

Nathan Jones

(Fictitious character based on real events)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for hearing me today. I represent a large group of small and medium sized business owners in our country. We are not the huge players who get all the national attention, like Mr. Henry Ford. We are the struggling factory owner or small shop owner who competes with other businesses for a very small piece of the profit pie. I own a small factory which makes patriotic bunting and decorative fabrics along with the traditional American flags of all shapes and sizes. Unlike Mr. Ford, I do not own and control every stage of my manufacturing process. Every stage of the car manufacturing process is produced on the factory site in his case. He does not have to buy finished materials from anyone, only raw resources. I on the other hand am not this fortunate. I often need to buy materials from others to go with my bunting and flag production, such as sticks, poles, metal fasteners, grommets, etc. This obviously cuts into my profit margin making my need to compete for every penny essential to my survival.

With your group, pause in your reading to discuss and answer these questions:

1. Is this character real or fictitious? What is his current situation?

I would love to pay my workers more, but if I pay them a higher wage, then I may not survive until next year. All my textile competitors are hiring recent immigrants at the lowest possible wage. I must do the same in order to compete with them and stay in business. These union organizers do not see how much I am looking out for the worker. If I increase wages, I will have to lay people off, which will create even higher unemployment. They need to be thankful for the job instead of complaining about the low wages. I also lose a lot of money from my workers when they go on strike or vandalize my machines. I have to hire security guards to keep some of the vocal complainers and trouble makers in line.

I am an honest, law-abiding businessman who pays my taxes and creates a good quality product for my customers. I am tired of being criticized by a bunch of foreigners who don't seem to understand the American work ethic. It is not a crime to make money. Every American has a chance to do the same. Through hard work and ingenuity, anyone can own a business and make a life for himself and his family. The key is to not complain and just work harder. They are preaching violence and the destruction of the values that made our country great. Emma Goldman is trying to get rid of marriage for goodness sake. I ask you, what would come of our society if our family is destroyed? No good, is what I say.

With your group, pause in your reading to discuss and answer these questions:

2. What is Jones' view of capitalism? Provide an examples of why he feels this way.
3. How does Jones feel about recent immigrants?

I believe in freedom, which is why I love making American flags. However, these radicals are trying to destroy the very way of life we enjoy. The government has a duty to protect us honest businessmen from being harassed and slandered by these foreign revolutionaries. Instead of trashing our society, they should buy one of my flags and put it on their front stoop like the rest of the law-abiding Americans. They should be thankful for a country that gives them the opportunity to make something of themselves.

With your group, pause in your reading to discuss and answer these questions:

4. Why does Jones feel criticism of him and capitalism are harmful? He says he believes in freedom so why is he willing to limit the freedoms of those who speak out against capitalism?
5. What does Jones think the government should do about this situation? How should it protect him and his business?