

# Free united states in the age of enterprise essay sample

[Business](#), [Company](#)



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## **Paper Due Date**

The last quarter of the 19th century became one of the most significant periods of the US history due to a number of events, such as the long confrontation between Republicans and Democrats and the policy of Laissez-faire, movement of Populists, rapid economic development and the prosperity of enterprises, a large influx of immigrants into the country and growth of labor unions. During this period of history John D. Rockefeller, Andrew W. Mellon, J. P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Andrew Carnegie and other huge industrialists became known as “ robber barons” because of their exceptional financial success. After the Civil War the United States of America finally started to change politically, economically, industrially and socially. The age of enterprise was an important step that America did towards the growth of capitalism and becoming one of the most influential nation in the world.

## **Political Situation: From Hayes to Harrison**

The age of enterprise (1877-1896) in the political sphere was marked by intense confrontation between two main parties - Republicans and Democrats, each of which sought to establish its control over offices and often changed its structure due to joining and detaching of minor parties. Victory of the industrial North in the Civil War and elimination of slavery allowed the citizens and immigrants to spread capitalism in the South and western lands. The Republicans that were predominant in New England and most of the states beyond the Mississippi chose Rutherford B. Hayes to be the President in 1877. And it was the beginning of the period of "lackluster" presidents ("From Smoke-Filled Rooms to Prairie Wildfire: 1877-1896" 534) who were mostly unknown and inconspicuous figures and were under Congress's control rather than independently ruled the country ("Politics in the Age of Enterprise, 1877-1896" 280). The next president James A. Garfield precipitated a great battle over patronage and his successor Chester A. Arthur became known as the president who defended the spoils system, thus the political life gained the corrupting feature. Grover Cleveland became the president of the nation in 1884 and finally this position was taken by the representative of the Democrats. He sought the respect from businessmen and tried to go into the tariff matter that helped him to come back to the presidency after the disastrous administration of the republican Benjamin Harrison. During the ruling of the latter, Congress expended more than one billion of dollars in a single session that, in turns, raised tariff to an extremely high level ("From Smoke-Filled Rooms to Prairie Wildfire: 1877-1896" 537). Therefore, neither of five presidents during the age of enterprise did not

present remarkable and prominent governance, and being under the patronage of the Congress, they were only promoting its interests and contributed to the creation and maintaining of strong party loyalties. And the party bosses were building the country.

## **The Populist Movement**

The age of enterprise was also characterized by the populist movement as after the Civil War the American farmers often suffered losses because of price reducing on their products. New technology was developing, the area of lands for cultivation was becoming larger as well, and this, in turns, promoted the increasing of the level of production. The opening of new railroads all over the country allowed farmers to occupy themselves with cultivation in the farther west. However, the agricultural crisis reached them in the second half of the 19th century: the farmers became dependent on the railroads that were monopolistic itself, thus it was harder for them (farmers) to deliver the produced goods to markets. According to the historian Howard Zinn, the Populist movement emerged as a result of the unequal distribution of incomes and wealth and because of hard work and poor living conditions of the labor class (Zinn " A People's History of the United States" Chapter 13). " Farmers needed organization to overcome their social isolation and to provide economic services - hence, the appeal of Granger movement and later the farmers' alliances. Two dominant organizations emerged: the Farmers' Alliance of the Northwest and the National (or Southern) Farmers' Alliance" (" Politics in the Age of Enterprise, 1877-1896" 279). The populists' desire to win the president elections,

however, did not become reality, and in 1892 Cleveland outstripped his opponent Harrison and became the president the second time. Although the populist movement was to some extent directed to destruction of large-scale capitalist production, it still had the positive impact on the development of the nation – it indicated the main directions of the democratic growth in the USA, which nowadays is the significant heritage of the country.

## **The Development of Enterprises**

The economy of the United States had gained an exceptional growth during the age of enterprise. Building of railway roads had established communication between cities and improved market trade. New type of corporation, trusts, had emerged and become the main form of business organization. Railroads were under control of six large trusts, one of them – House of Morgan (bank) – brought to its owner millions of dollars (Zinn “ A People’s History of the United States” Chapter 11). In the age of enterprise John D. Rockefeller became the oil magnate, starting with the first oil refinery in 1862, and establishing Standard Oil in 1870; by 1899 Rockefeller’s fortune counted 200 million dollars (Zinn). Andrew Carnegie returned to the US from London in 1872, where he found out about how Bessemer produced steel, and established his own steel plant. He became monopolist after the Congress decision of high tariff on foreign products, so by 1900 he could sell his company to Morgan for almost 500 million dollars (Zinn). Needed to mention that in the period when multimillionaires’ corporations swallowed every small organization, the United States government was behaving exactly as K. Marx stated about a capitalist nation – it supported the

interests of the rich (Zinn Chapter 13). Thereby, while novice farmers and small entrepreneur were trying to establish their business and stay afloat in the time of the rapid economic growth, several large businessmen captured the market and sought to monopoly, widening by that the gap between wealth and middle class. In 1890 Harrison adopted the Sherman Antitrust Act; however, it was interpreted in wrong way, so the huge corporations had never left the arena.

## **Conclusion**

The age of enterprise was the period of sustainable development of the American economy, invention of new technologies, laying the railway tracks, rapid development of agriculture and industrial spheres, the flow of immigrants who later become new labor force; and all these factors promoted progressive prosperity of the nation. Along with the economic growth, the age of enterprise is also characterized by several other events, such as the period of “lackluster” presidents’ governance when they were under the Congress’ control; and by the populist movement that emerged because of the monopolies and the power of wealth and, in turns, caused the democratic awakening of the country. Although there was an agriculture crisis after 1873, which was “the most severe of any since the Civil War” (Rhodes 104), at the very beginning of the 20th century “were conditions of prosperity, characterized by relatively high levels of production and low levels of unemployment” (Shergold 21). Therefore, the capitalist economy and society started to permeate the United States and shaped the nation in the way the world sees it nowadays.

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