# Prompt

Can you run a detailed fact check of this document? Can you identify the 5 biggest errors in this document and then list them in order of their significance, from most significant to least significant. Can you also assign an accuracy score out of 100, and provide a very brief narrative description for how to interpret this score? Can you make the entire output written in plain English and less than 750 words?

# Response from o3 (7/1/2025)

Five Largest Factual Errors (ranked by how much they distort the story)

| Rank | What the document says | Why it's wrong (and what the evidence shows) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | *"These payments could be big, typically amounting to **15 %** of the nominal freight price."* | The railroad "drawback" to Standard Oil was a flat **$1.06 per barrel** off a posted $2.56 rate—about **41 %**, not 15 %. The size of the concession is central to judging how anti-competitive it was. (en.wikipedia.org)<br><br>**CASEY: o3 is citing the South Improvement Company, and is correct that those proposed drawbacks were much higher. And this case is frequently discussed in the literature because it was well documented.**<br><br>**But these contracts were terminated shortly after becoming public, such that these drawbacks never actually went into effect. I reported lower numbers based on the level of drawbacks identified in later contracts that actually were collected, and potentially represent a more interesting economic story.** |
| 2 | *"Insurer agrees to pay **50 % over Medicare rates** across broad categories of care."* | Contemporary studies find private insurers pay **roughly double Medicare** (≈ 199 % for hospital care and 143 % for physician services on average). Understating the gap by half skews the healthcare analogy the paper relies on. (kff.org)<br><br>**CASEY: o3 is correct that these numbers vary across services. My 50% number was intended as an illustrative example, rather than an average. And the "143% for** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | **physician services" that o3 quotes is actually pretty close to 50% above Medicare.** |
| **3** | *"The railroads did in fact* ***lose all of their oil income*** *once Standard Oil became big enough to build their own pipelines."* | Railroads' oil traffic shrank but never vanished. Even today rail moves a material—if modest—share of U.S. crude, and in the 20th century they continued hauling refined products such as kerosene. For example, crude-by-rail still reached ≈ 10 % of U.S. production in the 2010–14 peak. (aar.org, teachdemocracy.org)<br><br>**CASEY: o3 is correct. I changed "all" to "most" in the post.** |
| **4** | *"Standard Oil would* ***evenly divide*** *their production across the railroads."* | The South Improvement Company pact split traffic **equally between Erie and New York Central, but gave the Pennsylvania Railroad a **double share**. The distribution mattered because it locked rivals into specified capacities. (en.wikipedia.org)<br><br>**CASEY: I stand by "evenly divide" as an acceptable simplification.** |
| **5** | *"Drawbacks were structured* ***as a percent*** *of competitor freight sales."* | The contract paid a **fixed dollar amount per barrel** shipped by rivals, not a percentage of their freight bills. This detail affects how one interprets the incentive scheme. (en.wikipedia.org)<br><br>**CASEY: o3 is correct. I fixed this in the post.** |

## Overall Accuracy Score: 78 / 100

Most historical context is sound, but the paper understates or mis-states several key numbers (items 1, 2 and 5) and over-states outcomes (item 3). These lapses don't topple the core narrative, yet they are significant enough to warrant caution when using the piece as evidence.

*How to read the score:*
Think of it like a classroom grade—high-C/low-B territory. The argument is broadly plausible, but some headline figures need correcting before you quote the paper or extend its analogies.