

Reading comprehension and

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Multiple Choice The problem Carnegie identifies in his opening sentence is most accurately paraphrased as The difficulty of using a nation's wealth without engendering class warfare.

2. The point of the anecdote about the Sioux village is that the village is a microcosm of the undifferentiated way modern man lived before some individuals amassed wealth.

3. The word 'deplored' in line 12 means lamented.

4. By "Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor," in line 16, Carnegie means Large disparities in wealth are preferable to a state in which everyone lives in abject poverty.

5. In his final sentence in line 23, Carnegie expresses his belief in the futility of All of the above.

Essay:

Andrew Carnegie: Disparity in Wealth.

Andrew Carnegie, in his 1889 essay, "Wealth," points out that the past few centuries have witnessed an unprecedented change for the better in human living conditions. A significant feature of this change is the increasing disparity in wealth between the rich and the poor. Carnegie argues that this disparity in wealth is not to be regretted but is to be "welcomed as highly beneficial" (12), and is necessary for the advancement of civilization. He attributes this disparity to the increase in the wealth of the nation in general, and declares that it is to be preferred over the widespread poverty of the past. This increase in wealth, and the accompanying disparity, must be accepted as inevitable. The need of the hour is to find the means of administering this wealth to ensure a "harmonious relationship" (2), and a sense of brotherhood between the rich and the poor. Carnegie's view of the

<https://assignbuster.com/reading-comprehension-and/>

benefits of economic prosperity, and his call for the proper administration of wealth, is to be commended; however, his acceptance of the gap between the rich and poor as unalterable and beneficial cannot be accepted.

Carnegie's approval of the increased economic prosperity of that period, in comparison to the past, cannot be faulted. Any improvement in the living conditions of men is to be desired and actively pursued. There is no doubt that the wealth of the nation as a whole has increased, bringing about a corresponding betterment of life for both the rich and the poor. Carnegie's contention that "Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as today" (19), is supported by the example of the Sioux village which exemplifies the general poverty which was widely prevalent in the past. There is no doubt that the contemporary gap between the wealthy and the poor is preferable to universal poverty.

Carnegie is right to emphasize the necessity of administering wealth in such a way as to avoid any conflict between the economic classes. In this context, Carnegie highlights the importance of philanthropists in the scheme of wealth distribution. In fact, he uses the philanthropist as the justification for his approval of economic disparity, saying, "Without wealth there can be no Maecenas" (16). He links the presence of the wealthy to the refinement of civilization, making them the guardians of culture and the benefactors of the poor. He holds that it is the duty of the wealthy to contribute to the advancement of the poor. The proper administration of wealth is undoubtedly of primary importance is maintaining order.

Carnegie's acceptance of the disparity in wealth between the rich and the poor as "highly beneficial" (22), is difficult to condone. His stand that such a gap is for the good of society cannot be defended in the light of the

contemporary developments in the world. Economic inequality leads to social division. It is acknowledged that crime rates increase as the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' widens. Secondly, not all the wealthy share Carnegie's sense of obligation to be philanthropists. In fact, in most societies, there is the tendency of the rich to attempt to consolidate political power so as to prevent any redistribution of wealth. This only results in increasing economic disparity. In this scenario, it is necessary to adopt measures to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.

Andrew Carnegie's essay "Wealth," is a clear call to philanthropy. He is right in his stand that disparity in wealth is preferable to widespread poverty. He is emphatic in pointing out the obligations of the wealthy in contributing to the advancement of civilization. However, his argument that economic disparity is beneficial does not hold water. Economic disparity leads to social division and not all the wealthy share Carnegie's own charitable impulses. In order to avoid social unrest, it is necessary to identify and implement measures to reduce economic inequality.