that the government was able to control these corporations, and surprisingly, this problem persists to this day. The worst part about it is that these huge corporations made it look like the country had no wealth while, in reality, the country had enough resources to maintain all people in a utopia. It may be argued that perhaps the government was also bought off by these gluttonous businesses and that the shrinking middle class was now at a breaking point. Although the author clearly expressed these issues, he failed to offer a lasting solution, but at least it grabbed the attention of the common man.