

In all these discussions, however, one important factor in the question is left out of consideration. That factor is the principle of protection without which these combinations would never have come into existence. It is not our province to enter into the merits or demerits of the system of protection, but there can be no question that one of the evils attending it is that by preventing outside competition it fosters the establishment of combinations by which competition from within is prevented and the largest possible profit secured. Our own experience, as well as that of the United States, gives abundant evidence of this, while, under the system of free trade, such combinations either do not exist or are harmless in their operation.

From the experience of the past, it seems doubtful whether any legislation can be effective in preventing such combinations as those now under consideration. It is, therefore, all the more necessary that we should carefully consider the points in which they injuriously affect the body politic, in view of the danger that if no remedy from legislation can be found, or no change in the fiscal system be adopted such as would prevent the evils complained of from arising, the whole fabric of trusts and combinations may not be swept away by a political convulsion, of which the immediate consequence would be the destruction of the capital which is now, by means of these combinations, creating a power dangerous to the State and oppressive to individuals.

It may not at first sight seem to be a matter of very much consequence whether a firm carries on its business under the name of "John Brown & Co.," or under the style of "The John Brown Co. (Limited)," but the effect of the change from the former to the latter must certainly be to weaken still further the personal tie which once existed between employers and employed. "John Brown" probably meant, and generally did mean, something to those who worked in his shop or his factory. There was more or less of human interest between John Brown and his men, and more or less of human sympathy; but the "John Brown Company," in which there may be no John Brown at all, is a mere abstraction—a mere corporation, in its very essence void of all human feeling, specially contrived for business, and business only, and freed from all considerations of sentiment. The "company" regards those who work for it just as it does its machinery of any other kind, out of which the maximum of gain is to be made at