

Andrew Carnegie, *Wealth*, 1889

1. The negative effects of the law of competition are great; but the advantages of this law are much greater because it leads to our wonderful material development, which improves the conditions of most people. While the effects of competition may sometimes be hard for many individuals, it is best for the progress of humankind because it insures the survival of the fittest in every area of life. We know that it will result in great inequality, but the law of competition is essential for the future progress of humankind. . . .

2. This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth:

First, he should to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, resisting display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants his children. With all surplus wealth, he should use it to help the community. The man of wealth thus serves his poorer brethren, with his superior wisdom, experience, and ability, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.

3. Those who administer this wealth must do so wisely for one of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity. It must not be used to help the lazy and those who will not try to help themselves. I have a friend who gave a beggar a quarter. He knew nothing of the habits of this beggar or how this money would be spent. . . . My friend only gratified his own feelings, saved himself from annoyance – and this was probably one of the most selfish and very worst actions of his life.

In giving charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so. . . . The rich man should know that the best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise – parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; and

public institutions of various kinds such as universities and museums.

The man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth which he could have used to help others during life, will pass away unwept, unhonored and unsung. The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced.

Questions:

1. What sort of competition do you think Carnegie is discussing in the first paragraph? According to Carnegie, what are the benefits and drawbacks of competition? Which is greater?
2. What is the duty of the man of wealth? How should the man of wealth spend his money? How should he not spend it? Why? Do you agree?
3. What sort of charity did Carnegie oppose? Support? Why?
4. Do you agree with Carnegie?

