

The Populists

Power to the People!

Settling the West

- Homestead Act (1862) allows settlers to get 160 acres of land for \$30 application fee; must make an improvement to the land
 - 500,000 families make use of the act

Farmers problems

- Drought
- Weather
- Farming techniques ruin the soil
- Locusts
- Land availability drives up prices
- Mechanization leads to “factory farms”; rising prices of combines and reapers
- Railroads increase shipping rates, cutting into profits (no state regulations; courts rules corporations are people, can't infringe on 14th Amendment rights)

Depression and the Farmers

- Deflation, low prices, rising interest rates
- Couldn't compete in competitive global market
- Mortgages called in
- Protective tariffs for industry drive up prices but don't protect farmers

The Grange

- Est. as a sort of union for farmers; starts out as social becomes political
- Membership increases to 800,000 by 1875
- Political success and setbacks
 - Munn v. Illinois (1877): courts ruled that property devoted to “public use” (RR, grain elevators, etc.) could be regulated by the states
 - Illinois v. Wabash (1886) Commerce that crosses state lines is under direction of federal government, not states; therefore, states cannot regulate
 - Interstate Commerce Act and ICCommission (1886): allows federal government to regulate RR; forces RR to obey laws on fair shipping rates; bans rate discrimination on short v. long hauls

Populism

- Farmer's Alliance (1870s) takes over from The Grange; membership hits one million by 1890
 - Excludes tenant farmers, blacks
- The Populists or People's Party forms in 1892
 - Government ownership of railroads, telephone, telegraph
 - "Free" unlimited coinage of silver
 - Excess RR land returned to the people
 - Laborers 8 hr. workday
 - Gov. warehouses to store crops
 - Immigration restriction
 - Direct election of Senators
 - Secret ballot
 - Initiative and referendums

Populism gets a boost from Carnegie

- Pullman strike crushed; “little guy” angry that government crushing the voice of the people
- Link between courts and big business

The “Cross of Gold”

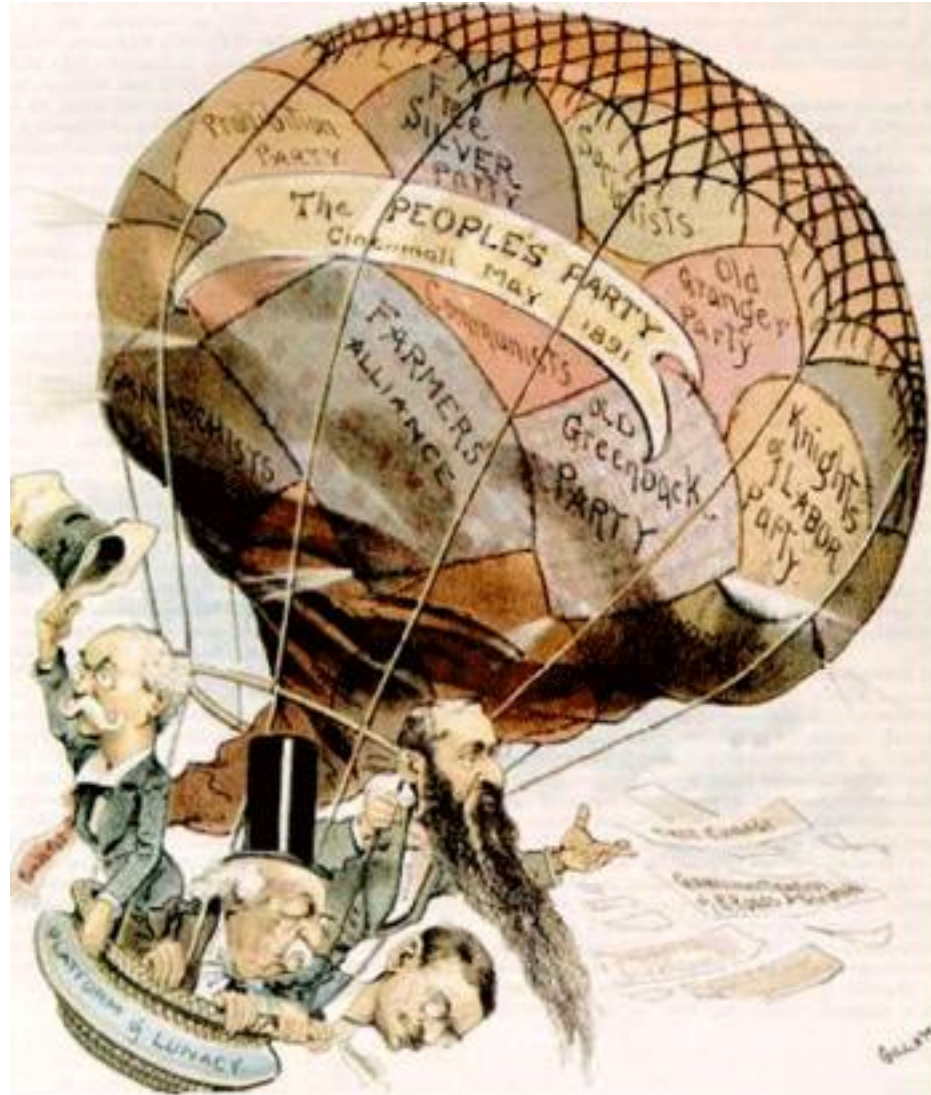
- 1896 election: Republican (McKinley) v. Democrat/Populist (William Jennings Bryan)
 - Repubs blame Dems for the Depression of 1893, advocate gold standard
 - Dems do not choose Cleveland (embarrassing deal with Morgan); back “silverite” Bryan
 - Jennings gives famous “Cross of Gold” speech, demanding a silver standard “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold”
 - Some Democrats (“gold bugs”) still back Cleveland; forced to support McKinley

Election of 1896

- Bryan fails to get labor vote (workers pressured into voting Republican)
- McKinley elected
- Highlights importance of cities, not farms, to elections
- Many platform ideas adopted in Repub and Dem platforms
- Importance of a government that listens to ALL

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"A PARTY OF PATCHES," JUNE 6, 1891