



Populism & the Election of 1896

AP US History



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



Problems of the Farmer:



"cycle of debt"

Deflation of currency

Prices drop due to increased productivity

High shipping costs

High interest rates following the Civil War

Farmers blamed monied interests (banks, railroads, manufacturers, speculators) and considered government as the stooge of these entities



The Silver Issue



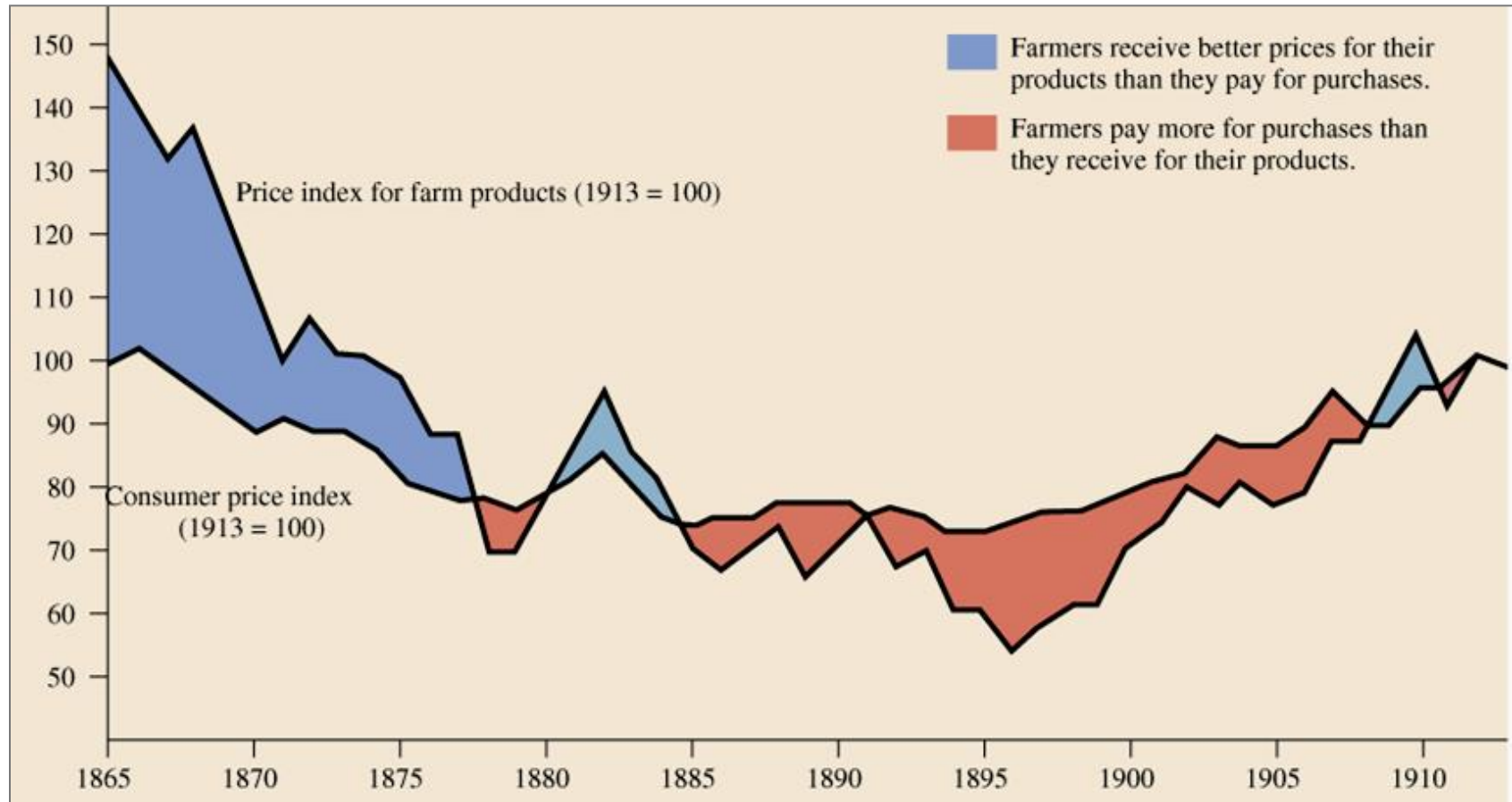
- **"Crime of '73"** (1873) → demonetization of silver (govt. stopped coining silver).
- **Bland-Allison Act** (1878) → limited silver coinage to \$2-\$4 mil. per mo. (based on the 16:1 ratio of silver to gold).
- **Sherman Silver Purchase Act** (1890)
 - The US Treasury must purchase \$4.5 mil. oz. of silver a month.
 - Govt. deposited most silver in the US Treasury rather than circulation.



Populism: An Agrarian Revolt



Price Indexes for Consumer & Farm Products: 1865-1913





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.



Supreme Court Decisions



- *Munn vs. Illinois (1877)*
- *Wabash, St. Louis, & Pacific Railroad Company vs. Illinois (1886)*



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



The Farmers Alliances



- Begun in the late 1880s (Texas first → the **Southern Alliance**; then in the Midwest → the **Northern Alliance**).
- Built upon the ashes of the Grange.
- More political and less social than the Grange.
- Ran candidates for office.
- Controlled 8 state legislatures & had 47 representatives in Congress during the 1890s.



*United We
Stand,
Divided
We Fall*

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





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

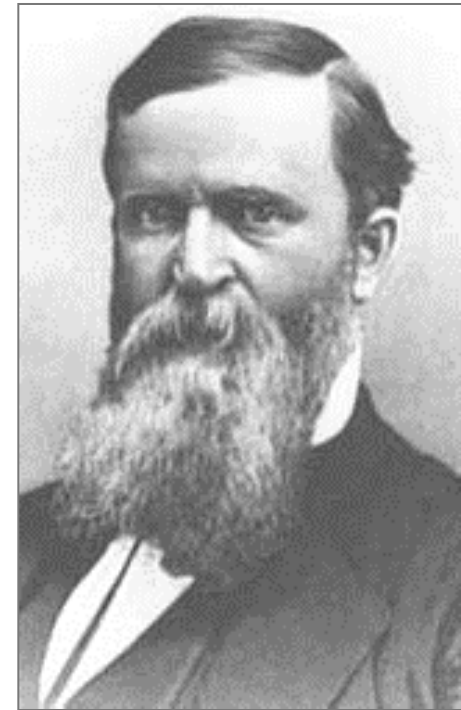




The Populist (Peoples') Party



- 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





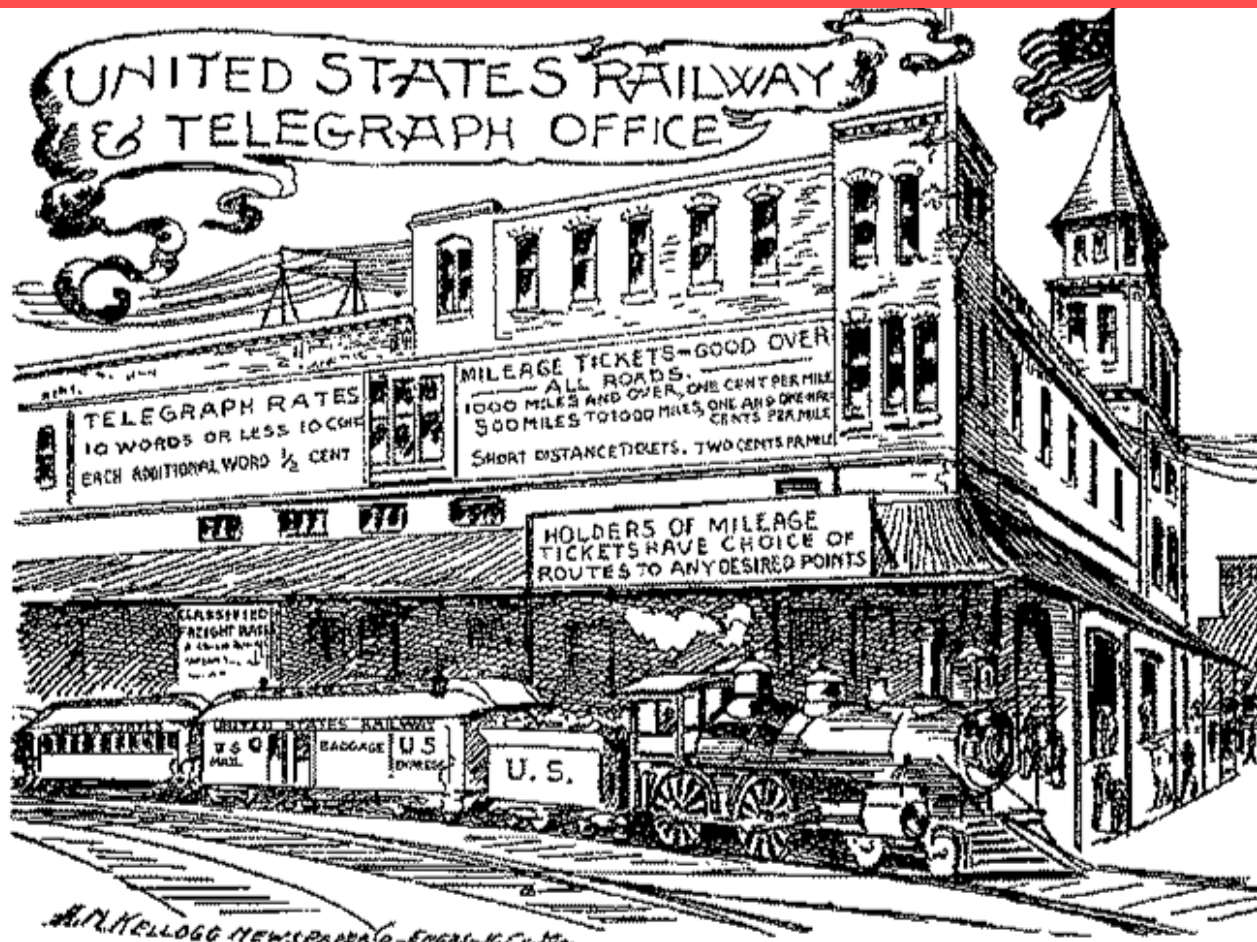
Omaha Platform of 1892



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.



Govt.-Owned Companies



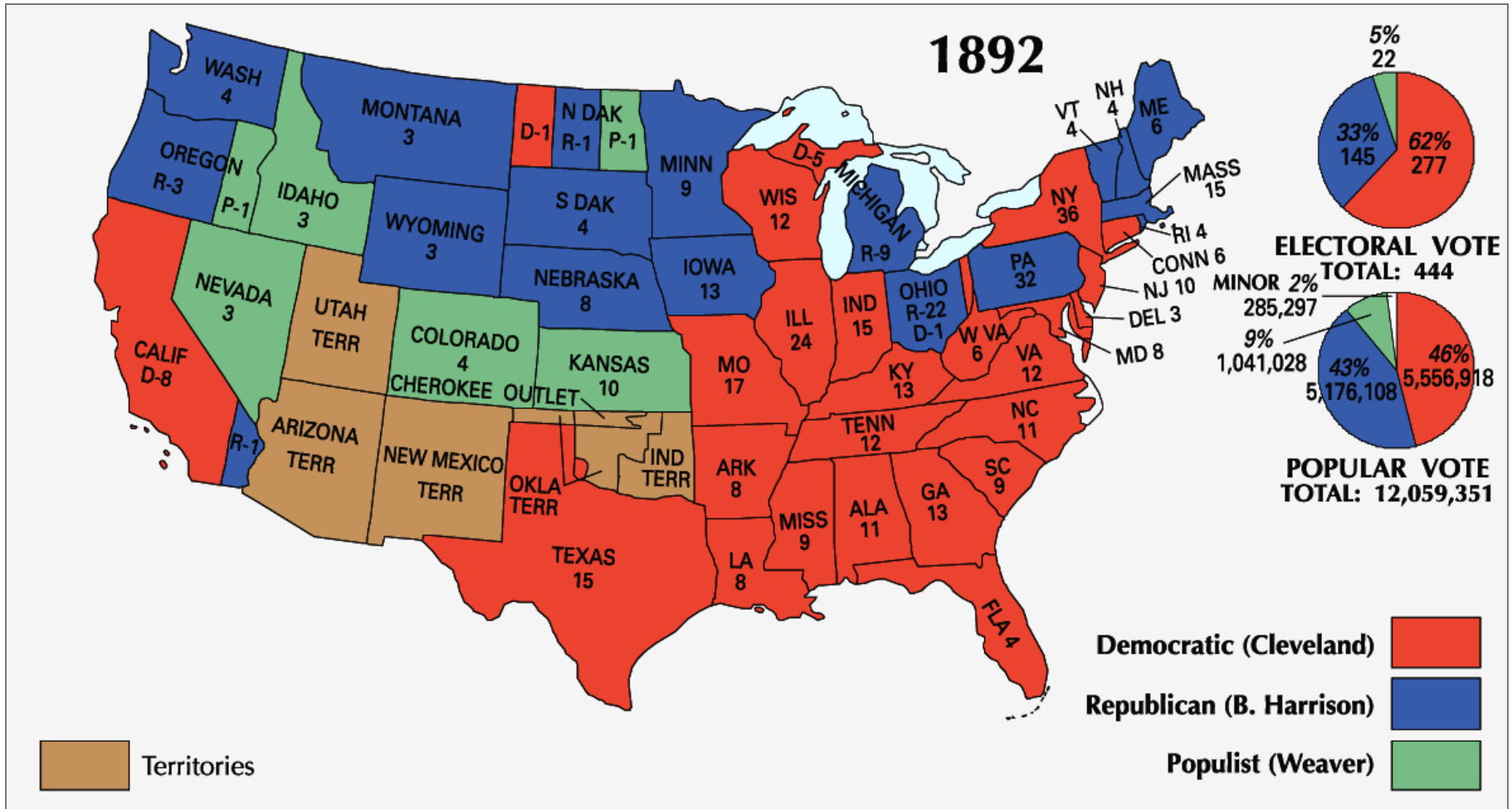
ANOTHER FEATURE OF OUR PLATFORM.

Third—Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people.

The telegraph and telephones, like the post office system, being a necessity for the transmission of news, should be owned and operated by the government in the interest of the people.



1892 Election





Bi-Metallism Issue





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



The Situation; The Result of Interest Bearing Bonds and Sherman



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



KEEP OFF THE GRASS

COXEY
STILL ASKS CONGRESS
... TO ...
EMANGIPATE LABOR.

Give Work to the Unemployed.
Improve the Highways.
Reduce Hours of Toil.
Put Children in School, not in Factories.
Issue Legal Tender Money, not Interest Bearing Bonds.

THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

Will elect a Congress to represent the People and not Wall Street.

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



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



Gold / Silver Bug Campaign Pins





William Jennings Bryan

(1860-1925)



The “Great Commoner”



William Jennings Bryan

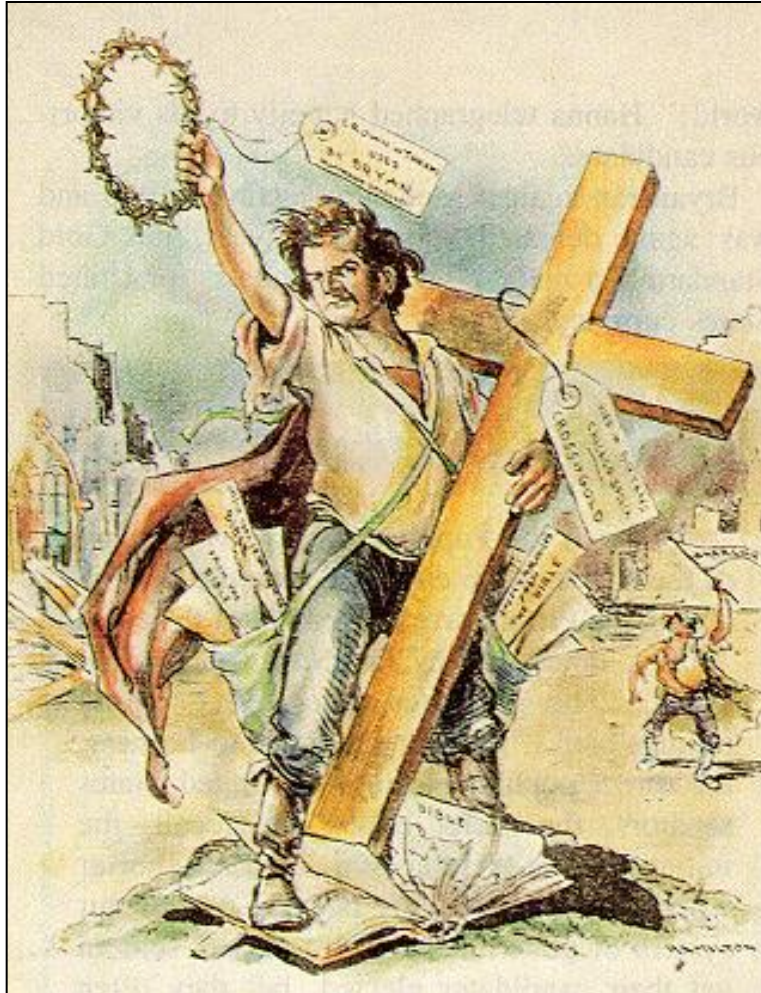


*Prairie avenger,
mountain lion,
Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,
Bryan,
Gigantic troubadour,
speaking like a siege
gun,
Smashing Plymouth Rock
with his boulders
from the West.*

➤ Revivalist style of oratory.



Bryan's “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!*



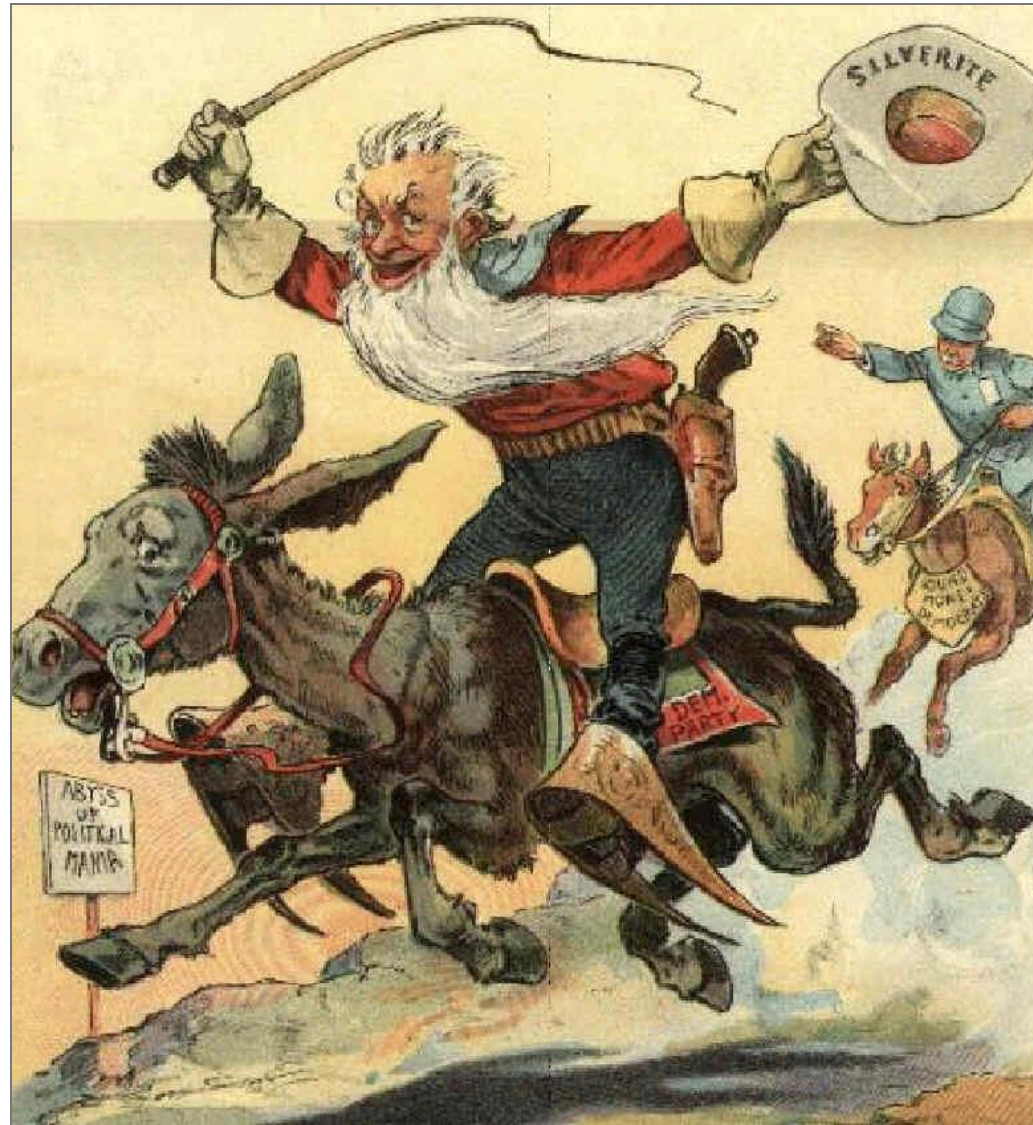
Bryan: The Farmers Friend (The Mint Ratio)



18,000 miles of campaign “whistle stops.”



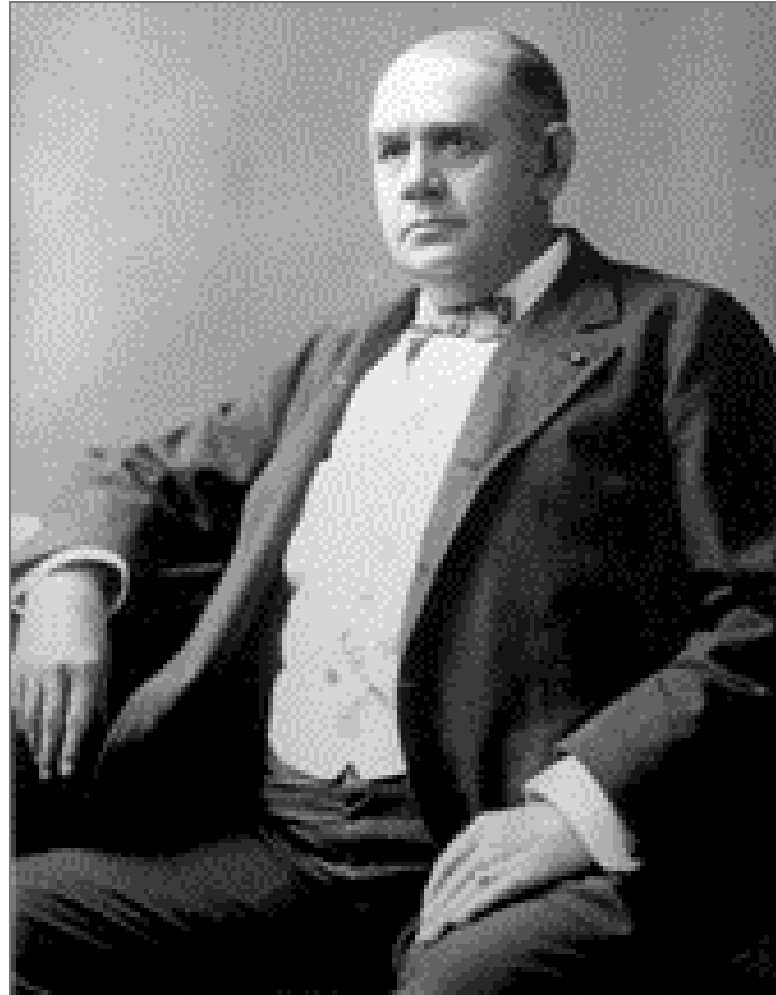
Democratic Party Taken Over by the Agrarian Left

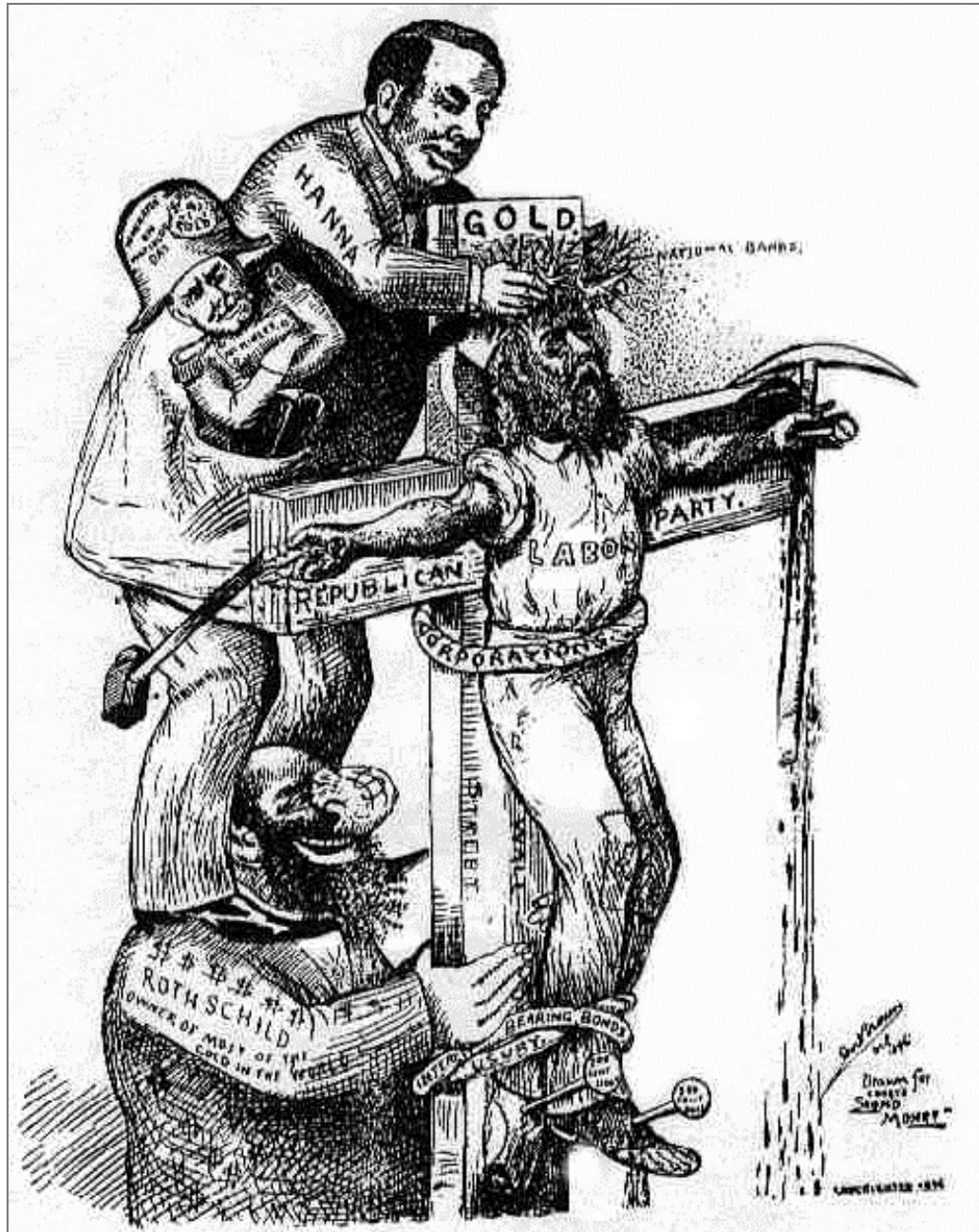


Platform → tariff reductions; income tax; stricter control of the trusts (esp. RRs); free silver.



Mark Hanna: The “Front-Porch” Campaign

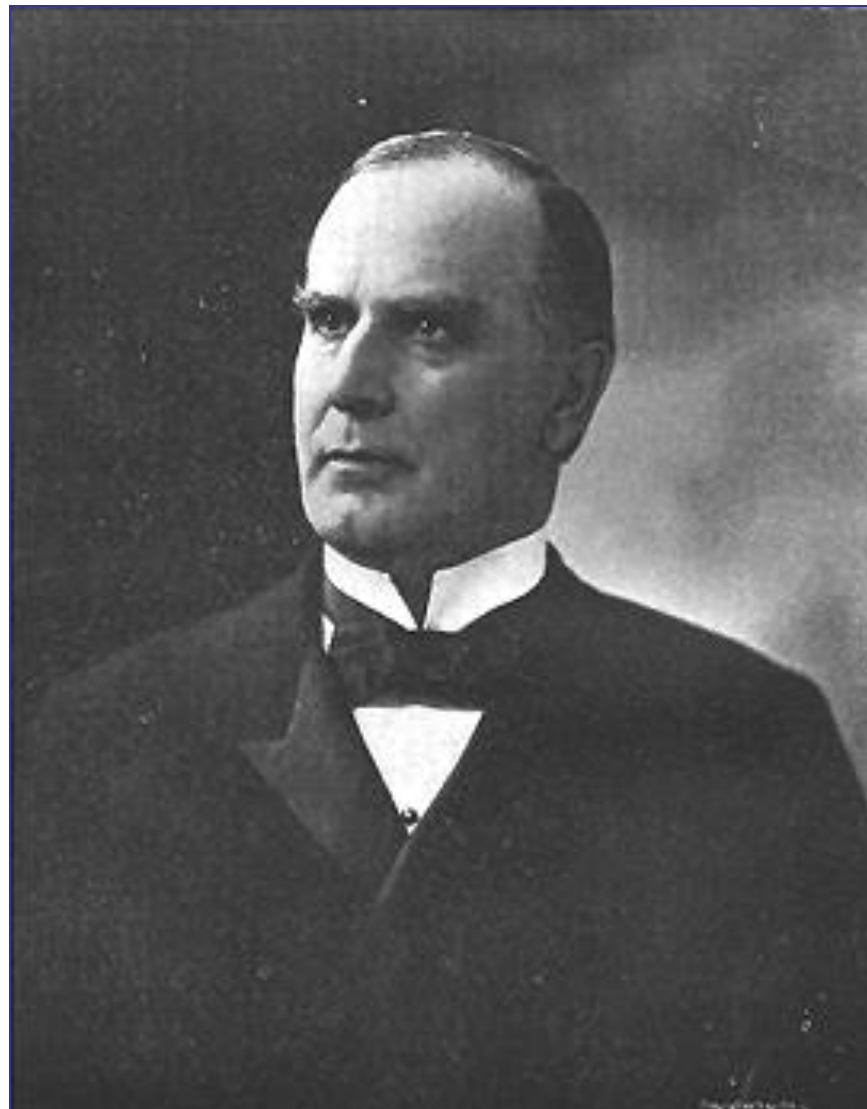








William McKinley (1843-1901)





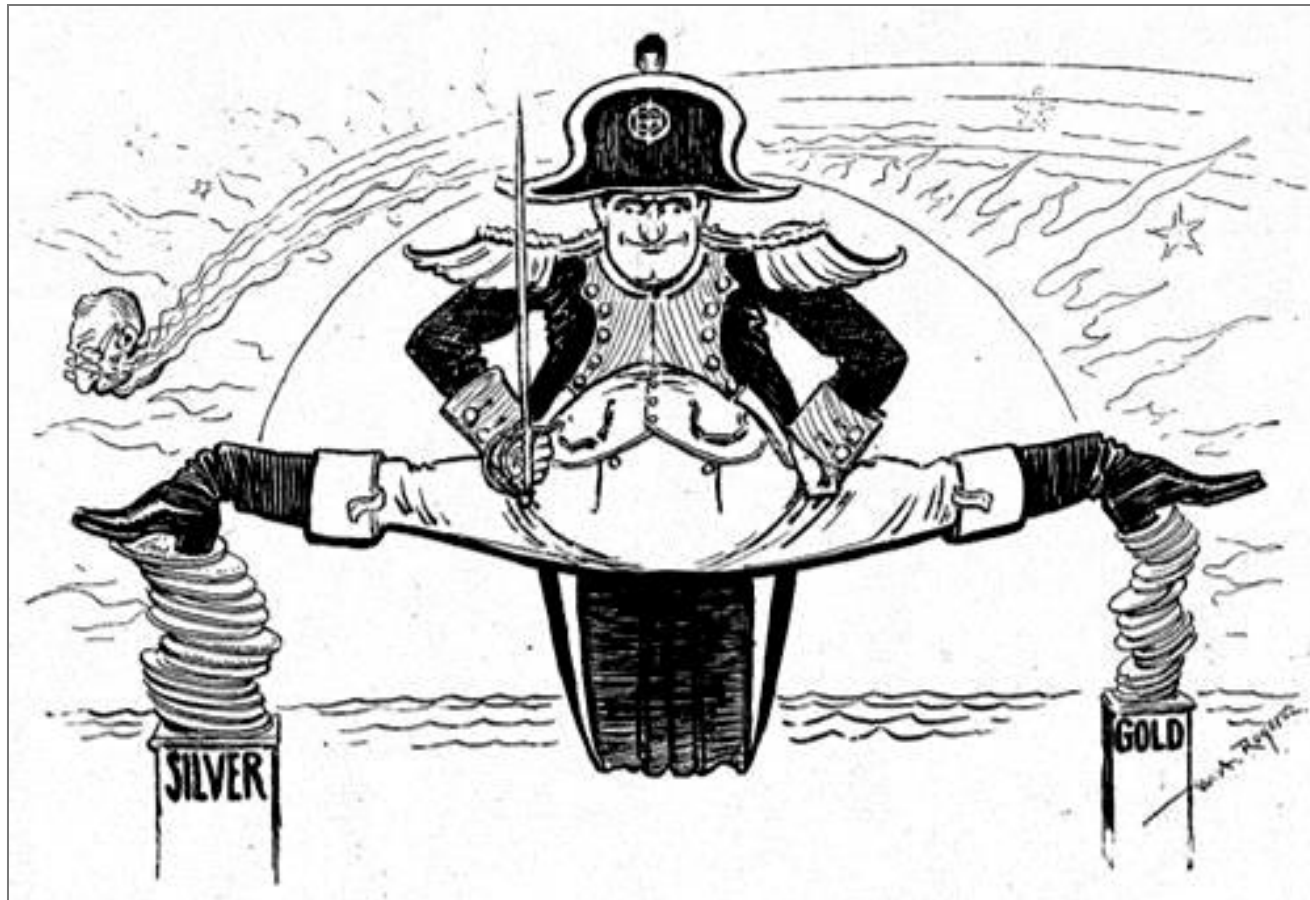
Mark Hanna to Candidate McKinley



Hanna: That man Clay was an ass. It's better to be President than to be right!



“A Giant Straddle”: Suggestion for a McKinley Political Poster





HARPER'S WEEKLY



Vol. XL—No. 351.
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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 1896.

TEN CENTS A COPY.
FOUR DOLLARS A YEAR.

IN 1861
WILLIAM MCKINLEY
WAS UPHOLDING HIS
COUNTRY'S HONOR,—
AND HE'S DOING
IT YET!



IN 1861
THIS IS WHAT
WILLIAM J. BRYAN
WAS DOING,—
AND HE'S DOING
IT YET!

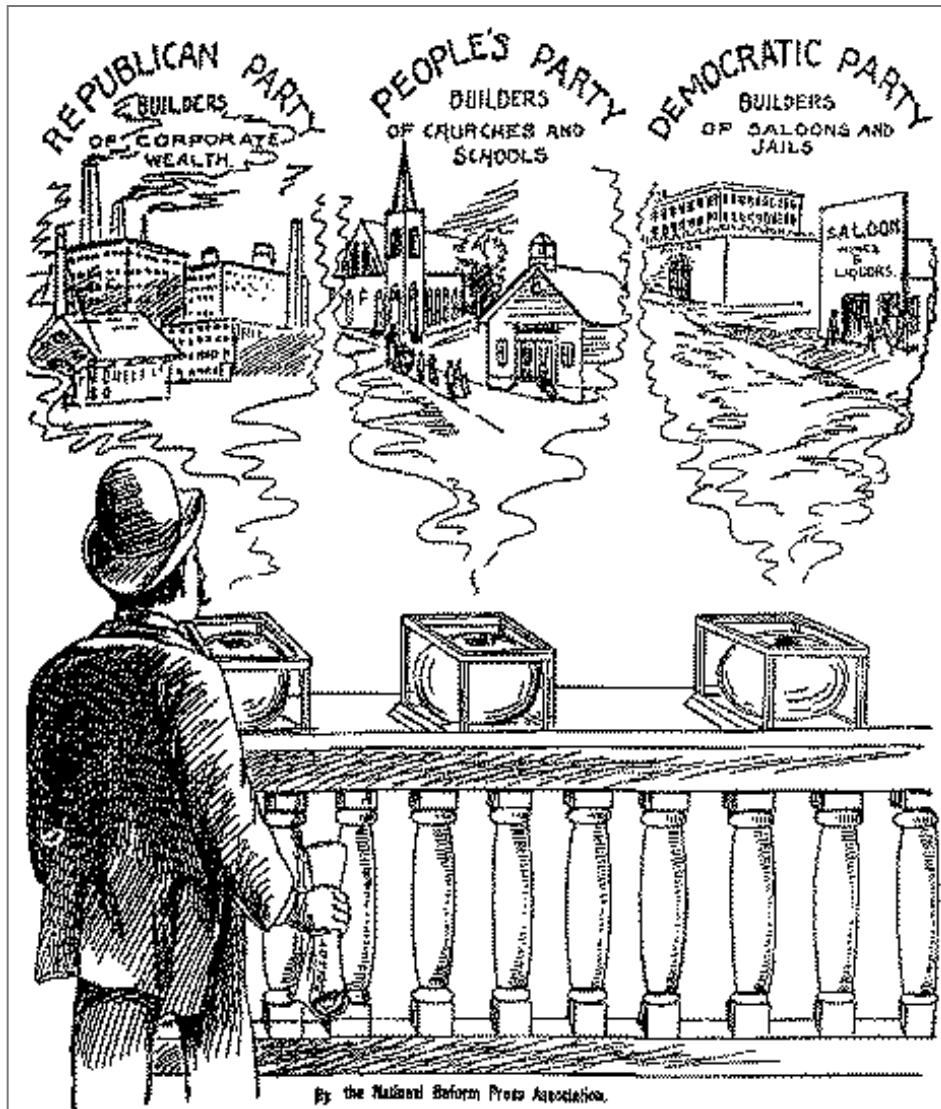


W.A. RAYNES

The
Seasoned
Politician

VS.

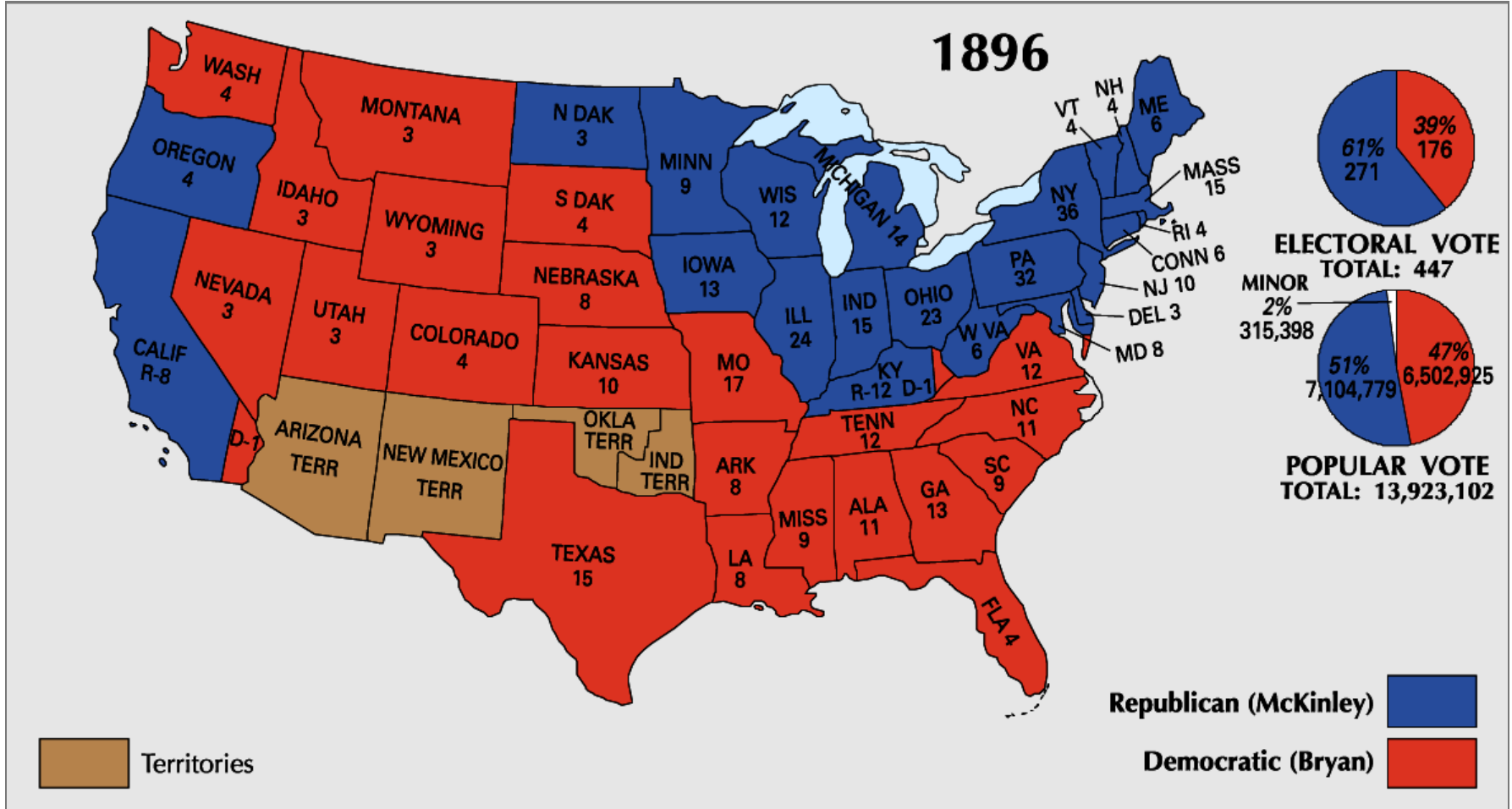
The "Young"
Newcomer



*Into
Which Box
Will the
Voter
of '96
Place His
Ballot?*



1896 Election Results





Why Did Bryan Lose?



- 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.



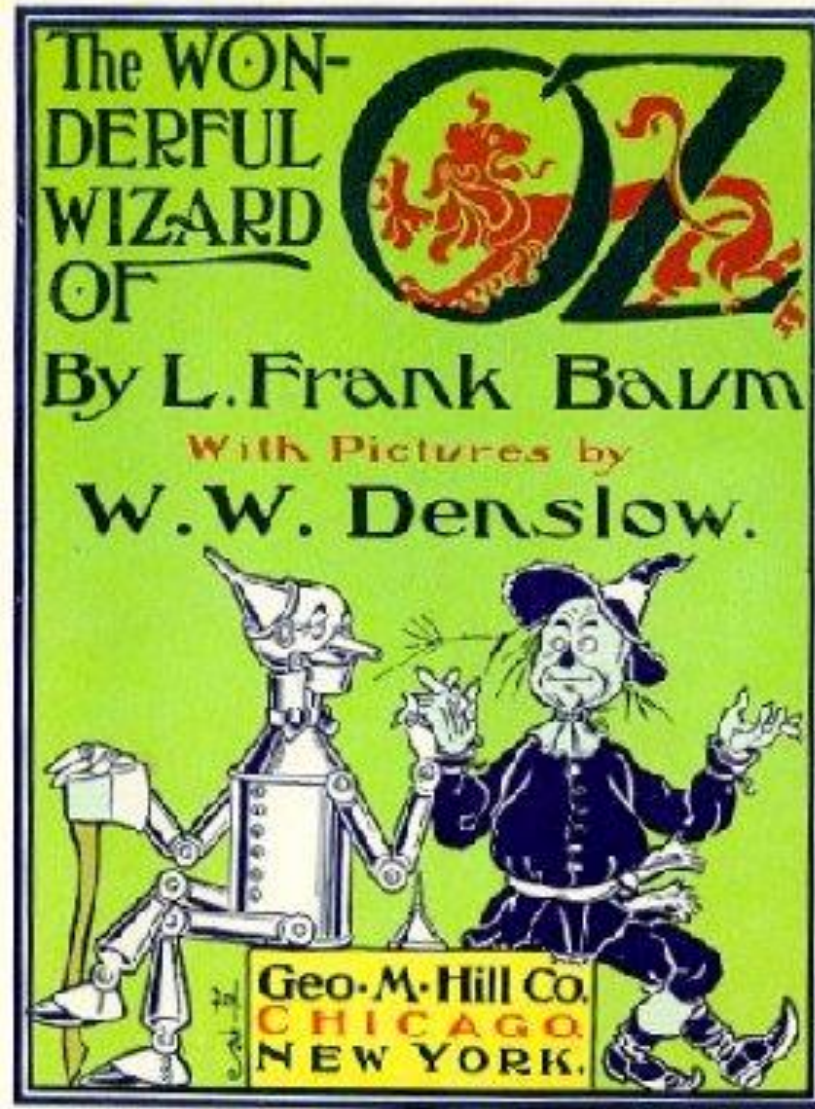
Gold Triumphs Over Silver



- 1900 → **Gold Standard Act**
- confirmed the nation's commitment to the gold standard.
- A victory for the forces of conservatism.



*The Wizard
of Oz*
by L. Frank
Baum



1 9 0 0



1964: Henry Littlefield's "Thesis"?





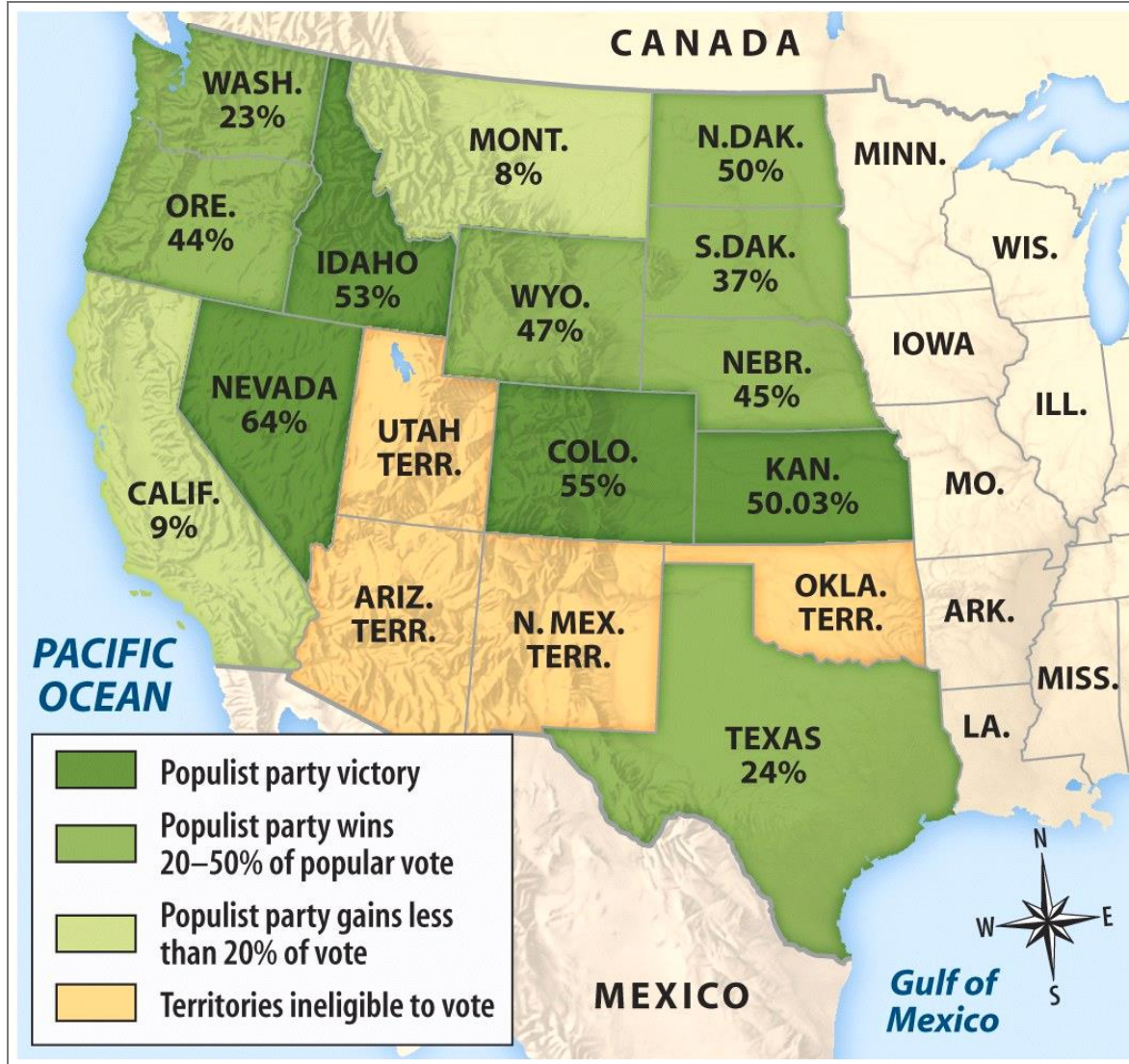
What Are the Metaphors?



- Dorothy → ?
- Kansas → ?
- Wicked Witches of the East and West → ?
- Tin Woodsman → ?
- Scarecrow → ?
- Cowardly Lion → ?
- Yellow Brick Road → ?
- Silver Slippers → ?
- Emerald City → ?
- Oz → ?
- The Wizard → ?
- Munchkins → ?
- Toto ?
- Flying Monkeys → ?



Heyday of Western Populism





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.



But, Populism Still Lives!



Al Gore in 2000





- *“For we have always understood that when times change, so must we, that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges, that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action...Now, more than ever, we must do these things together, as one nation, and one people.”*

President Barack Obama
Second Inaugural Address



- *“Now is not the time for us to engage in the centuries-old debate over the role of government in society” ... “now is the time to act.”*



President Barack Obama
Second Inaugural Address





J. Scott Applewhite, AP