

profit and loss lies within the scope of the decimal part of a cent.

And it has come to pass that practically unlimited means of production are confronted by limited consumption.

Competition.

Obviously, when supply is steadily in excess of demand, prices must tend downward to the point where only the strongest can survive and the weak must go to the wall. The struggle to live and to sell is competition.

When the boom is on, the mill runs full time. When reaction comes, the mill slacks down to half time or no time, and men are thrown out of employment, while interest and rust eat on. Competition means liberty, it is said, and it is true; but it means also liberty to the sweater and the bloodsucker to compete with the employer who wants to pay fair wages. It means also liberty to the tricky merchant who fails often and grows rich to compete with the merchant who pays his debts.

There is no doubt that one of the causes impelling business into combinations is disgust and revulsion against certain phases of competition.

Commercial Evolution and Demagogism.

Producers have sought in vain to bring about steady prices by adjusting output to demand.

First there was the so-called "agreement among gentlemen." Next there was the trust combine, which took alarm at court decisions and accepted the statutory invitations of New Jersey and West Virginia to incorporate under their laws.

The modern incorporated trust is a development of commercial evolution. To say that trusts are due to party is cheapest demagogism. However, there is seldom an important phase of national existence that is not taken advantage of by demagogues as a means of getting themselves elected to office.

Generation after generation has set its stakes on the road to progress and the world has moved up, moved by, and moved on and set other stakes, but crime and disease and the demagogue are still in the procession. Short crops, destructive storms, a dry time in summer, a flood in harvest, or an unseasonable frost are the demagogue's opportunities. He appeals to class cupidity and jealousy. He magnifies and inflames all class differences and urges that the state shall "constitute itself a kind of providence to break contracts and regulate anew the conditions of industry."

The trust belongs to a group of modern phenomena. It is one of the most conspicuous results of a strong modern tendency to centralization. Trusts have been forming so rapidly within the last few years as to rouse the serious concern of students and statesmen.

The newspapers assert that more than ten hundred million dollars went into

trusts in 1898, and that in the first three months of 1899 more than twice that sum was incorporated. The formation of a million dollar corporation has been for some time a matter of frequent chronicle.

Laws Seeking to Regulate.

Monopoly is not a new thing under the sun, and laws attempting to regulate mankind in labor, trade and commerce are not new. In the reign of Edward III. (1349) was passed "the statute of laborers," which provided that whereas in the recent pestilence many workmen and servants had died, and whereas, many seeing the necessities of masters, would not serve except for excessive wages, therefore every able-bodied person under the age of 60, not having wherewith to live, on being required, should serve him that did require him at the wages that had prevailed in the twentieth year of that reign. It provided, too, that victuals should be sold at reasonable prices. By subsequent laws in the same reign it was sought to define and declare what men should eat and what they should wear.

In the reign of Elizabeth (1562) a law was made whereby it was intended to rate the wages of artificers, laborers and other persons "according to the plenty, scarcity, necessity and respect of the time." In the reign of Edward IV. statutes were also passed defining "the length and breadth of cloth to be sold." Later, when divers persons did begin to make "ultra wares" not of "good stuff, and right making," wardens were created, whose duty it was to "survey the workmanship of artificers."

Laws were also passed in the reign of Edward III. creating and punishing offenses known as engrossing, forestalling, regrating and badgering. By these laws buying and selling at wholesale and holding for a subsequent rise was made a crime. In the reign of George III. (1772) they were repealed because it was said such laws had a tendency to discourage growth and to enhance the price of commodities.

In the reign of Edward VI., because it was said victualers had conspired to sell their victuals at unreasonable prices, and artificers, handicraftsmen and laborers had confederated in respect to their work, it was provided that all such persons should be punished and all such brotherhoods should be dissolved.

All these laws had become an obsolete antiquity by Blackstone's time and were never observed to any extent. The weight of authority is that these ancient English statutes did not come to us as a part of the English common law.

Attempts were made during the period of our revolutionary war to control prices by statute. The continental congress, under the date of November 22, 1777, among other things, recommended that commissioners be appointed by the

different states to convene "in order to regulate and ascertain the price of labor, manufactures, internal produce, and commodities imported from foreign parts; also to regulate the charges of inholders." Thereupon many of the states passed laws "to regulate the wages of mechanics and laborers, the prices of goods and commodities, and the charges of inholders," and then promptly repealed them. The attempt by the state to fix arbitrary prices had, as stated by the governor of Rhode Island, resulted in "an almost entire stop of vending the necessary articles of life."

These attempts to regulate prices by law were colonial war measures, and failed even as war measures.

Progress and Combination.

On the night of October 23, 1781, the watchmen of Philadelphia, going their nightly rounds, uttered the welcome cry, "Ten o'clock; starlight night; Cornwallis is taken." Independence had passed from a declaration to a fact.

From thirteen colonies we have grown to forty-five states, gridironed with railroads, lighted by electricity, and occupied by the most progressive people on earth, and we have been recently adding to our possessions. We have passed rapidly out of the period of a few moderate but conspicuous fortunes into a time of complex business activity where millionaires are common and Croesus would be only well-to-do.

Invention and capital have harnessed steam, electricity and gravitation. Human labor has been replaced by machinery, the ultimate effect of which has been to greatly increase human employment. It is said that "in England, before the invention of the spinning jenny, there were 5,200 spinners and 2,700 weavers. Ten years later there were 105,000 spinners and 247,000 weavers. In 1833 there were 487,000 spinners and and weavers. Today, taking the collateral industries dependent upon the cotton, woolen and flax industries, not less than 2,000,000 persons are employed instead of the 8,000 employed at the time the spinners and weavers broke the machines because they destroyed labor." In 1800 the weaver could buy ten yards of cloth with a week's wages. In 1890 he could buy 150 yards and work thirty hours less per week.

The railroads displaced stage coaches and freight wagons, and men complained because they were thrown out of employment. Now, the railroads of the United States alone give employment to 750,000 men, not including the army engaged in collateral industries.

The mighty enterprises which have exalted and embellished human existence would not have been possible without combinations of capital.

But there is such a thing as too much combination. Formerly, competition meant combination. Lately, however, it has come to mean a job for some ex-