

TRUSTS.

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It is not always when one is called upon to make a speech that he really has something he wants to say. I have today. When I was invited up here to address the Grangers I accepted the invitation promptly, not because of the good time I remember having had here with you a few years ago, but because I knew no better audience to address on the subject uppermost in my mind than one composed of my old neighbors and farmer friends of the state of New York. You have had in the past plenty of advice from me as to your crops and agricultural methods. You know what a favorite topic that is with me, but today I am going to branch off and talk to you about those horrible creatures you read and hear about—financial combinations and trusts. I have always believed in being perfectly frank, and I know it isn't popular nor fashionable nowadays to say much in defence of organized capital, but if all people said exactly what they thought there would not be so many misunderstandings or so much perversion of truth, and I think if all people said exactly what they think about trusts there would not be so much nonsense spoken and written about them.

Hard times are responsible for a great deal of suffering, but the worst feature of them is that they give opportunity for so many demagogues and unsound thinkers to wrongly influence public opinion. In such times seeds of discontent and prejudice are planted which germinate and grow like poisonous weeds in a garden, until common sense and industry pluck them out and cast them aside. We have been through such a period during the last few years and the demagogues have had so much to say, that some people fear the very bottom of society is falling out. Because people have been poor the rich are blamed. Business was dull, it was claimed, because there was no money. There was no money because the money power had it all locked up. Industrial competition had been killed by the combinations of capital. Thus at the doors of the rich was laid the responsibility for misery, and the hard times have been used to excite prejudice against all who hold property, whether acquired by inheritance or by hard work. This feeling will certainly diminish with the return of good times, but such sentiment is a firebrand whose smoldering embers will work injury even after the flames have been quenched. Among those who come to our shores from foreign lands indoctrinated with socialistic or anarchistic ideas such a prejudice is not un-

natural, but there should be no chance for it to spread or grow in genuine American hearts, and those who for selfish or political reasons stir it up deserve the shame, not the favor of the people.

All alleged evils which agitate a community must finally be analyzed by the cold logic of common sense. When a person is very sick it is easy to make him think he has almost any kind of disease, but when he is well you will not find him an easy prey to imaginary ailments. So it is with a community. When business is dull, crops are poor, prices are low and employment is scarce, the people only know the deprivations which they suffer, and any plausible explanation is accepted as the true cause to the effect. Sometimes it is one theory that captivates; sometimes it is another. When prosperity is restored and idleness vanishes, people cease to brood over imaginary causes of misery and vie with their neighbors in getting all they can of the good things of life instead of sulking enviously because others have been fortunate and they have not. Luckily for us all—for who has not felt the results of the last four year's stagnation in business and industry—an end of hard times seems to be in sight, and there are enough evidences of returning prosperity to permit us to look at things as they are without being prejudiced by pessimistic and discouraging conditions.

In discussing trusts or similar combinations of capital we must lay aside such prejudice and passion as demagogues like to arouse and measure their evils or their benefits by ordinary standards of intelligence and common sense. We find by such observation that the trust is not in itself necessarily bad; but whatever its nature it has come into existence in strict accordance with the law of social progress—the law of co-operation and organization. To inveigh against trusts merely because they are trusts is to cry out against combinations of human effort and possession in every field of activity—to set one's self against the laws of progress and in favor of retrogression and anarchy. The tendency of the times in industry and commerce, in charity, or in science is all towards co-operation and organization; and that tendency, exhibiting itself in a small and comparatively unimportant way at first, has become more and more an important feature of our civilization and an essential accompaniment in every field of effort.

For centuries there were few industrial or commercial enterprises that could not be directed and managed entirely by individuals acting each for himself and without association

with others; but with the growth of trade and the multiplication of industries and transportation facilities, associations of individuals, acting as corporations were necessary to conduct large enterprises and finally the corporations themselves were forced by conditions to combine, when engaged in the same line of effort, in order that greater economies, better results, and more profits might be attained. These are the present so-called corporate monopolies and trusts. They are to be judged just as individuals are to be judged—by their deeds. Because one combination of capital enjoys for a time a complete monopoly and uses its power tyrannically and unjustly, all combinations of capital should not be denounced, no more than all churches should be condemned because one has been intolerant, or all statesmen denounced because one has been corrupt. It sounds large to speak of the millions of money represented by certain corporate combinations, but those millions are not in gold or in silver, but in factories, in steamships, in railroads, giving employment to hundreds of thousands of men, feeding thousands and thousands of families, enriching the entire land, and sometimes enriching and sometimes impoverishing the shareholders and managers of these great interests. Such combinations should be judged broadly by the way they exercise their power, by the benefits which such a system of co-operation confers, not by occasional exhibition of greed or tyranny.

The bitterness which we occasionally see exhibited towards great corporate combinations is the same spirit which has manifested itself in all generations against industrial progress. It is the same spirit which has opposed the introduction of labor-saving machinery. Every advance has meant some sacrifices—some men thrown out of their former employments, some occupations destroyed, some readjustment of industrial conditions. When Cartwright invented a power loom in 1785 there was so much opposition on the part of the operatives that they burned a mill containing 500 of the looms, because they feared the new invention would mean less work. Today half a million people find employment at the looms in the United States alone, receiving wages of over \$160,000,000 a year and over \$600,000,000 worth of their product is turned out annually. Recall the old laborious process of separating by hand the cotton fibre from the seed and consider what a benefit to mankind has resulted from Eli Whitney's invention and now by the advantage which combined capital has been able to take of that and other mechanical devices over seven million bales of cotton are produced in our country every year and over \$250,000,000 worth of cotton goods are put on the market annually. If the

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