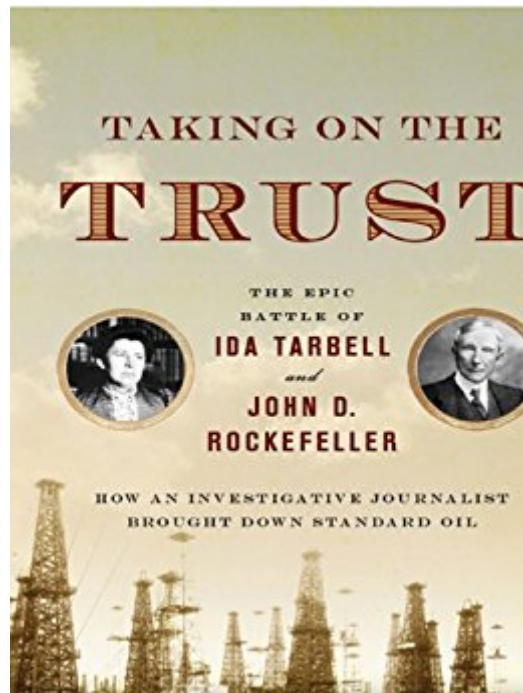


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Taking On The Trust: The Epic Battle Of Ida Tarbell And John D. Rockefeller



Synopsis

How a female investigative journalist brought down the world's greatest tycoon and broke up the Standard Oil monopoly. Long before the rise of mega-corporations like Wal-Mart and Microsoft, Standard Oil controlled the oil industry with a monopolistic force unprecedented in American business history. Undaunted by the ruthless power of its owner, John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), a fearless and ambitious reporter named Ida Minerva Tarbell (1857–1944) confronted the company known simply as "The Trust." Through her peerless fact gathering and devastating prose, Tarbell, a muckraking reporter at McClure's magazine, pioneered the new practice of investigative journalism. Her shocking discoveries about Standard Oil and Rockefeller led, inexorably, to a dramatic confrontation during the opening decade of the twentieth century that culminated in the landmark 1911 Supreme Court antitrust decision breaking up the monopolies and forever altering the landscape of modern American industry. Based on extensive research in the Tarbell and Rockefeller archives, *Taking on the Trust* is a vivid and dramatic history of the Progressive Era with powerful resonance for the first decades of the twenty-first century.

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Customer Reviews

Some journalists revel in muckraking reportage, and it doesn't make any difference to them that "muckraking" has been used as a term of opprobrium. There was a time when there was no tradition of newspapers doing investigative reporting; that tradition had to be invented. One of the inventors was Ida Tarbell who let the nation know how John D. Rockefeller was misusing corporate power. She didn't like to be called a muckraker, although she was in favor of reform, and the term had been coined by reform-minded Teddy Roosevelt. She resented that the term stuck to her, but it continues to do so. Rockefeller resented that her portrait of his abusive practices stuck to him, but it continues to do so. Tarbell was a journalistic innovator who deserves to be well known for her historic contributions to reporting and to society, and in *Taking on the Trust: The Epic Battle of Ida Tarbell and John D. Rockefeller* (Norton) by Steve Weinberg, the story is told in absorbing detail. The book is supposed to tell the story of both main characters, but Weinberg is a reporter himself and can be excused for making Tarbell the star. She is, anyway, a lot more interesting than Rockefeller who didn't have much going for him except for the capacity to make lots of money, the same as many robber barons of the time. Tarbell never had anything close to the money or influence that Rockefeller had, but she won the contest between them, and she was the one proved right after all. Tarbell shared her family's distrust of Standard Oil. Her father, and later her brother, became independent oil producers, and neither of them sold out to Standard Oil. Plenty of others did; Rockefeller swallowed up competitors and, as he pointed out, the smart ones took Standard Oil stock and became very rich indeed.

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