

Beat—Plutocrats

Despite cartels, monopolies and massive inequality, the 1920s were a decade when faith in business was at an all time high. The elite used their influence to wield economic and political power, often reshaping the country in their favor.

My Dearest Nephew,

I have heard of your opinions regarding the plan to enact a MERGER with our rival mining concerns.

Allow me to put your fears to rest: the government is largely INDIFFERENT to anti-trust laws. What is written on paper means nothing if not enforced.

The benefit should of course be self-evident, as sufficient CONTROL over the market will both allow the establishment of a standard price as well as benefit our efforts in related industries...

INDULGENT: The wealthy indulge in drinks, decadent parties, high-stakes poker, jewelry and exotic merchandise.

BOOMING: During the most prosperous 8 years of the decade, a new building went up on average every 51 minutes.

SPECULATION: Money is made by speculating on rising real estate values; investors buy shares of land and buildings.

WEALTH GAP: New Yorkers are above the poverty line if they make \$1,800/year. The wealthy spend that on a night at the club.

SERVANTS: Plutocrats cannot survive without chauffeurs and chefs, dog-walkers and doormen, butlers and maids.

VACATION: Come summer, Park Avenue and other wealthy neighborhoods clear out as their tenants travel abroad.

WALL STREET

NEW MONEY: The face of wealth has shifted from inherited “old money” to “new money” fortunes made in business.

VERY RICH: About 3,000 millionaires live in New York, making fortunes from railroads, real-estate, oil and steel, movies and motorcars.

OVERCONFIDENT: Unemployment is down, the market is up, nothing could possibly go wrong!

DOOMED: The Great Depression is on the horizon, yet everyone lacks foresight.

TAKING CREDIT: Stocks are being traded “on margin”, backed by debt from loans with as little as 10% down.

MANIPULATED: Savvy insiders persuade others into artificially raising stock prices... then sell before anyone notices the fake.

J.P. MORGAN JR.

PROFITEER: Struck a deal that earned him \$30M (1% of the total) from French and British WW1 munitions purchases.

BANKER: Develops a bad reputation during the depression, especially when he admits to not paying income tax.

HEIR: Inherited the family fortune. Will leave it to his children.

