

Industrial statesmen essay sample

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In the era following the Civil War, Industrialization had many leaders. These leaders achieved the great feat of booming the growth of the economy and industry of the United States and its citizens to become the leading industrial power in the world. As historians have reviewed their great achievements historians have become critics questioning how honest the fortunes of these leaders were. They pondered the tactics of great leaders such as John D. Rockefeller, J. Pierpont Morgan, and Andrew Carnegie. The morals of these businessmen and their strategies were the leading topic of discussion, whether to classify them as “ robber barons” or “ industrial statesmen”.

Glancing at the achievements of these great figures in history it appears that not only were they entrepreneurs they were generous to the community. John Rockefeller gave \$506, 816, 041. 18 to various missionaries, education boards, universities, and foundations before he died in 1937. This may seem like a very generous man, but in the opinions of historians, Andrew Carnegie and Rockefeller used these donations to improve their image and to have their names live on forever.

Rockefeller controlled more than 95% of the world oil market. His Standard Oil Company was the monopoly of the oil market. He also earned the label robber baron from his oil monopolies. He used his intelligence to try a new way of oil business to blow the rest of the market away. He started his company by just refining oil. He considered that drilling for “ black gold” would cost millions just to find the oil. Once he had enough money he found a way to control all of the oil industry. Instead of having to deal with middleman and payments for shipping he started his own barrels, refineries, pipelines, merchandised his oil, and even had his own fleet of tankers to

avoid shipping. This great deal of organization is what earned him his fortunes. He grew such a strong business that he could use his great rebate attributes to skillfully gain the railroads money when they should have been paying other oil refineries.

He would tell the lines that he wouldn't run his oil down their tracks which would destroy their railroads company so they were forced to pay him and charge traffic fees on competitors. He also flushed out competition by his great "trust" methods. James Weaver says that, "The main weapons of the trust are threats, intimidations, bribery, fraud, wreck, and pillage". When competition refused to be bought out Rockefeller would lower his prices of his Standard Oil, which put the other competition out of business. Even factories were mysteriously blown up on occasion back then. Rockefeller was also accused of horizontal monopoly which is to set prices forcing his competitors to merge with him. For all of these immoral tactics of business Rockefeller is considered a "robber baron" though he was one of the great reasons for the industrial revolution.

Andrew Carnegie preached to the public in his North American Review, "Wealth" that "the survival of the fittest" is what competition and the industrial revolution is about. He was considered the "steel king", but in his opinion everyone had equal chances to turn themselves from rags to riches. He thought that whomever would work the hardest would come out on top in the end. His theory would make many consider him somewhat neutral on whether or not he was a hero or one with wealth from unethical means during the industrial revolution, the definition of a "robber baron". He like

Rockefeller used his great management skills to his full advantage, which is not unethical. He had a great advantage in his business of vertical integration. Which means he owned all the means of production from iron ore mine to steel refinery to shipping to merchandise. This way everything was cheaper for him, but not all of his fortunes of Rockefeller's came from their great management. Both were aware of how to underpay or find the cheapest workers.

At the Homestead steel mill Carnegie ordered strikes to be stopped by all means. Six strikers died because of this. Employees signed “yellow-dog contracts” saying that they would not join unions. Many of the immigrants were taken advantage of by Carnegie, they would work long hours at low wages in harsh conditions. In the back of these Asian and Irish immigrants minds was the American Dream of freedom and fortunes. Working conditions were terrifying; factory workers would work twelve hours a day at least, six days a week. Poor ventilation and lighting as well as faulty equipment were many problems with the factories harsh and hazardous conditions. The average worker made \$350 a year and Carnegie made millions. Railroad conditions were also extremely harsh. Working dawn to dusk and receiving \$35 dollars a month Chinese were well underpaid.

Railroad leaders like William H. Vanderbilt and his father Cornelius “Commodore” Vanderbilt were earning millions sometimes with evident acts of corruption like the Credit Mobilier. The construction company would build the tracks, but say the price for goods were three times as much. The government had to pay them so they paid three times as much. All the

construction workers did was give a portion to the Governor so that it was official in the government. They made huge profits. William H. Vanderbilt's most famous quote was "the public be damned". He was in an interview with the Chicago Daily News in 1882. He was discussing how the "dear public" is not why the railroads are run, but built and run for the "men who invest money and expect to get a fair percentage on the same".

In conclusion these entrepreneurs used unethical tactics and strategies. They did help America and the citizens in a time of need, but they helped themselves the most. The leaders used their skills of management and their great intelligence to manipulate many businesses and citizens of America during the Industrial Revolution so that they could earn millions. These leaders were robber barons, but they were pioneers of the era. If not for those entrepreneurs then possibly we would not have such a great country, with excellent inventions, but greatest of all they started a race that has yet to stop, the race of competition, "survival of the fittest".