Competition:

The general acceptance by peoples of all classes that free competition has shrewdly developed abilities, the right to adventurous undertakings, give courage to stand by through hardships, or the time taken to develop new and untried projects, had taken so great a hold that in the main of this free competition men were coming to employ pilots, librarians, public officials, spying, to borrow underlying principles like that of the freedom of the road. To get an advantage was justified in the main of free competition, though you had the violence of the railroad building in the opening of our period in open warfare in Colorado between the Rio Grande and the Santa Fe. You have the effort to justify the practice of converting the railroad to the ally and handmaid of the restricted trades, justifying privilege on the ground of convenience, profits. That is, in the name of free competition we had practices utterly contrary to the democratic ideal, to the notions of equality of opportunity, and most serious of all, contrary to sound ethics.

The cynicism on part of men who curiously enough were supporters of a religious system which, based on what is called the brotherhood of man, escaped the country at large.
If you could put it over, well and good. He is making money, isn't he? And those who were making money, or sought before everything else to make money, agreed that business is business, that the ideals of democracy were impractical, that perpetuation of the strongest was sound science, and that the ethical code had no place in the business world.

There were those who realized the undermining nature of this philosophy and is began to be attacked more or less intelligently, generally less, all over the country. It was an intollerable realization of the idea of competition. But what could corrupting to the public machinery? It was the undermining of the countries ethical code. Moreover, because of the ridiculous position of so many of those who were trying to lead in the general adoption of this code it awakened an antagonism and a contempt for the church which was to grow and reverberate for long years.

A Moral Climate in Today

Washburne Gladden