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Article II

*Why did Some American Business Get So Big?*

This article is about the Standard Oil Monopoly. It talks about how petroleum was the most used material all over the world and how it was the United States greatest export. But instead of many companies making the petroleum, there was one giant company that was making it all and taking over all the smaller companies, leaving them unable to have much business. It also talks about the price of oil and petroleum and how they kept rising and how the monopoly was making too much money. There are many issues brought up in the article including ethical, economic and legal issues.

One ethical issue that is raised in this article is how the oil monopoly was driving other companies out of business or into bankruptcy. Because of the fact that the Standard Oil Monopoly controlled most of the petroleum production, other companies couldn’t make any which meant that their business’s either collapsed or they might have even gone into bankruptcy which caused even more problems. Another thing the monopoly did was control the shipment of oil so that even if people wanted to buy a lot of oil to make more petroleum, they couldn’t.

One economic issue that is evident in this article is the fact that people were being charged too much for petroleum. The monopoly caused the prices of oil barrels to go up and they also put taxes on petroleum so that people were paying more than they used too; and they were also paying more than they needed to. According to the article, the Standard Oil Monopoly had millions of dollars left over each month so they obviously could have been charging less.

One legal issue put forth in this article is how the monopoly wasn’t letting other companies do business. This issue, which also ties in with the ethical behavior of the monopoly, has to do with the fact that the monopoly was controlling the railroads. Due to secret dealings with the railroad company, the monopoly owned all the oil cars so then the competing companies could not get any oil and therefore they could not do any business which might have been a little illegal.

These issues all point towards one school of thought that we talked about: the autonomy school. This school believed in self-interest and maximizing personal gain and they also believed in having the greatest economic freedom for the individual. This is what the monopolies were doing when they kept growing; maximizing their self-interest. They didn’t care about other companies or the people they were selling to, they only cared about themselves and making a profit. This also correlates with the beliefs of Adam Smith because he believed in maximizing your self-interest, competition and laissez-faire.

There are many positive and negative aspects of the article. One negative aspect is that there was a big problem with the Standard controlling the oil. As made obvious in the article, John D. Rockefeller was monopolizing all the oil in the United States which was not good because it led to other bad things like the fact that people were paying too much for petroleum and oil, the monopoly was controlling trains and companies were going out of business because they couldn’t compete with the Standard. I don’t know if there were a lot of positive developments in this article but one was that the government started to regulate big business more so that companies could not start to monopolize their trade. That was important because otherwise, there would be a lot of monopolizing companies today and it would be very hard for people to compete in their work which is an important goal in America. Overall, I think the events had a positive effect on American history. People might have had some trouble getting oil for a while and some companies may have gone out of business but in the end, the Standard was broken up and other good companies were created.

There were many underlying principles that led to the formation of the Standard Oil Monopoly. One principle was the mindset of John D. Rockefeller. Through most of his life, Rockefeller was a very philanthropic man and felt guilty when he accumulated too much money (John D. and Standard Oil). All of his philanthropic deeds might have eased Rockefeller’s conscience when he decided to expand his oil company to make it more profitable. I also think that wealth was important at this time because it wasn’t long after the Great Depression and people were tired of having nothing, so people became greedy and tried to get as much money as they could. I think another cause of the monopoly was that oil was becoming more popular in the United States so Rockefeller knew he could profit in the oil business so he decided to take the whole thing over instead of just profiting from a small section of the oil business.

For a long time, the government did nothing about the Standard Oil Monopoly and that’s one reason why it caused so many problems for so long, but when Theodore Roosevelt became president his main goal was to break up monopolies and trusts. In order to do this, Roosevelt used the Sherman Antitrust Act. The act was not used much before Roosevelt’s presidency but he used it a lot to break up the big, controlling companies, like the Standard Oil Monopoly. The Standard was eventually split into 34 companies some of which became popular companies like Exxon and Mobil (Standard Oil). At the time, the Standard wasn’t really good for American but in the long run, things seem to have turned out okay.

Article III

*Sweatshop Conditions Horrify a Factory Inspector*

The main ethical issue raised in this article is the harsh and inhumane working conditions that sweatshop workers endure as they are indirectly forced to work in the small factories of Philadelphia in 1893. There were many examples of such unbearable conditions in the article as the factory inspector explored two sweatshops in Philadelphia. The sweatshops were averagely 3-floor buildings, with the quartering areas on the first floor, and the work areas on the second and third floors. Workers were adult women and males of all ages. The living conditions were terrible, “ashes were strewn all over the floor…” and “the stairway gave evidence of mistaken use too disgusting to mention” the article says. The thought that people could be forced to live like this is a very controversial ethical issue.

One economic issue in this article is the extremely low rate of pay that these workers received. Pay was not on an hourly rate like it is today; workers were paid per product they produced, no matter how long the labor took. One statement in the article reads “…the coat I used to get $3 for making two years ago, I now get $1.50 for… …I am glad to take just what I can get”, illustrating the meager amounts of money that the sweatshop workers fought to receive.

The legal issue in this article is the blatant breaking of the Factory Law. The Factory Act was passed in 1833 and established a set of rules to protect the rights of factory workers. Hours per working day were limited and children under the age of nine were no longer permitted to work. This article states that there were young boys living and working in the sweatshops of Philadelphia; the sweatshop owners were ignoring the Factory law.

The issues brought up in this article are relative to the economic, ethical and legal views of Thomas Hobbes. Thomas Hobbes had the idea that man was born with a selfish instinct in life. The article states “…the reckless spirit manifest among those people, their total disregard for any law, only that which will bring them dollars and cents…” which also relates to Hobbes’ speculation that without strong government control, man would live as they please in a “war of every man against every man”.

In 1893, Philadelphia was a highly industrialized city in the United States and with the onset of the Panic of 1893, sweatshops were prominent. Sweatshops only thrived because of the depression and large unemployment of workers in the United States; people would be willing to work for next to nothing under any conditions.

One negative development from the existence of sweatshops is the bad name that becomes associated with industry. Industry, before the development of sweatshops was a business that all citizens wished to be involved in. As employment rates went down, so did the standard of treatment for workers in the industry business, as well as their wages. Now industry jobs, no matter how necessary, were harsh and unsafe jobs to have.

Government policy took more control of the issue of sweatshops with the Illinois Factory Inspection Law in 1893. This law established an even safer set of rules for workers than the previous Factory Act. Women’s hours were cut back to eight hours per day and the minimum child labor age was raised from nine years old to fourteen. Although based in Chicago, this law was geared to change the conditions in sweatshops in other major cities as well. Although declared unconstitutional later in 1895, this first step led to the formation of groups against unfair labor conditions such as the National Child Labor Committee of 1904 and the National Women’s Trade Union League of 1903.

Article VII

*Women’s Business, New and Old*

Women have been unjustly suppressed by man for centuries. As the United States progressed and freed slaves the women were still lacking the right the “blacks” had now obtained. As the century went one, though the African Americans would later fight for civil rights, blacks were attaining rights that had solely been a luxury partaken of by the “white man”. Women continued in their pursuit of placement in the economic and business world of the United States. This article speaks about the suppression of women and their rise beyond the bounds of limitations set forth. Several women were able to achieve success at a staggering level, yet most were attaining success through “feminine professions”. Few did manage success in other fields but the boom of women in the job market was yet to come. Women were also highly involved in family businesses doing such things as accounting, book keeping, etc. Though women were not yet prevalent in the working force they were accomplishing success; some through the film industry and others from jobs specifically allotted to the female gender.

One ethical issues proposed in this is article is the issue of women being prevented from entering the business world as the men were. An ethical lapse is being illustrated due to the fact that the men were being able to enter into the work force, whether black or white, while the females retained the household duties. There is no just reason for this mistreatment and therefore can be seen as an injustice and ethically wrong.

One economic issue brought forth by the article is that as industries increased and expanded so did the involvement of investors and the meddling of companies. Women were very important in the expansion of the film industry. Such women as Dorothy Arzner, Mary Pickford and Mae West were pioneers in the film industry, not only being the forerunners as directors, actresses and producers but as well the first people to delve into this industry.

One legal issue exemplified in this article was the rising fight for rights. Women were not able to vote, own a home, etc. They yearned for a means of attaining what African American males had begun to achieve. Essentially they wanted independence. The law prohibited women as it once had prohibited blacks. The apparent legal issue is civil rights which later would spur the Women’s Rights Movement.

Many philosophers called for one to work for one’s self. The school of autonomy believed in self-interest and maximizing personal gain and they also believed in having the greatest economic freedom for the individual. Women needed to have enough self-interest to motivate them to go against the bindings of society and to seek wealth and success. They need not care that all the men had assumed they would be the “bread winners” and that all women were to stay home and care for the household. Women had to be motivated to achieve self-gain. This links with the beliefs of Adam Smith, he believed in self-interest, competition, laissez-faire and self-gain.

One positive effect shown in the article is women beginning to work and becoming successful. They were able to work. Though later the film industry would reject them women were able to attain jobs and success from this field. Also women were able to achieve success from jobs involving hairstyling, clothing and cooking. Though the limitations set forth by society restrained them from pursuing other field many were able to amount a great deal of wealth form these fields. A negative aspect that this article highlights was the tendency of industries to allow women to participate and to help them grow in their infancies but as the industries expanded they begin to have involvement by large companies and investors which lead to restrictions. One restriction was that women working within the industry were frowned upon therefore dramatically decreasing the number of female workers within the industry. This article illustrates the beginning of the film industry and its sudden rejection of women workers as it began to grow and to be invested into. I believe it has been positive. Though women had been rejected after expansion without them industries, such as the film industry wouldn’t be as great as they are today.

One principle was that of a communal success, as one benefited so could another. Everyone could share wealth and benefits; success was abundant and everyone could take part. Another principle was the belief in human rights and everyone’s applicableness to them. The United States was at a stage where civil rights were necessary. Everyone wanted the right to work and to have success, the “American dream”. Laws had been passed giving the slaves freedom. Though they may not have yet completely received all rights that were justly due they were progressing further than the women were. At this beginning of a boom in our history businesses were expanding and essentially America was expanding. Everyone was able to attain wealth and several women realized this and worked towards achieving it. As new industries popped up more opportunities for work did as well, giving women the chance to engage in the working force.

The 19th amendment was passed on June 4, 1919 stating ”The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any States on Account of sex. The Congress shall have the power by appropriate legislation to enforce the provisions of this article.” This adaption of the United States to deal with a rising issue gave women the right to vote and further solidified the United States progressive nature and belief in human rights. After the installation of this vote women were no longer viewed as solely hose maidens but rather as citizens of the United States of America. The initial Women’s Right Movement caused a wave in the 60s that further stimulated the fervor in which women were seeking equality. “In the world of work, large numbers of women have entered the professions, the trades, and businesses of every kind. We have opened the ranks of the clergy, the military, the newsroom. More than three million women now work in occupations considered "nontraditional" until very recently.” This is only a miniscule glimpse and summation of the tremendous effects of the Women’s Rights Movement and the 19th amendment.

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