



Interpreting Political Cartoons Contents

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Interpreting Political Cartoons – Cartoon 1

Directions: Answer the questions below each political cartoon.



Caption: ONE SEES HIS FINISH UNLESS GOOD GOVERNMENT RETAKES THE SHIP

Cartoon courtesy of Ohio University Department of History: Cartoon Collection (Original: *The Verdict*, May 22, 1999)

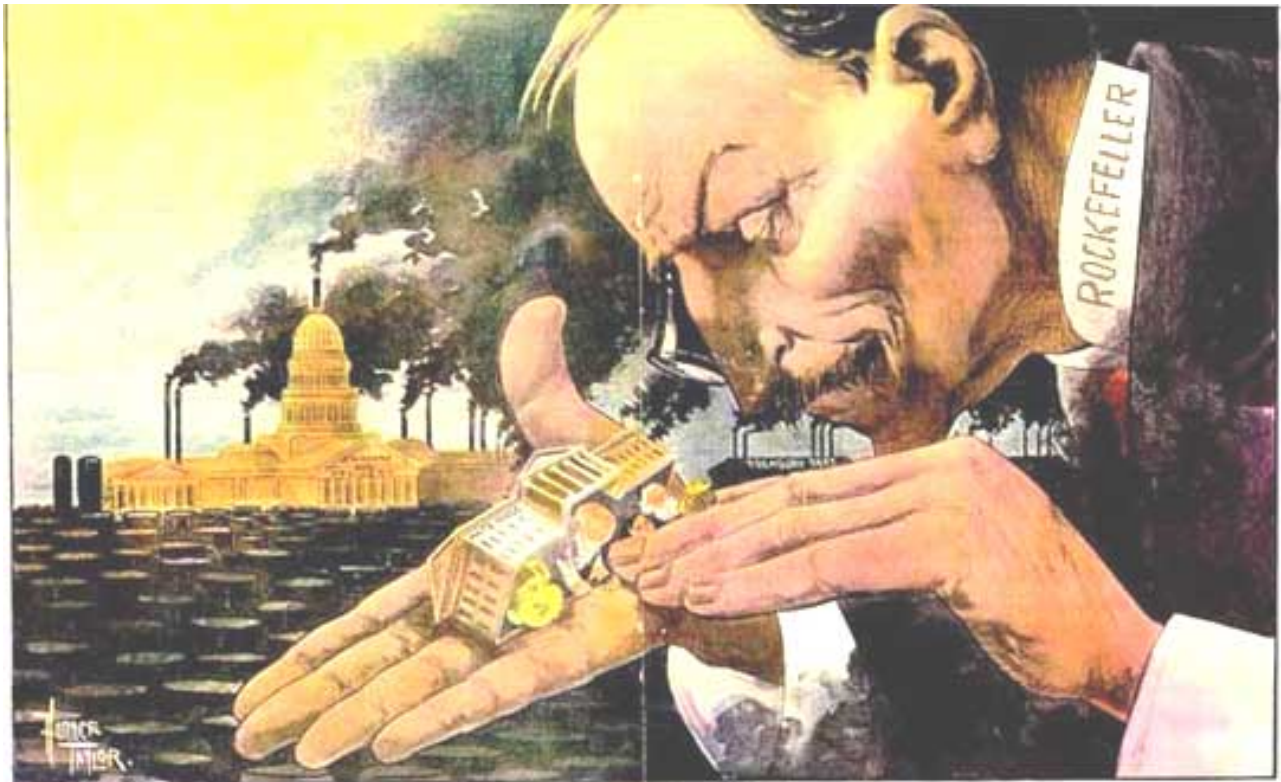
1. What is your interpretation of this political cartoon?
2. Who do the pirates represent?
3. What do “Uncle Sam” and the flag represent?
4. What is happening to “Uncle Sam” and the flag?
5. Why is labor the skull in the “Jolly Rogers” flag?
6. What could be happening during this period, 1880-1910 that would inspire such a political cartoon?

Cartoon 1 – Answer Key

The following are possible answers:

1. What is your interpretation of this political cartoon?
The United States government is being overrun, or in this killed by big business.
2. Who do the pirates represent?
"Big Business"
3. What do "Uncle Sam" and the flag represent?
The United States
4. What is happening to "Uncle Sam" and the flag?
The pirates are making Uncle Sam walk the plank to his death. The pirates are trampling the United States flag.
5. Why is labor the skull in the "Jolly Rogers" flag?
"Big Businesses" were built on the work of labor, often to the detriment and, in many cases, the death of the laborers.
6. What could be happening during this period, 1880-1910 that would inspire such a political cartoon?
Society was waking up to the detrimental practices of the "Big Business" industries and how they were becoming more powerful than even the United States Government.

Interpreting Political Cartoons – Cartoon 2



THE TRUST GIANT'S POINT OF VIEW
"WHAT A PUNY LITTLE GOVERNMENT!"

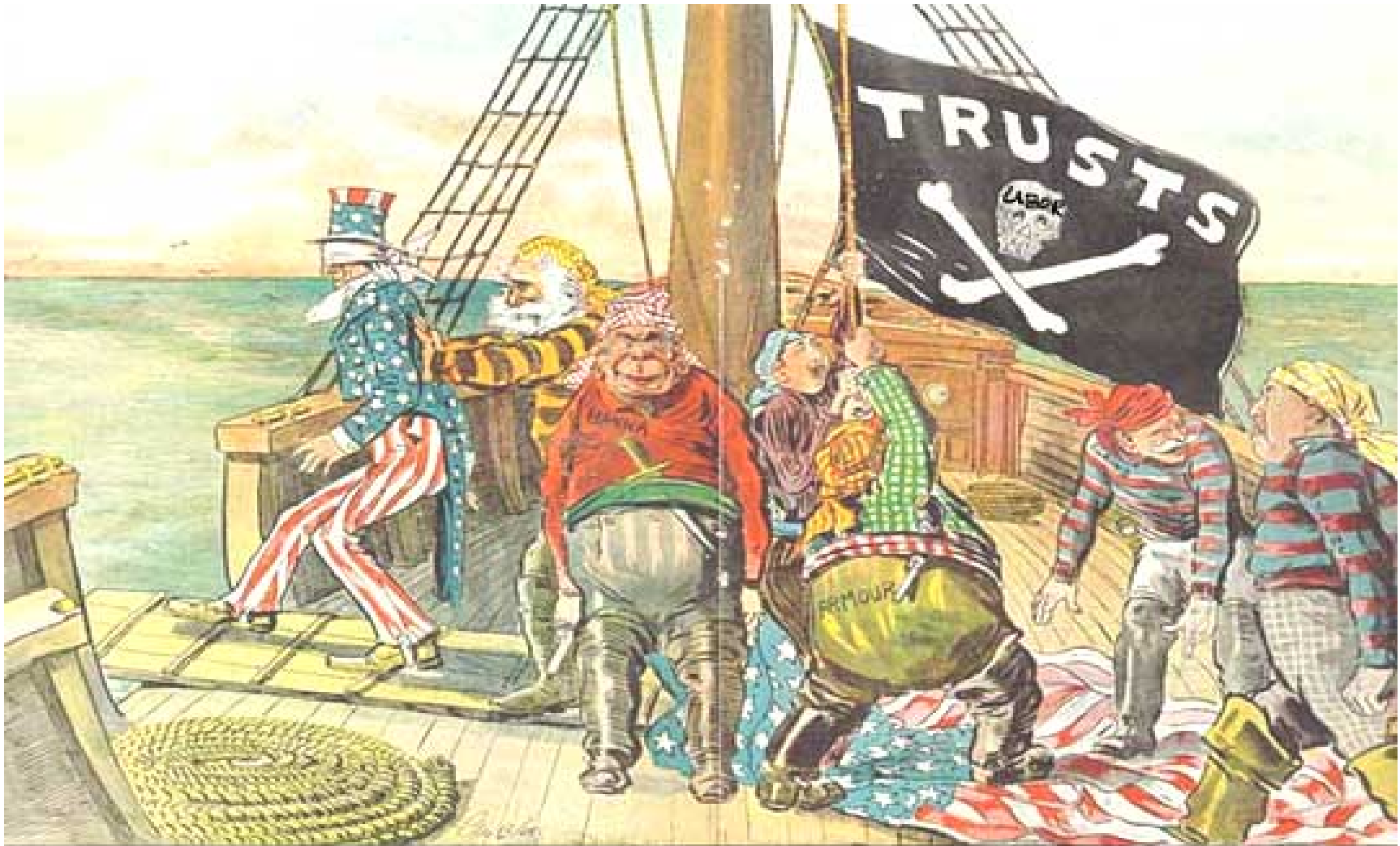
Caption: THE TRUST GIANT'S POINT OF VIEW

Cartoon courtesy of Ohio University Department of History: Cartoon Collection (Original: *The Verdict*, January 22, 1900)

1. What is your interpretation of this political cartoon?
2. Who is the person in the cartoon?
3. What building is in the background and what does it represent?
4. Why is this cartoon representative of the period from 1880-1910 in American history?

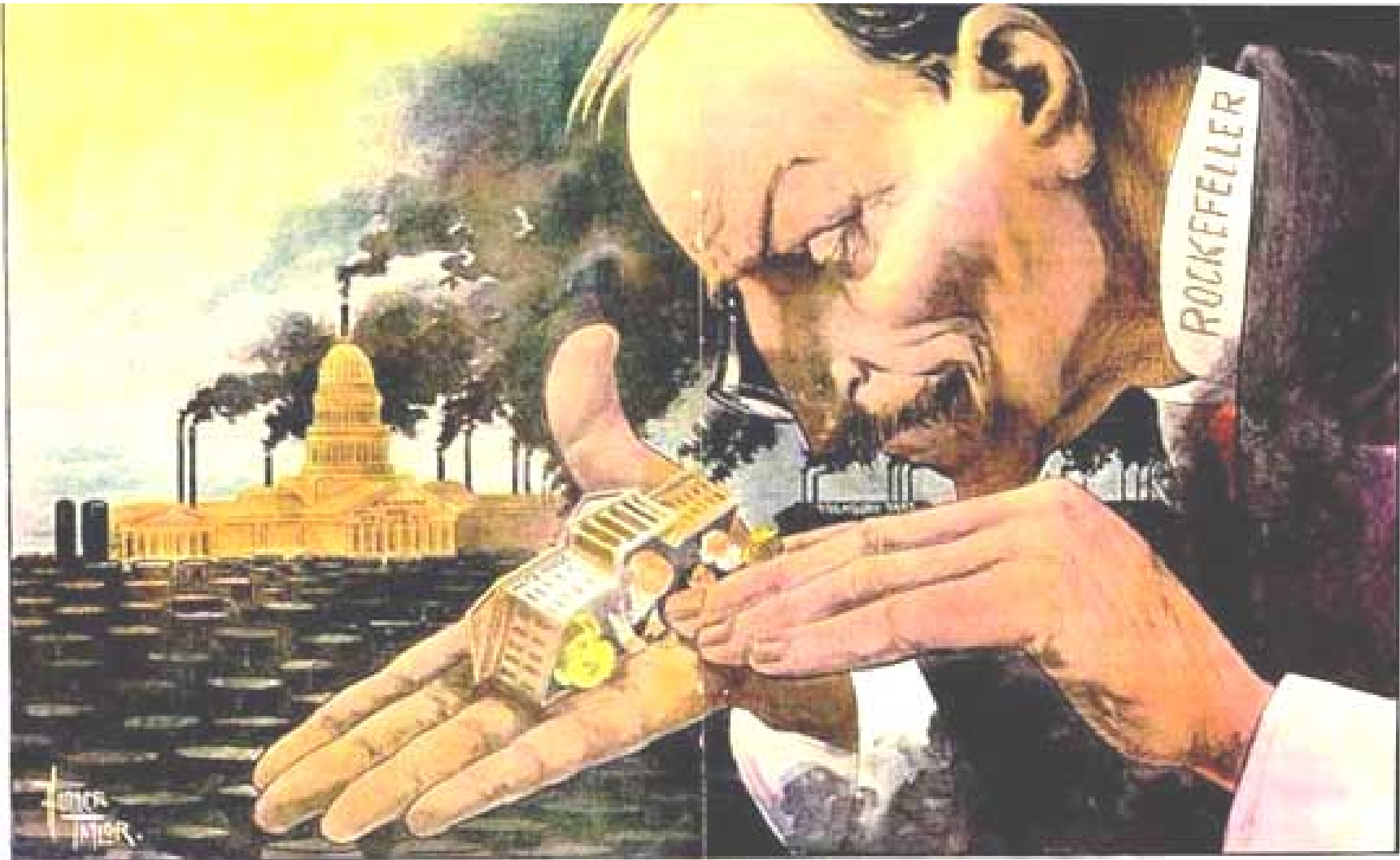
Cartoon 2 – Answer Key

1. What is your interpretation of this political cartoon?
“Big Business” had the United States government in the palms of their hands. “Big Business” industries had become so powerful that they could control the U.S. government, including the congressmen.
2. Who is the person in the cartoon?
John D Rockefeller, an oil tycoon.
3. What building is in the background and what does it represent?
The building is the United States Congress building. It represents our government.
4. Why is this cartoon representative of the period from 1880-1910 in American history?
Business leaders, like John D. Rockefeller, were so powerful that they could assert a tremendous amount of influence in the United States government. Many people thought these “Big Businesses” would take over our country.



ONE SEES HIS FINISH UNLESS GOOD GOVERNMENT RETAKES THE SHIP

ONE SEES HIS FINISH UNLESS GOOD GOVERNMENT RETAKES THE SHIP.



THE TRUST GIANTS POINT OF VIEW
"GREAT & BUSY LITTLE GOVERNMENT"

THE TRUST GIANTS' POINT OF VIEW