

The Last Stand of the Agrarians

Agrarian Politics, Populism, and the 1896 Presidential Election



Urban / Rural Shifts

Table 4. Population: 1790 to 1990

Census	Total		Urban		Rural		Total	Urban %	Rural %
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%			
1790	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1800	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1810	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1820	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1830	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1840	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1850	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1860	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1870	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1880	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1890	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1900	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1910	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1920	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1930	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1940	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1950	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1960	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1970	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1980	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6
1990	3,929,260	100	1,000,000	25.4	2,929,260	74.6	3,929,260	25.4	74.6

Source: <http://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/table-4.pdf>



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMpZOTGjW_E



THE FORGOTTEN FARMER.

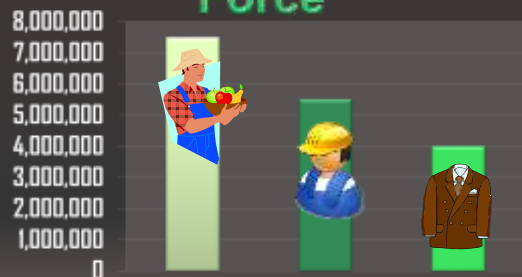
THERE are more than seventeen million working people, of all classes, in the United States. Among these there are over seven-and-a-half-millions who, in one way or another, are engaged in agricultural occupations. What are the other nine-and-a-half-millions? According to the census reports we must deduct four million people who are doing "professional" work, or the like—lawyers, doctors, clergymen, clerks, inventors, commercial travelers, musicians, teachers, and capitalists generally. Trade, transportation, mining, manufactures and mechanics employ the other five-and-one-half millions.

These few statistics, which the reader may easily verify for himself, are set down here merely as an illustration in simple proportion. It requires no profound study to learn from them that the farmers—that is, the people engaged in agricultural employments of all sorts, are, numerically, the greatest body of workmen in this country—that they have an enormous plurality over any one other class of laborers. There are seven-and-a-half-million persons doing work on the farm lands in the United States. These things are undeniably true—yet it is equally true that there is no large class of men in the country whose interests receive less intelligent and sincere attention from either state or national legislators.

This may explain why, for a quarter of a century, the American farmer has had to pay a burdensome tax levied for the protection—that

The American Labor Force

Puck Magazine, 1888





THE POPULISTS

What were some of the major problems facing farmers during the Gilded Age ??

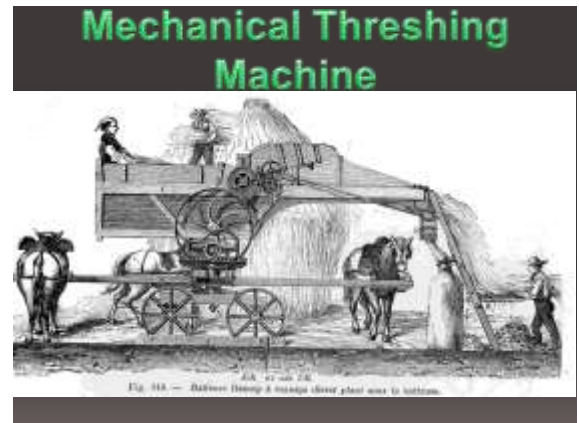
THE POPULISTS

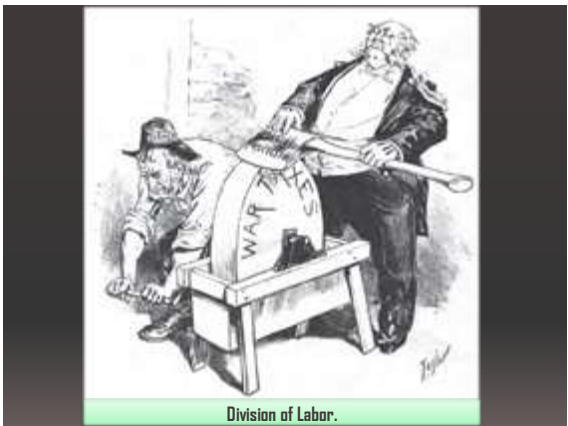
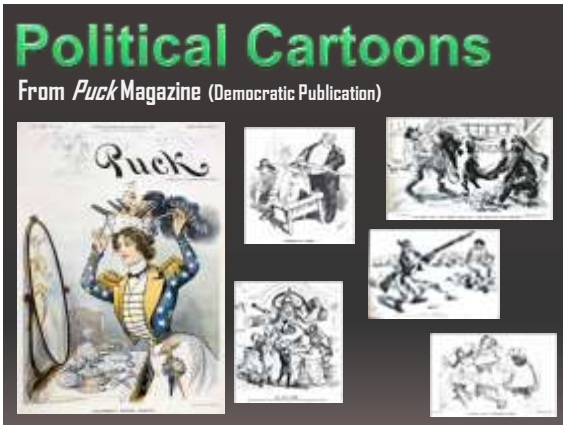
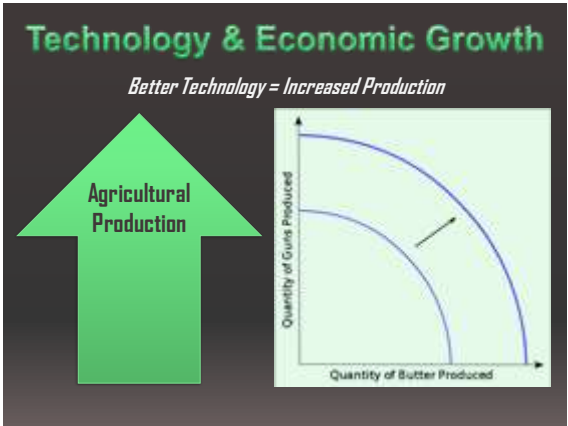
Causes

- New inventions & efficient techniques introduced
- Lack of competition among railroads
- Machinery is needed; shipping costs higher
 - Money is in short supply

Effects

- Prices of farm products decline
- Farmers' earnings decrease
- Farmers are unable to pay back loans
- Banks lend money to fewer farmer







FARMER'S REVOLT

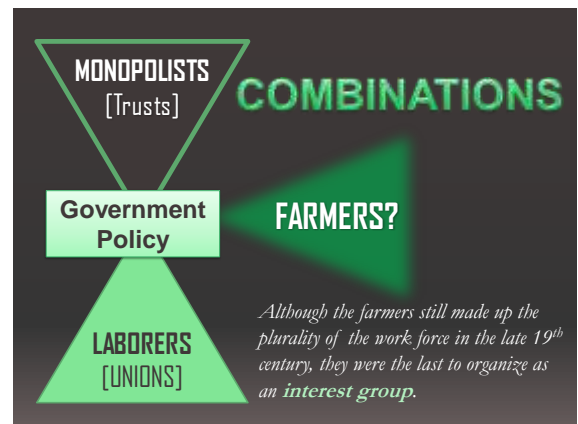
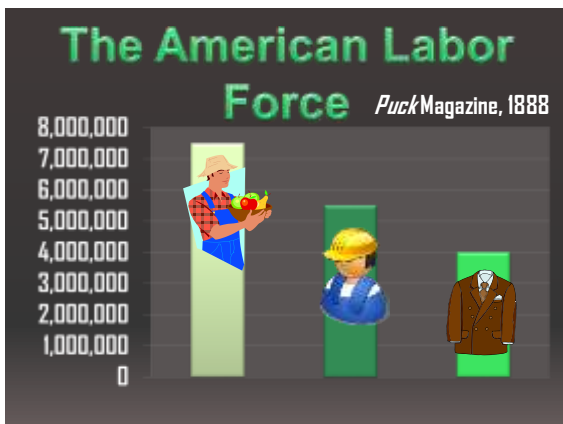
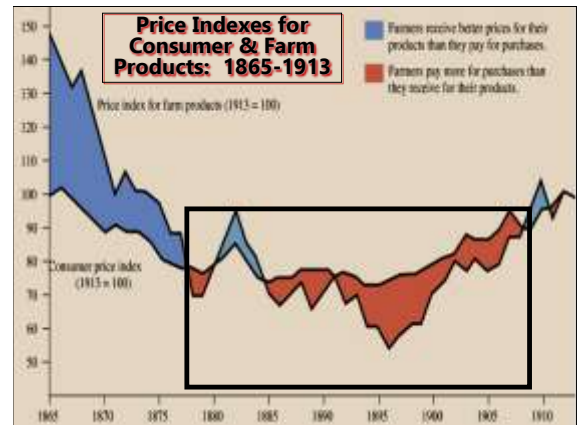
❖ By the late 1800's hardship had replaced the prosperity that farm families enjoyed after the Civil War.

❖ American farmers now faced hard times because of their own overproduction of crops.

❖ Many would blame the farmers for their own problems because they didn't follow the economic belief of "supply and demand"

FARMER'S REVOLT

- A group of poor Midwestern and Southern farmers who suffered economically due to low prices for their crops, which they blamed on Northeastern business interests.
- Would form into an independent political party and threaten the Democrats and Republicans.
- Also called the "People's Party", and would become a national political party called the Populists.



Farmers Unite!

Social	The Grange
Economic	Farmers' Alliances
Political	Populist Party

THE POPULISTS: *Grassroots Movement*

The Grange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Organized in 1867 in response to farmers' isolation. •Helped farmers form cooperatives which bought goods in large quantities at lower prices. • The Grange also pressured government to regulate businesses on which farmers depended.
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People's Movement Spreads

Farmers' Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Farmers' Alliance called for political actions that many farmers could support. •The alliances won support for women's rights. •Blacks allowed but parallel "Colored Farmers' Alliance."
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Becomes a national movement

Populists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Farmers' Alliances formed a new political party, The People's Party or the <u>Populists</u>. •A national movement that was supported by farmers, the West and parts of the South.... •Populists would elect a presidential candidate in the 1892 and 1896 presidential elections.
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Founder of the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry (1867)



The Grange Movement



- First organized in the 1870s in the Midwest, the south, and Texas.
- Set up cooperative associations.
- Social and educational components.
- Succeeded in lobbying for "Granger Laws."
- Rapidly declined by the late 1870s.

Patrons of Husbandry

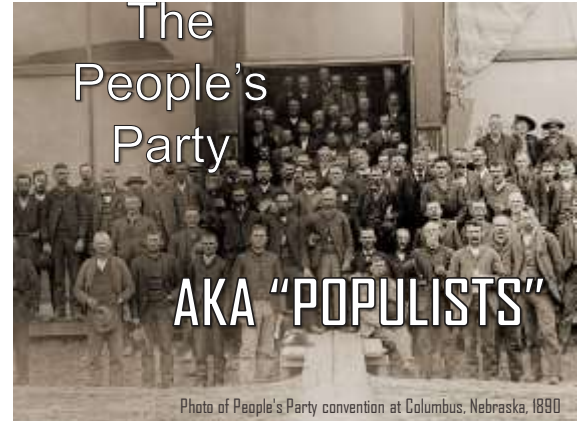
AKA The
"Grangers"



Grange movement, a coalition of U.S. farmers, of the 1870s.

Successful at the local
and state level with
the Granger laws.

**Gift for the Grangers:
The Farmer Pays for
All!**



1st LAWS TO REGULATE BIG BUSINESS

Granger State Laws	State representatives voted into office by members of the Grange who in turn represented the interests of farmers and passed state laws regulating railroad prices in 18 states.
Munn v. Illinois (1876)	Supreme Court decision stating that states had the ability to regulate private property if it affected public interest.
Wabash Case (1886)	Declared that it was unconstitutional for states to regulate interstate commerce. Showed need for Federal regulation of interstate commerce.
Interstate Commerce Commission (1887)	In 1887, Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act that setup the ICC. The federal government has the ability to regulate all aspects of interstate commerce. Rebates and drawbacks were illegal.
Sherman Antitrust Act (1890)	In 1890, Congress passed this act which prohibited monopolies or any business that prevented fair competition.

FARMER'S COMPLAINT

Farmers and Tariffs

- Tariffs helped farmers by protecting them against competition from farm imports.
- Also hurt farmers because they raised the prices of manufactured goods, such as farm machinery.
- Kept foreigners from earning U.S. money with which to buy American crops.

FARMER'S COMPLAINT

The Money Issue

- Farmers wanted an increase in the money supply, the amount of money in the national economy.
- WHY? Value of every dollar drops, leads to a widespread rise in prices, or inflation.
- This trend would benefit people who borrow money (farmers), but it would not be good for money lenders (banks).
- A decrease in the money supply would cause deflation.
- Monetary policy, the federal government's plan for the makeup and quantity of the nation's money supply, thus emerged as a major political issue.

FARMER'S COMPLAINT

Gold Bugs

- Before 1873 U.S. currency was on a bimetallic standard, consisting of gold and silver.
- Then Congress put the currency on a gold standard which decreased the money supply.
- "Gold bugs" (big lenders) were pleased.





The Silver Issue

- "Crime of '73" → demonetization of silver (govt. stopped coining silver).
- Bland-Allison Act (1878) → limited silver coinage to \$2-\$4 mil. per mo. (based on the 16:1 ratio of silver to gold).
- Sherman Silver Purchase Act (1890)
 - The US Treasury must purchase \$4.5 mil. oz. of silver a month.
 - Govt. deposited most silver in the US Treasury rather than circulation.



Bi-Metallism



SILVERITES VS GOLD BUGS

The Bland-Allison Act of 1878

- ❖ Gold standard enraged the "**silverites**," mostly silver-mining interest and western farmers.
- ❖ **Silverites** called for free silver (precious white metal), the unlimited coining of silver dollars to increase the money supply.
- ❖ Federal government was to purchase and coin more silver, thereby increasing the money supply and causing inflation
- ❖ Vetoed by President Hayes because he opposed the inflation.
 - ❖ Congress overrode the veto.
- ❖ Treasury Department refused to buy more than the minimum amount of silver required by the act.
 - ❖ The act had limited effect.

SILVERITES VS GOLD BUGS

Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890

- Increased the amount of silver that the government was required to purchase every month
- The law required the Treasury to buy the silver with notes that could be redeemed for either silver or gold.
- Many people turned in their silver Treasury notes for gold dollars, thus depleting the gold reserves.
 - In 1893, President Cleveland repealed the Silver Purchase Act.
- New gold mines allowed for the US to go back on the gold standard.

SILVERITES VS GOLD BUGS

❖ **Silverites** or farmers wanted an increase in the **money supply**, the amount of money in the national economy. As a result, the value of every dollar drops, leading to a widespread rise in prices, or **inflation**.

❖ This trend would benefit people who borrow money (farmers), but it would not be good for money lenders (banks). A decrease in the money supply would cause **deflation**.

❖ **Monetary policy**, the federal government's plan for the makeup and quantity of the nation's money supply, thus emerged as a major political issue.

SILVERITES VS GOLD BUGS

❖ **Gold bugs** were against this because with a smaller money supply prices would drop and each dollar buys more.

❖ This would take the US off the gold standard and hurt our credibility in the International trade markets who were on the gold standard.
Good for people who lent money

❖ Before 1873 U.S. currency was on a **bimetallic standard**, consisting of gold and silver.

❖ Then Congress put the currency on a gold standard which decreased the money supply.
"Gold bugs" (big lenders) were pleased.

FARMER'S COMPLAINT

The Rail-roads

Problems with the Railroads

- Lack of competition lets railroads overcharge to transport grain
- Farms mortgaged to buy supplies; suppliers charge high interest



**United
We
Stand,
Divided
We Fall**

- In 1889 both the Northern and Southern Alliances merged into one—the **Farmers' Alliance**.



The Populist (Peoples') Party



- Founded by James B. Weaver and Tom Watson.
- Omaha, NE Convention in July, 1892.
- Got almost 1 million popular votes.
- Several Congressional seats won.



James B. Weaver,
Presidential Candidate
&
James G. Field, VP



The Populist (Peoples') Party



- 1890 Bi-Election:
 - ➔ So. Alliance → wanted to gain control of the Democratic Party.
 - ➔ No. Alliance → ran 3rd Party candidates.
- 1892 → 800 met in St. Louis, MO
 - ➔ majority were Alliance members.
 - ➔ over 100 were African Americans.
 - ➔ reps. of labor organizations & other reformers (Grange, Greenback Party).

Platform of Lunacy



Omaha Platform of 1892

1. System of "sub-treasuries."
2. Abolition of the National Bank.
3. Direct election of Senators.
4. Govt. ownership of RRs, telephone & telegraph companies.
5. Government-operated postal savings banks.
6. Restriction of undesirable immigration.
7. 8-hour work day for government employees.
8. Abolition of the Pinkerton detective agency.
9. Australian secret ballot.
10. Re-monitization of silver.
11. A single term for President & Vice President.

Omaha Platform of 1892

1. **Purer democracy:** more involvement of people
 - Women's suffrage
 - Direct election of U.S. senators
 - Australian Secret Ballot
 - Term limits for Congress
2. Govt. ownership of RRs, telephone & telegraph companies.
3. Income tax
4. Initiative and referendum
 - Citizens propose and review legislation
5. Restriction of undesirable immigration.
6. 8-hour work day for government employees.
7. Demanded free and unlimited coinage of silver
8. A single term for President & Vice President.
9. **Sherman Silver Purchase Act**
 - ❖ 16 to 1
 - ❖ Purchase silver from mines in the west

Govt.-Owned



1892 Election



The Panic of 1893

Causes of the 1893 Panic

- Begun 10 days after Cleveland took office.
 1. Several major corps. went bankrupt.
 - Over 16,000 businesses disappeared.
 - Triggered a stock market crash.
 - Over-extended investments.
 2. Bank failures followed causing a contraction of credit [nearly 500 banks closed].
 3. By 1895, unemployment reached 3 million.
- Americans cried out for relief, but the Govt. continued its laissez faire policies!!

Here Lies Prosperity



Written by a Farmer at the End of the 19c

*When the banker says he's broke
And the merchant's up in smoke,
They forget that it's the farmer
who feeds them all.*

*It would put them to the test
If the farmer took a rest;
Then they'd know that it's the farmer
feeds them all.*

Coxey's Army, 1894



- Jacob Coxey & his "Army of the Commonwealth of Christ."
- March on Washington → "hayseed socialists!"



THE POPULIST REVOLT



• In 1893, Jacob Coxey, ([leader of Coxey's Army](#)) of Massillon, Ohio, and some 20,000 men and women began a march to Washington, DC.

• Demanded US Govt. public works programs, mainly railroads for the nation's unemployed.

THE POPULIST REVOLT



•600 protesters persisted through the length of the journey and on May 1, 1894.

- "Coxey's Army" reached Washington and marched along Pennsylvania Avenue.

•Before "General" Coxey could deliver a historic speech, however, he was arrested by District police - for walking on the grass. 🌟

Result of Election Returns



- Populist vote increased by 40% in the bi-election year, 1894.
- Democratic party losses in the West were catastrophic!
- But, Republicans won control of the House.



The 1896 Election

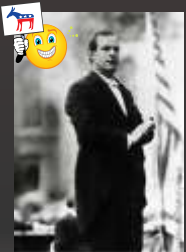


Bryan

Populists Endorse Bryan



Election of 1896



William Jennings Bryan
(D-NE)

VS.



William McKinley
(R-OH)



Gold / Silver Bug Campaign Pins





William Jennings Bryan



The "Great



POPULIST'S REVOLT



1860 to 1925



- William Jennings Bryan was a gifted speaker, lawyer, three-time presidential candidate, and devout Protestant.
- Bryan made his career in Nebraska politics.
- Served in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1890.

• Defender of the small farmer and laborer, Bryan worked closely with the Populist Party.



POPULIST'S REVOLT



- Bryan's efforts on behalf of farmers and laborers (the so-called "common" people) earned him the title the **"Great Commoner"**
- Ran for the presidency unsuccessfully in 3 elections as a Democrat.
- Known for the **"Cross of Gold Speech"**



William Jennings Bryan



*Prairie avenger,
mountain lion,
Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,
Bryan,
Gigantic troubadour,
speaking like a siege
gun,
Smashing Plymouth Rock
with his boulders
from the West.*

➤ Revivalist style of oratory.



CROSS OF GOLD SPEECH

- William Jennings Bryan's most well-known political speech delivered before the Democratic Convention in 1896.
- Highlighted the Populist stance and his strong position on the issue of the "Gold-Standard."
- Attacked the concept that gold was the only sound backing for currency.

CROSS OF GOLD SPEECH

- Argued the "real" business men were farmers, agricultural workers, miners and small town merchants.
- Demonstrated the true "pioneer spirit" of America
- These workers were all but ignored by a government that served the interests of big cities and large corporate enterprise.

CROSS OF GOLD SPEECH

"They tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard. We reply that our great cities rest upon our broad and great prairies".

CROSS OF GOLD SPEECH

"Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms, and the grass will grow in the streets of every city of the country".

CROSS OF GOLD SPEECH

"You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold"

POPULIST'S REVOLT



- Using images from the Bible, he stood with his head bowed and arms outstretched.
- So impressive was his speech that both Democrats and Populists nominated him for President.

"Cross of Gold Speech"

1896 Democratic
National
Convention

*"If protection has slain its
thousands the gold
standard has slain its
tens of thousands."*

-- W.J. Bryan



Cartoon from Judge Magazine, 1896

"Cross of Gold Speech"

1896 Democratic
National
Convention

*"You shall not press down
upon the brow of labor
this **green** crown of thorns! You
shall not crucify mankind
upon a **green** cross of gold!"*

-- W.J. Bryan



Cartoon from Judge Magazine, 1896



Bryan: The Farmer's Friend (The Mint Ratio)



18,000 miles of campaign "whistle stops."



Democr atic Party Taken Over by the Agraria n Left



Platform → tariff reductions; income tax; stricter control of the trusts (esp. RRs); free silver.

William McKinley (1843-1901)



- Born in Ohio on January 29, 1843.
- Private during the Civil War and earned the rank of major in 1865.
- Served in Congress from 1876 to 1890 and became a supporter of protective tariffs.
- Elected governor of Ohio in 1891, serving a second term in 1893.
- 1896, the Republican Party nominated him for president.
 - stressed protective tariffs
 - supported the gold standard.

Mark Hanna to Candidate McKinley



Harris: That race Clay won on ass. It's better to be President than to be right!

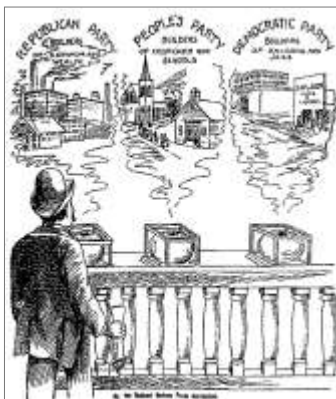
"A Giant Straddle": Suggestion for a McKinley Political



The Seasoned Politician vs. The "Young" Newcomer



Into Which Box Will the Voter of '96 Place



1896 Election Results



Gold Triumphs Over Silver



- McKinley defeats Bryan in the 1896 election.
- 1900 → **Gold Standard Act**
- Confirmed the nation's commitment to the gold standard.
- A victory for the forces of conservatism.



Why Did Bryan Loose?



- His focus on silver undermined efforts to build bridges to urban voters.
- He did not form alliances with other groups.
- McKinley's campaign was well-organized and highly funded.



Why Did Populism Decline?

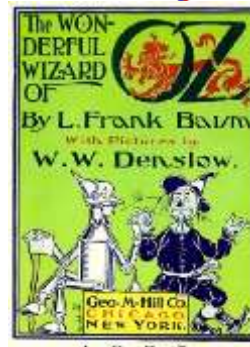


1. The economy experienced rapid change.
2. The era of small producers and farmers was fading away.
3. Race divided the Populist Party, especially in the South.
4. The Populists were not able to break existing party loyalties.
5. Most of their agenda was co-opted by the Democratic Party.

POPULIST PARTY



The Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum



1964: Henry Littlefield's Thesis?



The Cowardly Lion = William Jennings Bryan

The Tin Woodsman = eastern industrial worker

The Scarecrow = farmer

Wicked Witch of the East = Bankers

Wicked Witch of the West =

Dorothy and her "silver slippers" = the proposed silver standard

The Yellow-Brick Road = the gold standard supported by financiers

The Wizard of Oz = President William McKinley

Toto = a small, black dog

The Populist Platform

Political
Reform Proposals

Direct Election
of Senators
Ballot Initiatives
Secret Ballot

Economic
Reform Proposals

Graduated [Progressive]
Income Tax
Unlimited Coinage
of Silver
Nationalization
of Railroads



The Populist Platform

Political
Reform Proposals

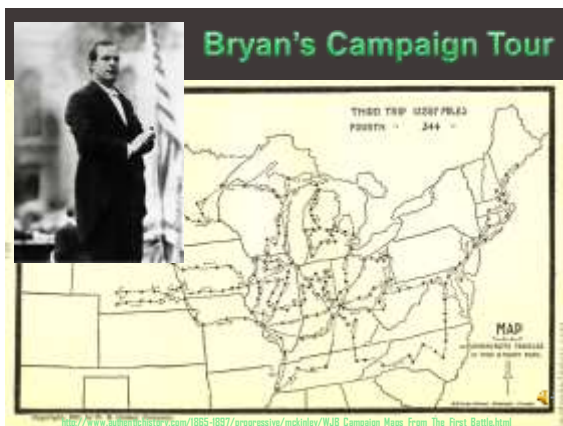
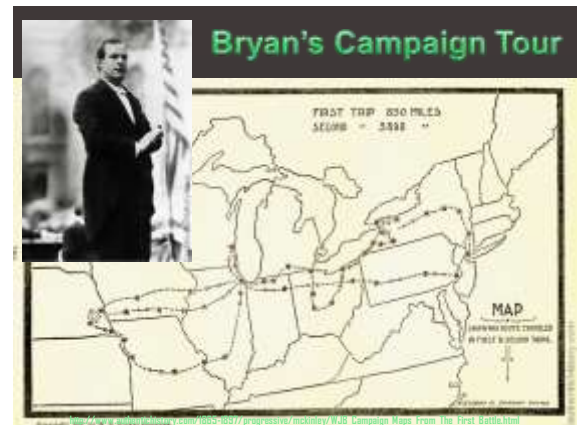
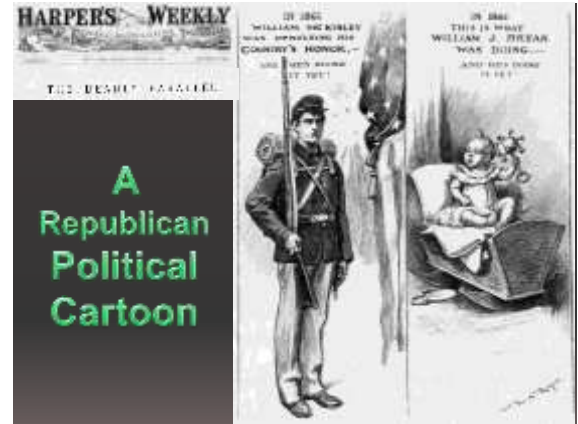
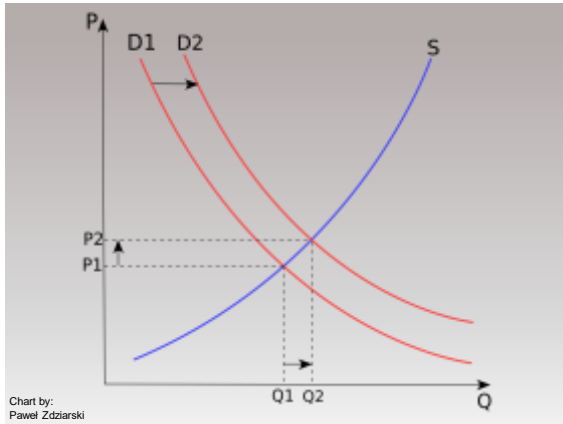
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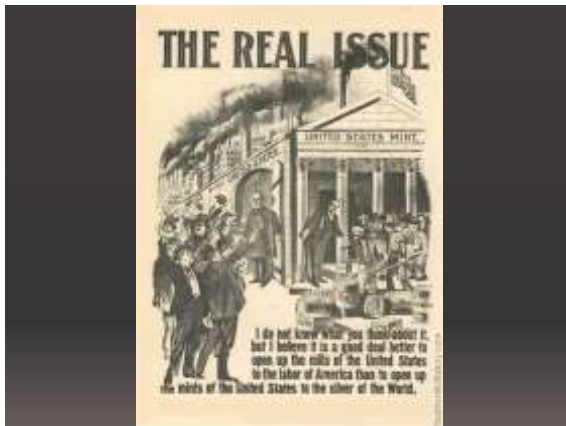
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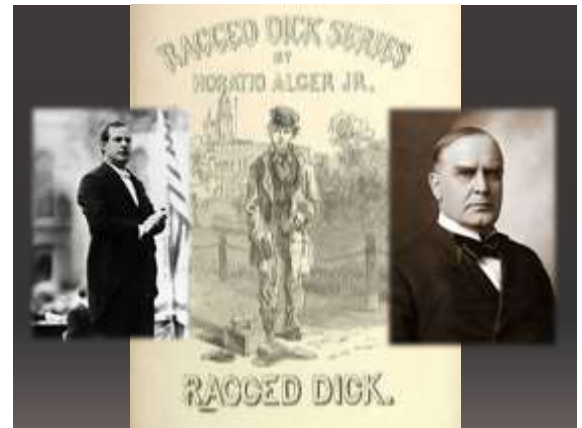
Graduated
Income Tax
Unlimited Coinage
of Silver
Nationalization
of Railroads



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**The
Sound
Money
Scare**

BOTTOM LINE:

We all want more money, but we also want our money to be worth something.

A bronze cauldron with three legs, overflowing with gold coins. The coins are stacked high, spilling out of the top of the pot. The cauldron has a handle on the left side.

Sound Money WINS!

but so do the monopolists.



THANKSGIVING.
"Give What We Are Able To Receive, Say The Lard Heads In Thank Offering."
Illustration by C. D. 1890

