

Solving the Problems Created by Big Business

Pretend that it is the late 1800's and you are the president of the United States. It is time to deliver your annual State of the Union Message to Congress in which you recommend legislation that you think should be made into law.

The problems listed below currently face the country. They were created by the expansion of business and industry in the second half of the 19th century. Think of some laws that ought to be passed by Congress in order to correct these problems. Write a speech that clearly describes your proposed laws.

A few students will have a chance to read their State of the Union Messages to the class.

1. Factory owners demand that their workers be on the job for 12 hours a day, 6 days a week.
2. A man earns 15c per hour, women and children even less.
3. Some operators of mines and factories employ children as young as 7 years old.
4. Big business has tried to prevent the formation of labor unions.
5. Some big businesses have cut their prices in order to drive small companies out of business. Once having a monopoly, or "trust," they raise prices because there no longer is any competition.
6. Big business gives large sums of money to government officials in exchange for political favors. Many local and state lawmakers, and even certain members of Congress, are now under the influence of big business.
7. Some businessmen make huge sums of money, but pay no taxes.
8. Too many natural resources are being wasted.

STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE