



Specialized Agency

The Second Industrial Age

Isaiah Hathaway and Isaac Hathaway
Co-Chairs



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Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates and Sponsors,

Welcome to GSMUN XXVI's Second Industrial Revolution Committee! Your Chairs Isaac & Isaiah Hathaway are simply elated at the thought of meeting all of you. As delegates in the Second Industrial Revolution Committee, you will be stepping into a world of smoke, corruption, and greed. As a cobbled-together coalition of farmers, workers, wealthy elite, and politicians you will find a way to crack down on corruption and the large monopolies that dominate the economic landscape. Picking up in the beginnings of the Garfield Administration, this committee will focus on the impact of monopolies and on the festering corruption that lurks beneath the surface of Gilded Age governance. Each delegate is a vital member of this committee and will take part in decisions that will determine the future of America, for better or for worse.

Isaac Hathaway, a junior at Maggie Walker, is thrilled to serve as Co-Chair for the Second Industrial Revolution Committee. This is his second time chairing and also his second time participating in GSMUN. In addition to Model UN, Isaac is an avid member of the Maggie Walker First Robotics Team 422 The Mech Tech Dragons, and the Maggie Walker Quiz Bowl Team. Outside of school, you can find Isaac playing tabletop games, CADing, and 3D printing a myriad of curios.

Isaiah Hathaway, a junior at Maggie Walker, is excited to serve as Co-Chair for the Second Industrial Revolution Committee. This will be Isaiah's second time working at GSMUN, originally as a crisis staffer but now as a chair. Outside of Model UN Isaiah is part of First Robotics Team 422 and the Maggie Walker Quizbowl Team. He also enjoys playing tabletop games, writing short stories, and reading fantasy novels.

As delegates of the Second Industrial Revolution Committee, you are expected to come prepared to debate the multi-faceted issues of corruption and monopolies during the Second Industrial Revolution as well as pose possible solutions to the problems they have created. You should know about the rise of monopolies, their effects, and the controversy surrounding them. It is also important to understand the political climate of 1880s America and the corruption happening within the government. The background guide is simply a guide to start your research, and delegates will be expected to complete a position paper, formatted in Chicago Manual Style (CMS) and pertaining to your position on the committee. At GSMUN, all position papers are expected to follow the Maggie Walker honor code; any and all plagiarism, including the use of generative AI (such as Chat-GPT, GPT-4, Bard, etc.), will not be tolerated.

Before we go, we would like to acknowledge that a large part of GSMUN is our commitment to making a difference through charity. There will be merchandise, scrumptious baked goods, and many other exciting baubles for sale during the conference, with all proceeds going to support the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. So don't forget to bring money! If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact us at gsmunxxvi.industrial@gmail.com. We are overwhelmed with anticipation for this committee and can't wait to see you there!

Your Chairs,

Isaiah Hathaway
gsmunxxvi.industrial@gmail.com

Isaac Hathaway

Second Industrial Revolution

Committee Overview

Background

Near the end of the eighteenth century, the first piece of British manufacturing equipment came to the United States of America in the form of a water-powered cotton mill. In the following century, new technology and innovation slowly crept into American society until the Civil War, when industrialization drastically boomed.¹ While the First Industrial Revolution had primarily been contained to Britain, by 1880 the process of American industrialization was in full swing, and with it came an era known as the Second Industrial Revolution.

The Second Industrial Revolution led to rapid urbanization as factories sprung up and provided new jobs to Americans. The developing railroad system allowed travel and transportation to reach new places. Alexander Graham Bell improved communication with the development of the telephone in 1876. Thomas Edison's introduction of electricity to the world through his invention of the lightbulb three years later elongated the workday.² For millions of American workers, the Second Industrial Revolution changed everything about their jobs. Instead of farming or working as artisanal craftsmen, many began to work under large corporations.³ These corporations rapidly grew to an unprecedented size, in turn elevating the status of the men who created them. A new age of technology and progress was ushered in, creating the industrialist pioneers into the wealthiest men the country had ever seen.

In his 1873 novel contemporary novelist, Mark Twain, labeled this era in American history as the "Gilded Age", indicating how under the facade of wealth and progress, there lies a host of other issues. A main issue of contention was the large

wage gap between the wealthy industrialists and the average American.⁴ Besides low wages, many American workers also found their new jobs monotonous and laden with dangerous conditions. Cities exponentially grew due to the influx of job-seeking migrants, and the populations increased, the cities struggled with overflowing sewers, rampant disease, and insufficient housing.⁵

After preserving the union in the Civil War, the Republican party, which was politically dominant, sought to restore America's morality and further develop the country. Although most people favored the Democratic party's economic policy, most northerners were hesitant to vote for them as supporters were labeled as "Copperheads," derogatory term for Northerners who supported the Confederacy in the Civil War.⁶ The Republican Party, however, began to factionalize over the issue of patronage, granting political allies jobs as a reward. One faction, Stalwart Republicans, favored traditional machine politics and generally benefited from the system so they desired to keep it around. Meanwhile, the "Half-Breed" Republicans, who were reform-minded, tried to find ways to remove the corrupt system and its supporters.⁷

The political landscape of the Gilded Age created an environment for the wealthiest men in America to strategically squash their competitors and create monopolies over their respective industries. The evolution of the business model from small businesses to monopolies was a new concept for Americans, largely influencing society, economics, and politics both locally and internationally.⁸

Topic I: Gilded Age Corruption

History of the Issue

The Gilded Age (1877-1900) was an epoch of profound societal transformation in American history. The period was marked by urbanization, rapid industrialization, and a significant shift in America's demographic patterns as a result of westward expansion. A notable feature of the era was its stark juxtaposition between immense industrial progress and systemic corruption. While the surface gleamed with the promise of prosperity and progress, the underbelly was tarnished with widespread corruption, specifically within the political sphere. The rapid rise of industrial capitalism and the subsequent centralization of political power served as catalysts for an escalation in government corruption.⁹

The Spoils System, often viewed as a controversial practice, contributed to a significant amount of the political corruption found in the Gilded Age. The Spoils System became a term popularized by New York Senator William L. Marcy, who defended the practice in an 1832 speech given to the U.S. Senate saying, "to the victor belong the spoils"¹⁰ In essence, the Spoils System represented a form of political patronage where government jobs were dispensed as rewards to loyal party members. Under this system, supporters of the winning party were frequently rewarded with public offices, regardless of their qualifications or competence.¹¹ The system reached its height during the Gilded Age when appointments with the president could guarantee certain political positions.¹² Critics argued the Spoils System exacerbated corruption by enabling unqualified but politically loyal individuals to occupy important government positions, leading to systemic inefficiency and graft.¹³ The system's defenders, however, contended that it was an essential aspect of democracy, maintaining that it provided ordinary citizens with the opportunity to serve in government roles. Despite the controversies surrounding it, the Spoils System was deeply ingrained in

American politics throughout the 19th century, significantly contributing to the rampant corruption during the Gilded Age.¹⁴

Public officials were frequently paid salaries that were insufficient to maintain a comfortable standard of living, especially in developing urban centers. This issue was particularly problematic for lower-ranking officials, whose modest salaries often made them susceptible to bribes and other forms of corruption. Public officials frequently felt the need to exploit their positions for personal gain to offset the low government salaries they received. Therefore, these lower government salaries often served as a point of contention and served as catalysts for corruption.¹⁵

The practice of assessment fees further intensified corruption within political offices. These fees were charged to officeholders based on their salaries, supposedly to fund party activities and election campaigns. However, these assessments often served as de facto bribes, enabling a system where those who paid the most received preferential treatment in the form of political favors, contracts, and appointments.¹⁶

The laissez-faire economic philosophy of the era meant minimal government intervention and a largely unregulated business environment. These systemic vulnerabilities to corruption were often exploited with impunity. Even when exposed, these corrupt practices were frequently dismissed as 'business as usual,' a reflection of the societal norms of the time.¹⁷

Current Status of the Issue

The congressional election of 1882 was unsuccessful for the Republican party which led to the Democrats winning many seats largely campaigned on promises of passing civil service reforms. The disastrous performance convinced many within the Republican party that they needed to support such reforms if they wished to do well in the next election.²² In the upcoming Lame-Duck

Congress, when one Congress meets after another is elected, many within the Republican party are pushing their party members to pass reform legislation so that they can take credit before they lose control of Congress.²³

Analysis and Solutions

A myriad of issues are facing those who wish to reform the civil system. The African-American community fears that reforms to the civil service system could lead to a greater increase in systemic racism. This is because certain reform strategies such as merit tests, could allow for a systematic way to force people of color out of the government. Additionally, many marginalized groups see the Spoils System as one of their few ways into the government and fear that if it was taken away they could lose many job opportunities.

Others worry that reforms could decrease party loyalty as removing the Spoils System would lead to fewer benefits for those involved in a political party. This could lead to more factionalism and a decrease in efficiency. However, many acknowledge that some positions, such as cabinet members, should still be appointed.²⁴

Questions to Consider

1. How can it be ensured that appointed government officials are selected based on merit and not because of political affiliations or nepotism?
2. How can civil service reforms ensure they do not allow for increased discrimination against minority groups?
3. What regulations are currently in place to prevent corruption within political appointments/federal hirings? Are they effective, why or why not? What checks and balances could be put in place and who would enforce them or any new regulations?
4. Is it possible to create a way for elected officials to encourage and

reward party member loyalty without compromising ethics?

5. Is the Merit-Based System an effective replacement for the Spoils System? Is there an alternative civil service reform system that could be introduced? If so, what government agencies should it pertain to?

Further Research

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3. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25144285>: An academic article that talks About Patronage in the gilded age also touches on some other topics.
4. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/1751/chapter/4>: An article that details one potential route of civil service reform and the benefits and negatives of such a route.
5. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3110024>: An additional article evaluating different routes to civil service reform.

Topic II: Monopolies

History of the Issue

The first large-scale corporations in America emerged within the railroad industry. In 1850, the only business employing more workers than the railroads was the U.S. government. This would herald the rise of non-charter monopolies within the United States. Prior to that, corporations had been state or federally-sponsored and ran exclusively on charters. Charters were contracts between a corporation and federal or state government that entitled the

corporation the right to exist and do business within the government's jurisdiction. They usually came with some stipulations on the corporation intended to force the corporation to maintain social responsibility, something commonly done by mandating they complete public works projects, such as a city sewer. This would theoretically force the corporation to provide for the local community. The charters would be valid for a limited time before they would have to be renewed by the state or federal government, allowing the government to hold the corporation accountable.

Because the government needed to directly approve a corporation's charter, the system became politicized and corrupt as politicians sought to use it for their own gain. Politicians often campaigned to cancel unpopular corporations or those that competed with their own interests. A prominent example of this was Andrew Jackson's presidential campaign which built ending the charter of the Second Bank of the United States into its platform. The charter system made it difficult to form a corporation because the charters would have to pass through the legislature, something which took long periods of time and could be derailed by unfriendly politicians. For these reasons, the United States eventually abandoned the charter system in favor of a general incorporation system. In the new system, any group could form a corporation as long as they met a set of standards produced by the government. As a result, the number of corporations within the United States increased.²⁶

The new system of American corporations often included the ability to sell stocks. This new ability contributed to the increase in corporations as it allowed entrepreneurs to gather the necessary capital for their ventures. As these new corporations expanded beyond the local level, they also developed new managerial systems that relied on a large hierarchy of control as opposed to the previously used system of local control.

This new management hierarchy also led to the creation of middleman positions, which formed the link of communication between the corporate owners and their workers, as well as the use of cost accounting procedures. With their new methods of management, freedom, and stock, the corporations of America began to grow in both number and size.²⁷

From a market of many small corporations, a few men such as Andrew Carnegie of Carnegie Steel were able to grow their corporations into massive monopolies through vertical and horizontal integration. In vertical integration, a company would seek to control multiple aspects of the supply chain for a product. An example of this would be Pabst Brewing Company, which made beer and owned saloons to distribute it in. Horizontal integration is when a company expands by buying out or merging with a rival company. The corporation Standard Oil was famous for using this method to gain control of around 90% of America's oil production.²⁸

Late into the 19th century, an attorney from Standard Oil, Samuel Dodd, had the idea of forming a trust. In the trust, the stockholders of multiple companies would entrust their shares to a board of trustees that would jointly manage the companies. In return, the stockholders would receive a portion of the consolidated earnings.²⁹ This could help firms avoid competition with each other and make more money in the process. The trust was extremely successful and other firms such as William Henry Vanderbilt's New York Central Railroad began to replicate it.³⁰

Protectorate Tariffs, heavy tariffs on imported European manufactured goods, also helped to promote the rise of American Corporations. The tariffs were placed before America had started heavily industrializing, in hopes of protecting fledgling American manufacturers from the already industrialized European market. Since the tariffs on European manufactured goods were so high, most American consumers were forced to buy from domestic manufacturers. As a result,

American corporations had the large consumer base necessary to support their rise and lacked outside competition.³¹

Current Status of the Issue

As the Gilded Age has progressed, some corporations have grown to dominate their industries and become monopolies. One such corporation—Standard Oil—is in control of around 90% of the United States' oil pipelines and refineries.³² Through the strategies of horizontal integration, vertical integration, and trusts, the monopolies have overcome the competition in their industry.³³

Many businessmen see competition as a curse leading to instability because control of the market was ununified. This belief leads corporations to seek consolidation either through absorbing opponents or making agreements called cartels where they work with another firm to neutralize competition. Cartels incorporate corporations of the same type who agree to fix prices or divide markets. Cartels dividing markets are commonly used in the railroad industry to split routes between different corporations, a practice which often gives the companies involved a monopoly over their selected area.³⁴ Large vertical monopolies can use their control over multiple levels of the supply chain to lower the price of a product to levels that competitors can't compete with. This is exemplified by Carnegie Steel which had total control over the raw materials it needed to make its steel, the manufacturing of the steel itself, and the ability to make finished products like railroad rails from the steel. In order to compete with Carnegie Steel, competitors would need to move into more specialized areas or develop an equally connected management system.³⁵ By eliminating their competition, the monopolies would set their prices and wages at whatever they desired.³⁶

Under the new corporations, many American worker's economic status suffered as a result of the new technological inventions. Many jobs once held by skilled laborers are no

longer needed as technology increases, allowing these jobs to be fulfilled by unskilled laborers. Most factory workers only make four to five hundred dollars a year when six hundred dollars a year is generally regarded as a minimal salary for reasonable comfort. The low wages often push women and children into working to provide for their families, even though they are usually paid half as much as adult men. In the South, which contained almost no industrialization before the Civil War, mill towns have begun to spring up. Mill towns are essentially controlled by a single holding factory which provides almost all jobs and usually owns the general store.³⁷

As the wealth of monopolies increases, so does the wealth of their leaders. This increase in wealth leads some leaders to make significant philanthropic contributions, but some of the population still question these motives.⁸ Many people negatively refer to wealthy industrial leaders as Robber-Barons because they believe that "leaders of industry" actively strip money from their workers. One such example is Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the foremost railroad tycoons. Many Americans believe these extremely wealthy individuals were engaging in unscrupulous business practices, thus leading some to view these leaders negatively.³⁹

However, many Americans recognize these wealthy industrial leaders' names not only from their industries but also from their philanthropic endeavors. John D. Rockefeller donated 500 million to charitable causes such as furthering secondary education.⁴⁰ Still, the vast majority of Americans, especially southern farmers whose industry had suffered from the Civil War, lived much poorer lives and felt minimal impact from the philanthropic work of the wealthy industrial leaders.⁴¹

The Southern farmers, whose farms are already struggling, feel even more of an economic burden as the high protectionist tariffs fall on agricultural exports. The production of exported crops is highly concentrated in the South so many

Southerners feel these tariffs are unjustly targeting them and de facto helping the industrialists by allowing the industrialists to sell their products at higher prices. These protective tariffs only apply to the industrial sector of American business, leaving other businesses like farming open to foreign competition.⁴²

Some state governments have passed antitrust laws in an attempt to curb the power of monopolies and free up the market. These laws prove to be insufficient because states can't regulate interstate trade, which many of the monopolies aid in. Many supporters of anti-trust legislation look towards Congress to use its constitutional ability to regulate interstate trade.⁴³

Analysis and Solutions

Though a large portion of the public supports antitrust laws, there is still debate about how to employ antitrust laws and to what extent the power of the laws should reach. One subject of debate is whether antitrust laws are a part of corporate law or are part of a separate crime-tort model. In a corporate law method, corporations attempting interstate commerce need a federal license similar to in pre-general incorporation law America. In addition, special federal bureaucracies with large swaths of regulatory power have the responsibility of mandating and monitoring the structures of corporations. In a crime-tort model, the antitrust laws would be processed like crimes or torts and have to go through normal courts.⁴⁴

On a larger scale, debates about anti-trust legislation often lead to debates about the monopolies themselves. Their detractors see monopolies as abusing their control over the market to set artificially high prices and create economic instability. They point to a series of recessions that started in 1873 and have continued to return every five to six years. The detractors also argue that the control of monopolies over industry stifles advancement and concentrates the wealth in a

few single hands. On the other side of the debate are those who defend monopolies and big businesses. They argue that the monopolies created job opportunities for many of America's unskilled workers and streamlined the process of manufacturing. The defendants claim that punishing the monopolies would be unfair to their leaders as it would be undoing their hard work and progress.⁴⁵

Another issue of debate is what to do with the protective tariffs. The large majority of Democrats and Southern farmers want to remove or lower the tariffs. They see the tariffs as enabling the large monopolies to have higher prices by keeping out foreign competition. The Republicans and some Northern Democrats who support these tariffs view them as a way to protect American industry and help protect American jobs.⁴⁶

The concentration of wealth through monopolies has led to a large wage gap in America, something some Americans see as an issue. While the industrialist families throw lavish parties, ten million other Americans suffer below the poverty line. Some Americans like Henry George have taken to criticizing capitalism itself, claiming that the problems of poverty could be fixed if wealth was distributed instead of concentrated.⁴⁷ Southern Democrats propose another solution of reviving the income tax, something used to raise money during the Civil War. By putting a tax on the percent of income made by the wealthy elites they believe that the government could reinvest in helping those less well-off. Many Republicans and supporters of monopolies oppose such bills, seeing it as an unfair burden on those who have been successful.⁴⁸ Many industrialists and their supporters claim that such a wealth gap is an example of natural law. Industrialist John D. Rockefeller stated, "The growth of a large business is merely the survival of the fittest, ... It is merely the working out of the law of nature and of a law of God."⁴⁹ The Industrialists claim the wealthy shouldn't be

punished as their wealth was gained through their own hard work as much as the state of the poor is a result of the poor's own failure. They push the belief that anyone can follow in their footsteps to greatness. The industrialists and their supporters also claim that it is the responsibility of those who have wealth, not the government, to provide for society through philanthropy.⁵⁰

Questions to Consider

1. Has the American economy outgrown protective tariffs on manufactured goods? Should the tariffs be changed and what would make such a policy necessary or unnecessary?
2. Do the wealthy industrialists have a responsibility to provide for the community? Should the federal government enforce policies like an income tax to do this? What is the government's role in the distribution of wealth?
3. What is the most important business practice for the government to regulate or ban? At what point do regulations limit or stifle corporations?
4. What is the greatest benefit of enacting anti-trust legislation and regulating monopolies? What is the greatest negative of doing so?
5. How does urban industrialization increase the divide in social classes? What are the major problems between the farmers, industrial workers, and wealthy industrialists?

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4. <https://www.austincc.edu/lpatrick/his1302/agrarian.html>: An easy-to-read that discusses the tariff situation.
5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20439170>: Jstor article explaining the different ideas about how an anti-trust law could work.
6. <https://online.maryville.edu/business-degrees/americas-gilded-age/>: An article about some of the different industrial leaders.
7. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4501181>: Another Jstor article that discusses tariffs.
8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24640180>: An article discussing the evolution of American corporations.

Endnotes

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