Ivy

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History and Anthropology

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Industrial Revolution

Once the civil war ended, the American nation joined hands to rebuild America. During this phase, many white farmers ended in poverty. They started producing cotton which was a major change since in the pre-war phase, they used to work less for heavy sums. On the other hand, the pressing challenge for the Southern population was devising a new pattern of labor. They actually wanted a substitute for slavery. At this point of time in American history, people were becoming more urbanized, since they started adopting a business as a new mode of their income. Agriculture lost the sense of priority and American people started developing their interests in industry and business. With time, when industrialization expanded, the large cities became more developed. On the other hand, the railroad minimized the distance between cities and America started witnessing a new wave of industrialization. Despite such advancement in the private sector, the national economic growth was dependent largely on government-owned businesses, which sparked competition among the private sector.

Industrialization was more rapidly toward the North. It resulted in massive migrations from the Southern part of the country toward North. This industrialization and reconstruction piloted a new era. Mark Twain called this era ‘the gilded age’, which he believed was supposedly covered with gold, with harsh realities inside (Johnson 57). The years after 1865, witnessed enormous industrialization and development which resulted in bringing massive economic, political and social transformations. The gilded age was further compounded with the government-backed finances, new technological advancements, and expansion in communication networks. These advancements expanded the consumer market and business consolidation. The American government, subsidized transportation, and communication which helped in opening new markets. These communication and technological revolution restructured management and financial structures, which consequently built monopolies. These monopolies increased the use of natural resources by some particular cooperation. Parallel to these all developments, there was a negative side of this revolution. The large corporations started employing skilled labors, which impacted negatively over the unskilled population.

Machine development was another trend of industrialization. It helped in the mass production of the goods which reduced the cost of production and living since it massively replaced the labor (Johnson 59). Another useful impact of mass production was the decline in prices of daily commodities. Innovations in industry and technology, gradually expanded to agricultural sector. In the agricultural sector, the reforms included reduced fuel consumption, declined lighting cost and improvement in mining and seed bowing. These unprejudiced developments reveal how industrialization, increased mechanization and communication, and technological advancements spurred the American economy. As a result of this mega restructuring of American society, a new class of wealthy American emerged. This class maintained a social gap from the less developed people and enjoyed influence in politics and business (Johnson 73). Among some rich Americans, there were people like John Rockefeller, P. Morgan, and Andrew Carnegie. These businessmen influenced the political hierarchy through their economic standing (Johnson 74).

These businessmen were often depicted by cartoons carrying money bags. People from that time American society use to refer them as political machines, which indicated their monopolies over the political process. Practically these influential businessmen blocked the entrance to American Senate, and more and more people considered being rich as the only condition for being a Senator in that time America. This suggests that the American government at that time remain under a large influence of rich Americans. These powerful Americans made their way to the government by exploiting the labor class, who worked day and night to bring large economic advantaged to these monopolists. Since these monopolists had control of the government in their hand, therefore, a normal American had the least say in matters of their interest. Different to the classic sense of monopolists, the history suggests that these wealth American worked for the financial and institutional betterment of America. Despite their positive role in making America, ordinary Americans consider them corrupt and self-centered.

According to Lehr, these monopolists held large social standings and it was almost impossible to stand against them in the society (Lehr 109). Lehr argues that these mega monopolists also ruined the businesses of middle-class industrialists. There were many small and middle-class industrialists who became the victims of their ruthlessness both in the political and economic sense. They smashed small businesses and took over their control. Doing this helped them to keep the competitors out of the business. A little later, a new strategy was adopted by these monopolists. They teamed up with the government-owned financial cooperation’s and denied lending loans to small or middle businessmen. They made the provisions of lending business loans so harsh that just these hand full of people complied with such provisions. This increased the social gap too much extent, which till date remains evident. As a repercussion of all this, the immigrant and the working class largely suffered the aftermath of this monopoly.

Andrew Carnegie writes in ‘Gospel of Wealth’ that despite the growing difference between the wealthy and middle poor lower classes, the wealthier considered their social responsibility to help the poor (Lehr 119). The wealthy people believed that if they take care of the needs of the poor class of American society, they can lead a simple and pure life. Despite such kind of heart attitude, the wealthy people considered themselves as socially superior. They use to avoid the gatherings of Middle Americans. Since till that times, a proper court system was not present in America, therefore the rich American usually decided the fate of people. In doing so, they use to consider whether these people have benefitted them in the past, or can they be of any advantage to them in the future. These social obligations were conditions were subject to their possession of wealth. Among the wealthy people of those times, Carnegie spent his money on the betterment of the poor class. He laid the basis for Carnegie libraries and Carnegie steel where he employed many ordinary Americans.

The phase of industrialization after the civil war transformed the economic structure of America. For the first time in American history, people witnessed immense growth and such large inflows of cash. Despite the fact, that it divided American society into two classes, the industrial revolution was beneficial for America. This industrial revolution also worked for the betterment of American labor class. Although they were not the equal beneficiary of enlarged economy, they developed in them the sense of unity and cooperation. This era brought in them the sense of union ship, class struggles and helped guided their way toward a better life. An unbiased analysis suggests that if the industrial revolution has not helped the wealthy classes to emerge, they would have emerged otherwise. This is how the industrial revolution was beneficial for American society. After the industrial revolution, American society witnessed a new era of development and prosperity. From that time onwards, everything in America started revolving around business and economy. Generally, this gilded era left impactful signs over the America of today. If the industrial revolution would have not taken place, the American economy would have witnessed slow growth. For all these reasons, the American society of today credit the post-civil war industrial revolution for their enormous successes.

Works Cited:

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Lehr, Elizabeth Drexel. *“King Lehr” and the Gilded Age*. Pickle Partners Publishing, 2018.