

Basic US History
Unit 6 – America Expands
“The Lords Of Industry”
by Henry Demarest Lloyd

Henry Demarest Lloyd was one of the most vocal critics of the new business practices that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. “The Lords of Industry” exposed the tactics used by business leaders to eliminate competition and control prices.

VOCABULARY

superintendent	a manager or supervisor
combination	a trust
battery	use of force
conspiracy	a secret plan to commit a crime
ravaging	looting, plundering

Two years ago it was found that there was too much milk in New York and Boston. The “embattled farmers” of Orange County, which supplies New York with two-thirds of its milk, declared a milk war. The New York dealers were cut off from their regular supplies. Committees of farmers waited at every railroad station, and offered to buy all the milk that was brought down for shipment . . . When bought, it was spilled. When not bought, it was usually spilled just the same . . . When the Superintendent of Lehigh and Hudson Railroad allowed milk to be shipped against the protests of the farmers, they threatened to tear up the tracks, and the sheriff of the county had to be called in to protect the road. . . . It took eight men armed with clubs, guns, and pistols to guard one man collecting milk.

Peace was declared March 24, 1883. A committee of farmers and a committee of the milkmen agreed upon a fixed price for each month until April, 1884, ranging from two and a half to four cents a quart. . . . March 22, of this year, the farmers’ committee and that of the milk dealers’ organization . . . met again, agreed on prices for another twelve months, and this year there will be no milk war . . . Other combinations, more or less successful, have been made by ice men of New York, fish dealers of Boston . . . copper miners, manufacturers of sewer pipe . . . to say nothing of the railroad, labor, telegraph, and telephone pools with which we are so familiar . . . All are “voluntary,” of course, but if . . . [any] individual or corporate producer, show any backwardness . . . they are whipped in with all the competitive weapons at command, from assault and battery to boycotting and conspiracy. The private wars that are ravaging our world of trade give small men their choice . . . Combine or die!

[By today’s prices, milk in 1884 was a bargain at 49 to 79 cents a quart. A quart of milk today costs about \$1.58.]

QUESTIONS

1. When there is plenty of a particular good on the market, its price will be artificially low. Who might have had reason to suggest that there was too much milk in New York and Boston?

2. What law did the U.S. government pass to prevent businesses from engaging in such practices?

3. What was the cause of the “milk war” Lloyd described in his article?

4. How might Lloyd have felt about OPEC, a modern-day organization that regulates production and prices of oil?

5. Imagine that you are Andrew Carnegie and that you have just finished reading “The Lords of Industry.” Write a letter to the editor of North American Review defending your business practices.
