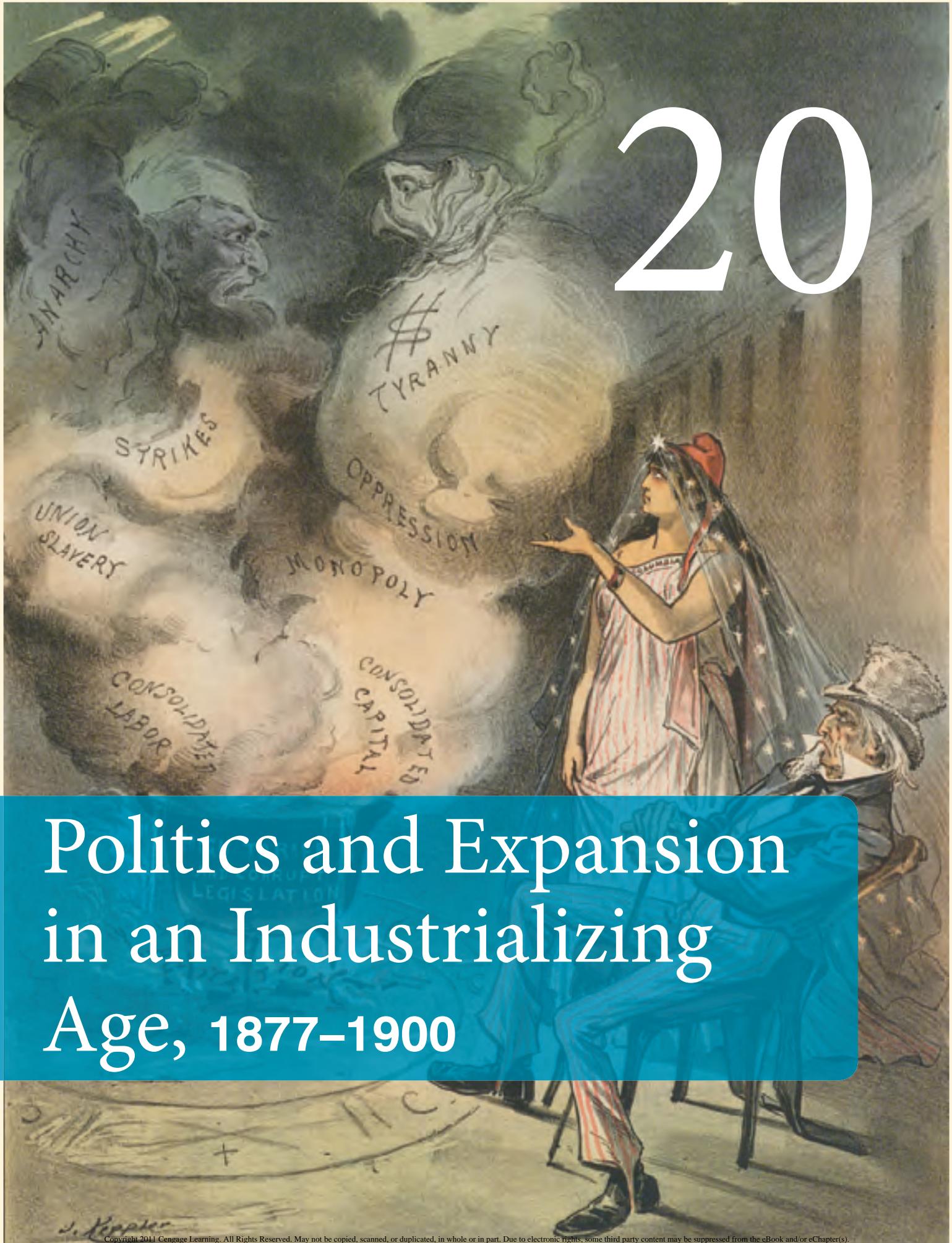


20

Politics and Expansion in an Industrializing Age, 1877–1900





PRESIDENT JAMES A. GARFIELD

(National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY)

wounds, knew better. “I am a dead man,” he told them. His doctors tried everything. But as the doctors probed the wound with bare hands and unsterilized instruments, blood poisoning set in. On September 19, Garfield died.

The nation mourned. An Ohio farm boy, Will Boyer, was shocked to hear the news from another farmer as he walked along a country road. Garfield embodied the American dream of the self-made man. Born in a log cabin in Ohio (he was the last log-cabin president), he had worked his way through Williams College, preached in the Disciples of Christ Church, taught at Hiram College, practiced law, and won election to the Ohio senate. He fought in the Civil War, went to Congress in 1863, and was elected president in 1880. As for Guiteau, the jury rejected his insanity plea, and in June 1882 he was hanged.

An ambitious, well-meaning man, Garfield also embodied a political generation that seemed more preoccupied with the spoils of office than with the problems of ordinary people. In Congress, Garfield had been tainted by the 1873 Crédit Mobilier scandal and other corruption charges. His presidential nomination in 1880 had resulted from a split in the Republican Party between two rival factions, the Stalwarts and the Half-Breeds, that vied with each other over the distribution of patronage jobs.

The obscure Guiteau, a loyal party member who had supported Garfield, expected to be rewarded with a high diplomatic post. When this failed to materialize, his delusional mental state worsened. Viewing Garfield’s death as “a political necessity,” he believed the public would hail him as a hero. (Indeed, he had selected as his gun a .44-caliber “British Bulldog” pistol because it would look good in a museum.)

While contemporary critics like Henry Adams viewed Garfield’s assassination as an example of the absurdity of late-nineteenth-century politics—a time, Adams sneered, of “little but damaged reputations”—historians today see it as a sign of how closely contested political battles were. The phenomenal expansion of large corporations, the settlement of the trans-Mississippi West, and the surge in urban growth put intense pressure on the political process. At stake was not only the government’s proper role in the stimulation and regulation of America’s explosive industrial growth, but also the thorny issues of how to assimilate new immigrants, control chaotic urban life, gain access to new markets, and encourage territorial expansion.

THE POLITICS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION As this cartoon in *Puck* attests, many Americans in the late nineteenth century believed that high tariffs on imported goods could lead to strikes and the formation of monopolies. (*Frank & Marie-Therese Wood Print Collections, Alexandria, VA*)

JULY 2, 1881, was a muggy summer day in Washington, D.C., and President James A. Garfield was leaving town for a visit to western Massachusetts. At 9:30 A.M., as he strolled through the railroad station, shots rang out. Garfield fell, a bullet in his back. The shooter, Charles Guiteau, immediately surrendered.

At first, doctors thought the president would recover. But Garfield, a veteran who had seen the long-term effects of gunshot

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These intense debates over economic and social policy involved nothing less than contending visions of how industrial growth should or should not be regulated and who should benefit financially. The struggle to control economic expansion reached its peak in the 1890s when a new third party, the Populists, joined with the Democrats to challenge corporate control of the economy. The leading symbol of this challenge became the campaign for “free silver”—backing currency with silver reserves as well as gold. Representing the opposite position, the Republican Party’s support for high tariffs and the gold standard represented a commitment to encouraging the growth of large corporations, to freeing industry to expand without regulation, and to developing new markets.

From the mid-1870s to the mid-1890s, power had seesawed back and forth between the political parties. No party was able to control the political process. But in 1896, the election of President William F. McKinley ushered in a generation of Republican domination of national politics. Elected in a campaign focused on the restoration of prosperity, McKinley stumbled into war with Spain, substantially increased U.S. territory, and established new outposts from which American corporations could gain access to overseas markets.

FOCUS Questions

- How did political parties build coalitions out of their diverse ethnic and regional constituencies?
- What factors prompted the rise of the Grange and the Farmers’ Alliance movements?
- Why did William Jennings Bryan fail to win the presidency in 1896?
- Why did the United States go to war with Spain and become an imperial power?

Party Politics in an Era of Upheaval, 1877–1884

Between 1877 and 1894, four presidents squeezed into office by the narrowest of margins; control of the House of Representatives changed hands five times; and seven new western states were admitted into the Union. Competition between political parties was intense. No one party could muster a working majority.

To meet these challenges, party leaders sought desperately to cement the loyalty of their followers. While the Democrats rebuilt their strength in the South, Republicans struggled to maintain the loyalties of the working class and to increase their support from business. At the municipal level, political machines worked to attract loyalty among immigrants and other newcomers in the rapidly expanding cities.

Contested Political Visions

In the late nineteenth century, more than 80 percent of eligible white males often voted, and in hard-fought elections, the percentage rose to 95 percent. Voter participation a century later would equal scarcely that level.

Higher voter turnout resulted in part from the attempts of the major parties to navigate the stormy economy created by postwar industrial and geographic expansion, the influx of millions of immigrants, and the explosive growth of cities. As voter turnout shot up, however, political parties sidestepped many of the issues created by industrialization, such as taxation of corporations, support for those injured in factory accidents, and poverty relief. Nor was the American labor movement, unlike its counterpart in Europe, able to organize itself effectively as a political force. Except for the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 and the largely symbolic Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890, Washington generally ignored the social consequences of industrialization and focused instead on encouraging economic growth.

How can we explain this refusal to address economic concerns and, at the same time, account for the enormous popular support for parties? The answer lies in the political ideology of the period and the three major symbolic and economic issues that preoccupied lawmakers nationally: the tariff, the money supply, and civil-service reform.

Political parties in the late nineteenth century energized voters not only by appealing to economic self interest, as was evident in support for industrialization and pensions for Civil War veterans and their widows, but also by linking their programs to deeply held beliefs about the nature of the family and the proper role of government. Republicans justified their support for the tariff and defended their commitment to Union widows’ pensions as a protection for the family home. Democrats countered, using metaphors of the seduction and rape of white women by outsiders and labeling Republican programs as classic examples of the perils of using excessive government force. High tariffs imperiled the family and

threatened economic disaster. With respect to both parties, men, in particular, associated loyalty to party with a sense of masculinity.

Despite their differences over the tariff and monetary policy, neither Republicans nor Democrats believed that the national government had any right to regulate corporations or to protect the social welfare of workers. Neither party therefore courted the labor union vote. Many members of both parties embraced the doctrine of *laissez-faire*—the belief that unregulated competition represented the best path to progress. According to this view, the federal government should promote economic development but not regulate industry.

Rather than looking to Washington, people turned to local or state authorities. On the Great Plains, angry farmers demanded that their state legislatures regulate railroad rates. In the cities, immigrant groups, organized by political bosses, battled for control of municipal governments and local contracts. In response, native-born reformers attempted to oust the organizations in power and clean up corruption. Meanwhile, city and state governments vied with each other for control. Cities often could not change their system of government, alter their tax structure, or regulate municipal utilities without state approval. When Chicago wanted to issue permits to street popcorn vendors, for example, the Illinois legislature had to pass a special act.

Both parties, in the North and the South, practiced fraud by rigging elections, throwing out opposition votes, and paying for “floaters” who moved from precinct to precinct to vote. Each also expressed moral outrage at the other’s illegal behavior.

By linking economic policy to family values, both parties reinforced the appeal of their platforms and encouraged the participation of women in the political process. Although most women could not vote, they played an active role in politics. Frances Willard and her followers in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), for example, helped create a Prohibition and Home Protection Party in the 1880s. A decade later, western women Populists won full suffrage in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah.

Patterns of Party Strength

In the 1870s and 1880s, each party had its own ideological appeal and centers of regional strength. The Democrats ruled the South, southern sections of border states like Ohio, and northern cities with large immigrant populations. They campaigned for minimal government expenditures, opposed tariff increases, and generally attacked what they considered to be “governmental interference in the economy.” In addition, Democrats staunchly defended

their immigrant followers. On the state and local levels, they fiercely opposed prohibition, supported parochial schools, and rejected requirements that immigrant children attend only those schools that taught in English.

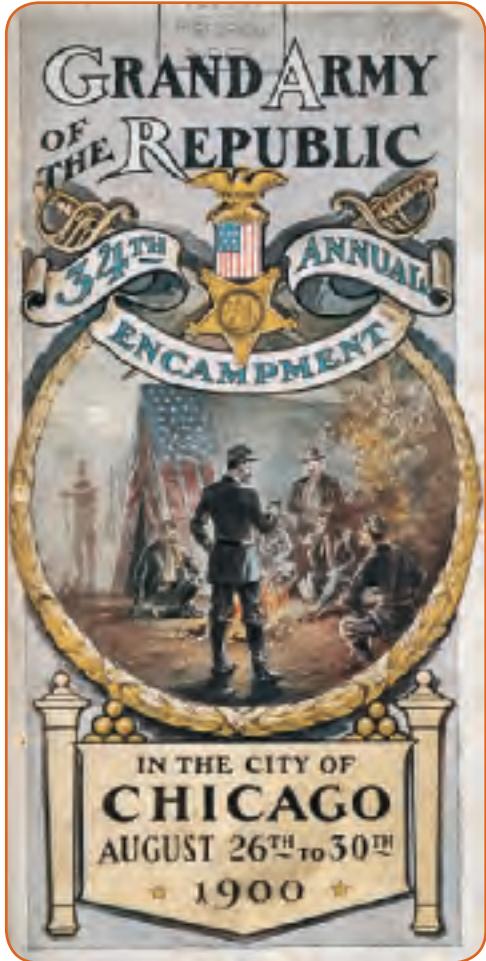
The Republicans reigned in rural and small town New England, Pennsylvania, and the upper Midwest and drew support from the **Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)**, a social and political lobbying organization of northern Civil War veterans. They often “waved the bloody shirt,” reminding voters that their party had led the nation during the Civil War. “The Democratic Party,” wrote one Republican, “may be described as a common sewer and loathsome receptacle, into which is emptied every element of treason North and South.” To emphasize their patriotism, the Republicans ran a series of former Union army generals for president and voted generous veterans’ benefits.

State and local party leaders managed campaigns. They chose the candidates, raised money, organized rallies, and—if their candidate won—distributed public jobs to party workers. Bosses like the former saloonkeepers “Big Jim” Pendergast of Kansas City, a Democrat, and George B. Cox of Cincinnati, a Republican, turned out the vote by taking care of constituents, handing out municipal jobs, and financing campaigns with “contributions” extracted from city employees.

Although issues of governmental authority dominated on the federal level, family tradition, ethnic ties, religious affiliation, and local issues often determined an individual’s vote. Outside the South, ethnicity and religion were the most reliable predictors of party affiliation. Catholics, especially Irish Catholics, and Americans of German ancestry tended to vote Democratic. Old-stock Protestant northerners, in contrast, voted Republican. Among immigrant groups, most British-born Protestants and 80 percent of Swedish and Norwegian Lutherans voted Republican, as did African-Americans, North and South. Although intolerant of racial differences, the Democrats were generally more accepting of religious diversity than were the Republicans.

Political battles often centered on cultural differences, most notably, prohibition. Irish whiskey drinkers, German beer drinkers, and Italian wine drinkers were equally outraged by antiliqor legislation. State and local prohibition proposals always aroused passionate voter interest.

“The Democratic Party may be described as a common sewer and loathsome receptacle, into which is emptied every element of treason North and South.”



POSTER ANNOUNCING GAR ENCLAMPMENT, CHICAGO, 1900 In addition to their nostalgic annual reunions, Union army veterans, organized as the Grand Army of the Republic, were a potent force in Republican Party politics, lobbying for pensions and other benefits. (*Chicago Historical Society*)

Political Bosses and Machine Politics

The swelling numbers of urban dwellers gave rise to a new kind of politician, the “boss,” who listened to his urban constituents and lobbied on their behalf. The boss presided over the city’s “machine”—an unofficial political organization designed to keep a particular party or faction in office. Whether officially serving as mayor or not, the boss, assisted by local ward or precinct captains, wielded enormous influence in city government. Often a former saloonkeeper or labor leader, the boss knew his constituents well.

For better or worse, the **political machine** was America’s unique contribution to municipal government in an era of pell-mell urban growth. Typified

by Tammany Hall, the Democratic organization that dominated New York City politics from the 1830s to the 1930s, machines emerged in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Atlanta, San Francisco, and a host of other cities after the Civil War.

By the turn of the century, many cities had experienced machine rule. Working through the local ward captains to turn out voters, the machine rode herd on the tangle of municipal bureaucracies, controlling who was hired for the police and fire departments. It rewarded its friends and punished its enemies through its control of taxes, licenses, and inspections. The machine gave tax breaks to favored contractors in return for large payoffs and slipped them insider information about upcoming street and sewer projects.

At the neighborhood level, the ward boss often acted as a welfare agent, helping the needy and protecting the troubled. To spend three dollars to pay a fine for a juvenile offense meant a lot to the poor, but it was small change to a boss who raked in millions from public-utility contracts and land deals. While the machine helped alleviate some suffering, it entangled urban social services with corrupt politics and often prevented city government from responding to the real problems of the city’s neediest inhabitants.

Under New York City’s boss **William “Magear” Tweed**, the Tammany Hall machine revealed the slimy depths to which extortion and contract padding could sink. Between 1869 and 1871, Tweed gave \$50,000 to the poor and \$2,250,000 to schools, orphanages, and hospitals. In these same years, his machine dispensed sixty thousand patronage positions and pumped up the city’s debt by \$70 million through graft.

By the turn of the century, the bosses were facing well organized assaults on their power, led by an urban elite whose members sought to restore “good government.” In this atmosphere, the bosses increasingly forged alliances with civic organizations and reform leagues. The results, although never entirely satisfactory to anyone involved, paved the way for new sewage and transportation systems, expanded parklands, and improved public services—a record of considerable accomplishment, given the magnitude of the problems created by urban growth.

Regulating the Money Supply

In the 1870s, politicians confronted a tough problem: how to create a money supply adequate for a growing economy without producing inflation. Americans’ almost superstitious reverence for gold and silver created problems of its own. Many

believed that only gold or silver, or certificates exchangeable for these metals, were trustworthy. Reflecting this notion, all the federally issued currency in circulation in 1860 consisted of gold or silver coins or U.S. Treasury notes redeemable for gold or silver. (Currency from some sixteen hundred state banks was also in circulation, worsening a chaotic monetary situation.) During the Civil War, the federal government issued “greenbacks,” paper money not backed by gold or silver.

Bankers and creditors also believed that economic stability required a strictly limited currency supply. Debtors, in contrast, favored expanding the money supply to make it easier for them to pay off their debts. The monetary debate thus focused on a specific question: Should the Civil War paper “greenbacks” currently in circulation be retained or eliminated, leaving only a currency backed by gold? The hard times associated with the Panic of 1873 sharpened this dispute.

The Greenback party (founded 1877) advocated an expanded money supply, and other measures to benefit workers and farmers. In the 1878 midterm elections, with the support of labor organizations angered by the government’s hostility in the labor unrest of 1877, Greenback candidates won fourteen seats in Congress.

As prosperity returned and the Greenback party faded, the debate became focused on the even longer lasting controversy over the coinage of silver. In 1873, Congress instructed the U.S. mint to cease making silver coins. Silver had been “demonetized.” But new discoveries in Nevada (see Chapter 17) vastly increased the silver supply, and debtor groups now demanded that the government resume the coinage of silver.

Enthusiastically backed by the silver-mine owners, silver forces won a partial victory in 1878, when Congress required the treasury to buy and mint up to \$4 million worth of silver each month. But the treasury, dominated by monetary conservatives, sabotaged the law’s intent by refusing to circulate the silver dollars that it minted.

Frustrated silver advocates tried a new approach in the **Sherman Silver Purchase Act** of 1890. This measure instructed the treasury to buy 4.5 million ounces of silver monthly and issue treasury notes, redeemable in gold or silver, equivalent to the cost of these purchases. The monetary supply slightly increased but the government paid far less for its monthly purchases and therefore issued fewer treasury notes. The controversy over silver dragged on (see Table 20.1).

Civil-Service Reform

For decades, successful candidates in national, state, and local elections had rewarded supporters with jobs ranging from cabinet seats to lowly municipal posts. Defenders called this system rotation in office and claimed that it was a democratic means of filling government positions. Critics called it the spoils system after the old expression, “To the victor belong the spoils.”

“To the victor belong the spoils.”

For years, a small but influential group of upper-class reformers, including Missouri senator Carl Schurz and editor E. L. Godkin of the *Nation*, had campaigned for a professional civil service based on merit. Well-educated and wealthy, these reformers favored a civil service

TABLE 20.1 MAJOR CURRENCY LEGISLATION, 1873–1900

Law	Provisions	Purpose
Coinage Act of 1873	Demonetized silver by ending the minting of silver dollars.	To make gold the only backing for U.S. currency.
Brand-Allison Silver Act of 1878 Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890	Authorized the treasury to mint \$2–4 million in silver coins each month. Required the treasury to purchase 4.5 million ounces of silver per month at the prevailing market price.	To expand the money in circulation by remonetizing silver. To placate silver inflationists without sacrificing the dominance of gold.
Repeal of the Sherman Purchase Act (1893)	Ended the government purchase of silver.	To protect the gold standard for currency.
Currency Act of 1900	Set aside a gold reserve that could be legally exchanged for paper currency.	To place the U.S. currency on an internationally accepted monetary basis.

Source: Gretchen Ritter, *Goldbugs and Greenbacks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Appendix B.



"WHERE IS THE DIFFERENCE?" 1894 By equating criminal payoffs to the police with corporate contributions to senators, this cartoon in *Puck* magazine suggests that corruption pervades society and needs to be stopped. (Granger Collection)

staffed by "gentlemen." The reformers had a point. A professional civil service was needed as government grew more complex.

Elected through the compromise that ended Reconstruction (see Chapter 16), Republican president Rutherford B. Hayes cautiously embraced the civil-service cause. In 1877, he launched an investigation of the corruption-riddled New York City customs office and fired two high officials. One, Chester A. Arthur, had played a key role in passing out jobs.

When Congressman James A. Garfield won the 1880 Republican presidential nomination, the delegates, to appease the opposing New York faction, chose Chester A. Arthur, the loyalist Hayes had recently fired, as Garfield's running mate. Since Garfield enjoyed excellent health, the choice of the totally unqualified Arthur seemed safe.

The Democrats nominated a career army officer from Pennsylvania, Winfield Scott Hancock, and the Greenbackers gave the nod to Congressman James B. Weaver of Iowa. Garfield's managers stressed his Civil War record and his log-cabin birth. By a razor-thin margin, Garfield edged out Hancock; Weaver trailed far behind.

Garfield's assassination in 1881 by the crazed office-seeker Charles Guiteau brought to the White House Vice President Arthur, the very symbol of

patronage corruption, and gave a powerful emotional thrust to the reform cause. Civil-service reformers portrayed the fallen president as a spoils-system martyr. In 1883, Congress enacted a civil-service law introduced by Senator George Pendleton of Ohio (Garfield's home state) and drafted by the Civil Service Reform League that had been created two years earlier. The **Pendleton Civil Service Act** set up a commission to prepare competitive examinations and establish standards of merit for a variety of federal jobs; it also forbade political candidates to solicit contributions from government workers.

Although the Pendleton Act initially covered only about 12 percent of federal employees, subsequent presidents gradually expanded the number of positions. By the 1890s, the act had opened up new positions for women, who now held nearly a third of the jobs as federal clerks in government agencies. The creation of a professional civil service thus helped bring the federal government in step with the modernizing trends transforming society.

As for Chester A. Arthur, his performance surprised those who had expected him to be an utter disaster. Arthur supported civil-service reform and proved quite independent. Fed up with the feuding Republicans, in 1882 the voters gave the Democrats a strong majority in the House of Representatives.

In 1884, for the first time since 1856, they would put a Democrat in the White House: Grover Cleveland.

Politics of Privilege, Politics of Exclusion, 1884–1892

The stalemate between the two major parties in their battle to establish the standards for economic growth continued under President Cleveland, a Democrat, and President Harrison, a Republican. Both Presidents challenged powerful interests and faced stiff opposition. Cleveland alienated strong lobbies by calling for cuts in the tariff and in veterans' pensions. In 1888, business and veterans' groups rallied to defeat Cleveland and elect Benjamin Harrison of Indiana, a former Civil War general, in one of the most corrupt campaigns in American history. Harrison alienated voters by passing a high tariff and an expanded pension law that increased the number of pensioners by 43 percent.

Responding to major party fraud and inattention to the needs of rural Americans, farmers mounted protests and began to organize. While the Grange and Farmers' Alliance movements condemned the monopolistic practices of grain and cotton buyers in the post-Reconstruction South, the white majority consolidated their political power by denying the region's black citizens their most basic rights.

A Democrat in the White House: Grover Cleveland, 1885–1889

At a tumultuous Chicago convention in 1884, the Republicans nominated their best-known leader, James G. Blaine. A gifted orator, Blaine spoke for the younger, more dynamic wing of the Republican Party eager to promote economic development and reinvigorate foreign policy.

But Blaine had been stained by the revelation that he, as Speaker of the House, had offered political favors to a railroad company in exchange for stock. For reformers, Blaine epitomized the hated patronage system. To E. L. Godkin, he "wallowed in spoils like a rhinoceros in an African pool."

Sensing Blaine's vulnerability, the Democrats chose a sharply contrasting nominee, Grover Cleveland of New York. In a meteoric rise from reform mayor of Buffalo to governor, Cleveland had fought the bosses and spoils men. The shrewdness of the Democrats' choice became apparent when Godkin, Carl Schurz, and other Republican reformers bolted to Cleveland. They were promptly nicknamed **Mugwumps**, an Algonquian term for a renegade chief.

Unfortunately, Cleveland as a youth had fathered an illegitimate child. Although he admitted the indiscretion, Republicans still jeered at rallies: "Ma, Ma, where's my pa?" Cleveland also faced opposition from Tammany Hall, the New York City Democratic machine that he had fought as governor. If Tammany's immigrant voters stayed home on election day, Cleveland could lose his own state. But in October a New York City clergyman denounced the Democrats as the party of "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion." Blaine failed to immediately repudiate the remark. The Cleveland campaign managers widely publicized this triple insult to Catholics, to patriotic Democrats, and to drinkers. This blunder and the Mugwumps' defection allowed Cleveland to carry New York State by twelve hundred votes, and with it the election.

Once in office, Cleveland embraced the belief that government must not meddle in the economy and opposed any public regulation of corporations. He also rejected providing any governmental help for those in need. Vetoing a bill that would have given seeds to drought stricken farmers in Texas, he warned that people should not expect the government to solve their problems.

One public matter did arouse Cleveland's energies: the tariff. Since it brought in revenue in the era before a federal income tax, the tariff functioned as a protection for special interests and a source of government income. But which imported goods should be subject to duties, and how much? Opinions differed radically. Producers of such commodities as coal, hides, timber, and wool demanded tariff protection against foreign competition as did many manufacturers. Other businesses, however, while seeking protection for their finished products, wanted low tariffs on the raw materials they required.

Massachusetts shoe manufacturers, for example, urged high duties on imported shoes but low duties on imported hides. Most farmers, by contrast, hated all tariffs for making it hard to sell American farm products abroad.

Cleveland's call for lower tariffs arose from his concern that high tariffs created huge federal budget surpluses, which tempted legislators to distribute the money in the form of veterans' pensions or expensive public-works programs in their home districts, commonly called pork-barrel projects. With his horror of paternalistic government, Cleveland viewed the budget surplus as a corrupting influence. Although the Democratic campaign of 1888

To E. L. Godkin, Blaine
"wallowed in spoils like a
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[W]e can see nothing but starvation in the future if relief does not come."

gave little attention to the issue, Cleveland's talk of lowering the tariff angered many corporate leaders.

Cleveland stirred up another hornet's nest by opposing the routine payment of veterans' disability pensions. No one opposed pensions for the deserving, but

fraudulent claims had proliferated. Unlike his predecessors, Cleveland investigated these claims and rejected many of them. He also vetoed a bill that would have pensioned all disabled veterans whether or not their injuries occurred in military service. The pension list should be an honor roll, he stressed, not a refuge for fraud.

Big Business Strikes Back; Benjamin Harrison, 1889–1893

By 1888, some influential interest groups had concluded that Cleveland must go. The Republicans turned to Benjamin Harrison of Indiana. A corporation lawyer and former senator, Harrison was so aloof that some ridiculed him as the human iceberg. To avoid alienating voters, his campaign managers brought delegations to Indianapolis and hammered at the tariff issue. Harrison warned that only a high tariff would ensure business prosperity, decent wages for workers, and a healthy home market for farmers.

The Republicans amassed a \$4 million campaign fund from worried business leaders to purchase posters, buttons, and votes. Despite voter fraud, Cleveland received almost a hundred thousand more votes than Harrison. But Harrison carried

the key states of Indiana and New York and won the Electoral College vote. The Republicans held the Senate and regained the House. Once in office, Harrison swiftly rewarded his supporters. He appointed as commissioner of pensions a GAR official who, on taking office, declared "God help the surplus!" The pension rolls soon ballooned from 676,000 to nearly a million (see Figure 20.1). This massive pension system (which was coupled with medical care in a network of veterans' hospitals) became America's first large-scale public welfare program. In 1890, the triumphant Republicans also enacted the McKinley Tariff, which pushed rates to an all-time high.

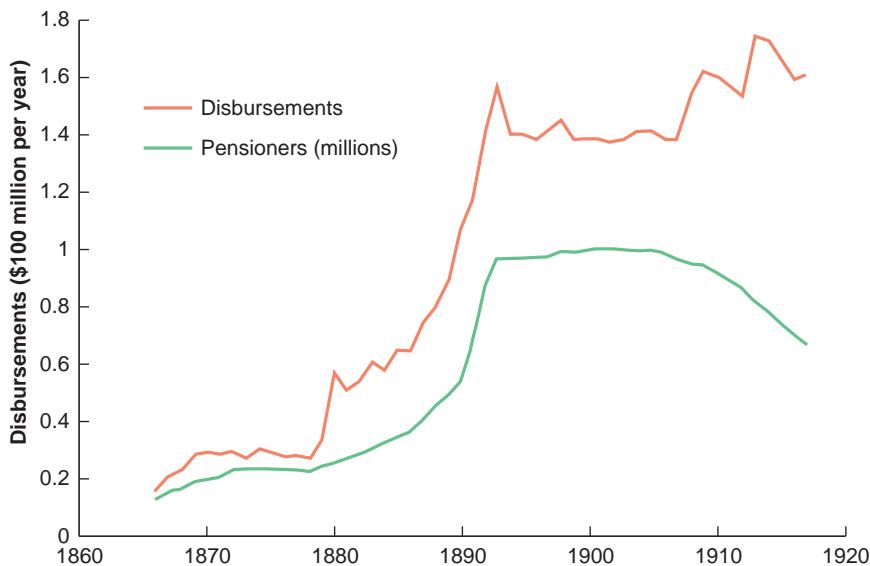
Rarely has the federal government been so subservient to entrenched economic interests and so out of touch with the plight of the disadvantaged as during the 1880s. But inaction bred discontent. In the election of 1890, the Democrats gained sixty-six congressional seats and won control of the House of Representatives. Farmers, too, turned to politics and swung into action.

Agrarian Protest and the Rise of the People's Party

Great Plains farming had long been a risky venture. Between 1873 and 1877, terrible grasshopper infestations had consumed nearly half the Midwestern wheat crop. As production rose, prices fell. Wheat tumbled from \$2.95 a bushel in 1866 to \$1.06 in 1880 (see Figure 20.2). Farmers who had borrowed heavily to finance homesteads went bankrupt or barely survived. One struggling Minnesota farmer wrote the governor in 1874, "[W]e can see nothing but starvation in the future if relief does not come."

FIGURE 20.1 CIVIL WAR PENSIONS AND PENSIONERS, 1866–1917 The pension system for Union army veterans represented a major federal welfare program in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because of corruption, the cost of pensions increased even though the actual number of veterans declined.

Source: William H. Glasson, *Federal Military Pensions in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), 273.



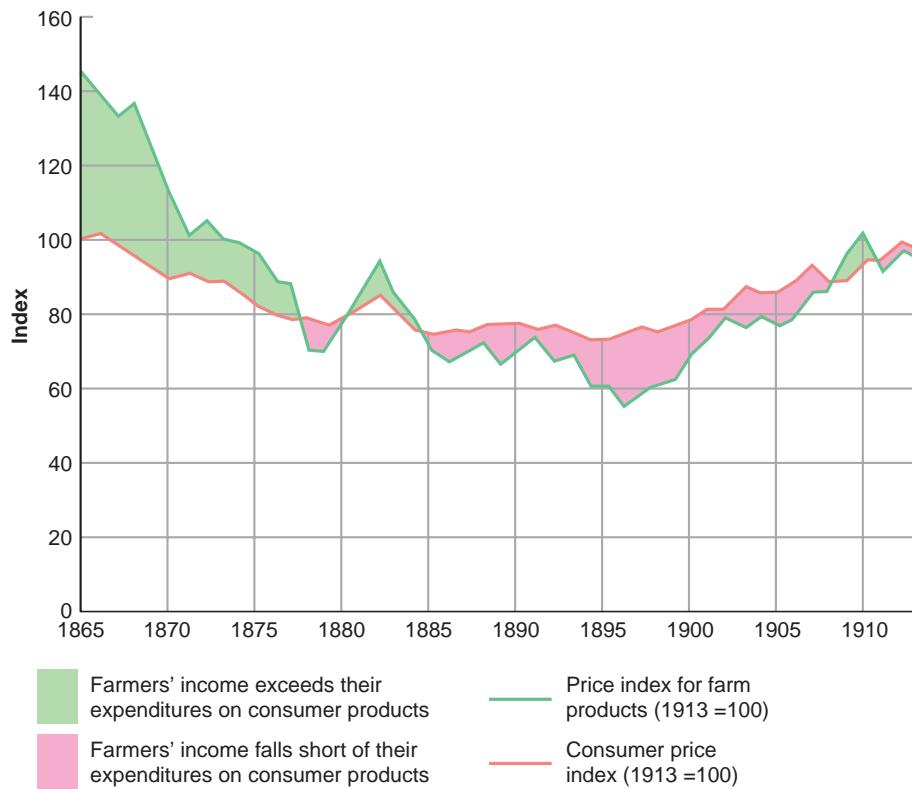


FIGURE 20.2 CONSUMER PRICES AND FARM-PRODUCT PRICES,

1865–1913 From 1865 to 1895, the prices that farmers received for their crops gradually declined. Even when they increased after 1895, farmers had difficulty making ends meet. As cycles of drought and debt battered Great Plains wheat growers, a Kansas farmer wrote, “At the age of 52, after a long life of toil, economy, and self-denial, I find myself and family virtually paupers.”

Midwestern farmers in 1867, under the leadership of Oliver H. Kelley, a Department of Agriculture clerk, formed the **Grange**, or “Patrons of Husbandry.” In the next decade, membership soared to more than 1.5 million. Offering information, emotional support, and fellowship, the Grange urged farmers to “buy less and produce more, in order to make our farms more self-sustaining.” They negotiated special discounts with farm-machinery dealers and set up “cash-only” cooperative stores and grain-storage elevators to cut out the “middlemen”—the bankers, grain brokers, and merchants who made money at the farmers’ expense.

Grangers focused their wrath on railroads, which routinely gave discounts to large shippers, bribed state legislators, and charged higher rates for short runs than for long hauls. Stung by these practices, Grangers in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa lobbied state legislatures in 1874 to pass laws fixing maximum rates for freight shipments.

The railroads appealed these “Granger laws” to the Supreme Court, but in *Munn v. Illinois* (1877) the Court rejected the railroads’ appeal and upheld an Illinois law setting maximum grain storage rates. The regulation of grain elevators, declared the Court’s majority, was legitimate under the federal Constitution’s acknowledgment of the right of states to exercise police powers. When the Court in *Wabash v. Illinois* (1886) modified this position by

prohibiting states from regulating interstate railroad rates, Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act (1887), reaffirming the federal government’s power to oversee railroad activities and establishing a new agency, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), to do just that. Although the commission failed to curb the railroads’ monopolistic practices, it did establish the principle of federal regulation of interstate transportation.

Despite promising beginnings, the Grange movement soon faltered. In 1878, the railroads, which had lost their battle on the national level, lobbied state legislatures and won repeal of most of the state-regulation laws. The cash-only cooperative stores closed because most farmers had little cash. The Grange ideal of financial independence from banks and merchants proved unrealistic because conditions on the Plains made it impossible to farm without borrowing money. When the prices of corn, wheat, and cotton briefly revived after 1878, many farmers deserted the movement. The Grange lived on as a social and educational institution, but it had lost its appeal because it was unable to improve its members’ financial position.

The problems that drove farmers to form the Grange prompted Southern and Midwestern farmers to form the alliance movement. The **Farmers’ Alliance** began in Texas in the 1870s as small planters, trapped by the crop lien system, mortgaged



POPULIST FARMERS AT CLANTON, ALABAMA, AUGUST 1891 Worried about the corrupting influence of money in politics, these Alabama Populists entered the political campaign to ensure that government was “accountable to the people themselves, and the people only.” (*Kansas State Historical Society*)

future harvests to cover current expenses. Mired in debt, about a third of southern farmers gave up their land and became tenants or sharecroppers by 1900.

In 1887, Texan Charles W. Macune, a self-trained lawyer and a physician, assumed leadership of the Alliance movement. By 1889, Macune had merged several regional organizations into the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, or Southern Alliance. A parallel black organization, the National Colored Farmers' Alliance, had meanwhile emerged in Arkansas and spread to other southern states.

As they attended alliance rallies and picnics, read the alliance newspaper, and listened to alliance speakers, hard-hit farm families became increasingly aware of their political potential. An Arkansas member wrote in 1889, “Reform

never begins with the leaders, it comes from the people.” By 1890, the Southern Alliance claimed 3 million members. An additional 1.2 million joined the National Colored Farmers’ Alliance.

Meanwhile, Alliance fever had spread to the Great Plains. In the drought-plagued years of 1880 and 1881, alliances sprang up in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota. Membership grew when insects destroyed much of the wheat crop and increases in world production drove down prices for agricultural products. Under these conditions, many settlers returned East. “In God we trusted, in Kansas we busted,” some scrawled on their wagons. Western Kansas lost 50 percent of its population between 1888 and 1892. Others hung on, and the Northwestern Alliance grew rapidly. By 1890, the Kansas Alliance claimed 130,000 members, followed closely by alliances in Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Minnesota. What had begun as a desperate attempt to save their farms had now turned into a massive political campaign to change the American political and economic system.

Alliance members at first tried to create a biracial movement. Southern Alliance leaders Tom Watson of Georgia and Leonidas Polk of North Carolina urged southern farmers, black and white, to act together. For a time, this message of racial cooperation in the interest of reform offered promise. But Alliance members also shared the “separate

“Reform never begins with the leaders, it comes from the people.”

but equal” philosophy of their “New South” counterparts that combined progressive reform with the separation of races (see Chapter 18).

Women joined the alliance leadership as well. Mary E. Lease, a Wichita lawyer, burst on the scene in 1890 as a fiery alliance orator. Other women, veterans of the Granger or prohibition cause, founded the National Women’s Alliance (NWA) in 1891. Declared the NWA, “Put 1,000 women lecturers in the field and revolution is here.” By no coincidence, a strong feminist strain pervades Ignatius Donnelly’s *The Golden Bottle* (1892), a novel portraying the agrarian reformers’ social vision (see Going to the Source).

As the movement swelled, the opposition turned nasty. When Jerry Simpson, an Alliance rancher from Kansas, mentioned the silk stockings of a conservative politician in his district and noted that he had no such finery, a hostile newspaper editor labeled him “Sockless Jerry” Simpson, the nickname he carried to his grave. When Mary Lease advised Kansas to “raise less corn and more hell,” another editor sneered: “[Kansas] has started to raise hell, as Mrs. Lease advised, and [the state] seems to have an overproduction. But that doesn’t matter. Kansas never did believe in diversified crops.”

All this activity helped shape a new political agenda. In 1889, the Southern and Northwestern Alliances loosely merged and lined up candidates in the 1890 midterm elections. Alliance candidates focused on government action on behalf of farmers and workers, including tariff reduction, a graduated income tax, public ownership of the railroads, federal funding for irrigation research, a ban on land-ownership by aliens, and “the free and unlimited coinage of silver.”

The 1890 elections revealed the strength of agrarian protest. Southern Democrats who endorsed alliance goals won four governorships and control of eight state legislatures. On the Great Plains, alliance-endorsed candidates controlled the Kansas and Nebraska legislatures and gained the balance of power in Minnesota and South Dakota. Three alliance-backed senators, together with some fifty congressmen (including Watson and Simpson), went to Washington as angry winds from the hinterlands buffeted the political system.

Regional differences, which threatened to divide the movement, were soon overcome by shared economic grievance. Southern Alliance leaders who initially opposed endorsing a third party, fearing it would weaken the southern Democratic Party, the bastion of white supremacy, eventually adopted the third-party idea. In February 1892, alliance leaders organized the People’s Party of the United States, generally called the **Populist Party**. At the party

convention in Omaha, Nebraska, that August, cheering delegates nominated for president the former Civil War general and Greenback nominee James B. Weaver of Iowa. Courting the South, they chose as Weaver’s running mate the Virginian James Field, who had lost a leg fighting for the Confederacy.

The Populist platform called for the direct popular election of senators and other electoral reforms. It also endorsed a **subtreasury plan** devised by alliance leader Charles Macune by which farmers could store their nonperishable commodities in government warehouses, receive low-interest loans using the crops as collateral, and then sell the stored commodities when market prices rose. Their model was the postal service, an efficient, centralized, large-scale organization that worked for the public good. Ignatius Donnelly’s ringing preamble pronounced the nation on “the verge of moral, political, and material ruin” and called for a return of the government “to the hands of ‘the plain people’ with which class it originated.”

“Raise less corn and more hell.”

African-Americans After Reconstruction

As the Populists organized, a group of citizens with profound grievances suffered renewed oppression. With the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the restoration of power to white elites (see Chapter 16), southern white opinion demanded an end to the hated “Negro rule,” and local Democratic Party officials pursued this objective. Suppressing the black vote became a major goal. Intimidation, terror, and vote fraud kept blacks from the polls or forced them to vote Democratic. Mississippi amended its state constitution in 1890 to exclude most black voters, and other southern states soon followed suit.

Because the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) guaranteed all male citizens’ right to vote, white southerners used indirect means such as literacy tests (a test of the ability to read), poll taxes (a tax paid to vote), and property requirements (which restricted the right to vote to those who owned property) to disfranchise blacks. To protect illiterate whites, the so-called grandfather clause exempted from these electoral requirements anyone with an ancestor who had voted in 1860. Although black disfranchisement proceeded erratically over the South, by the early twentieth century it was essentially complete.

Disfranchisement was only one part of the system of white supremacy. In a parallel development, state after state passed laws imposing strict racial segregation in many realms of life (to be discussed

Women in Politics

In this article, written for the *Arena* magazine in 1892, Annie L. Diggs, a Populist orator and editor from Kansas, identifies twenty-five prominent women speakers and editors who played important roles nationally in the Farmers' Alliance and

"Farm life for women is a treadmill.... The worn and weary treadmills are anxious, troubled.... Instead of mythologic lore, they read "Seven Financial Conspiracies," "Looking Backward," "Progress and Poverty." Alas! Of this last word they know much and fear more – fear for their children's future. The [women]... turn with all the fierceness of their primal mother-nature to protect their younglings from devouring, devastating plutocracy.

The great political victory of the people of Kansas would not have been won without the help of the women of the Alliance. Women who never dreamed of becoming public speakers grew eloquent in their zeal and fervor....

Before this question of the salvation of the imperiled homes of the nation, all other questions, whether of "prohibition" or "suffrage" pale into relative inconsequence. For where shall temperance or high thought of franchise be taught to children, by whose breath the world is saved, if sacred hearth fires shall go out? The overtopping, all-embracing moral question of the age is this for which the Alliance came. Upon such great ethical foundations is the labor movement today building itself. How could women do otherwise than be in it?

Easily first among Kansas women who rose to prominence as a platform speaker for the political party which grew out of the Alliance is Mrs. Mary E. Lease.... Seldom, if ever, was a woman so vilified and so misrepresented by malignant newspaper attacks. A woman of other quality would have sunk under the avalanche. She was quite competent to cope with

the Populist Party. In 1892, the Populists in Kansas elected the governor and a majority in the state senate only to be stymied by a Republican majority in the state house.

all that was visited upon her. Indeed, the abuse did her much service. The people loved her for the enemies she made.

Already the story of the wondrous part she has played in the people's struggle for justice has reached other countries....

In the to-be-written history of this great epoch, Mrs. Mary E. Lease will have a most conspicuous place.

Consider this Kansas record, oh supercilious sneerer at "strong-minded" women. Most of these women have opened their mouths and spake before many people.... All these heretical things they have done, and yet are the womanliest, gentlest of women, the best of homekeepers, the loyalist of wives, the carefulest of mothers....

Thus splendidly do the *facts* about women in politics refute the frivolous *theories* of timorous or hostile objectors. The women prominent as active, responsible factors in the political arena are those who are characterized by strong common sense, high ideals, and lofty patriotism. When such as these cast ballot throughout the nation,

*"Then shall their voice of sovereign choice
Swell the deep bass of duty done,
And strike the key of time to be
When God and man shall speak as one."*

Source: Annie L. Diggs, "The Women in the Alliance Movement," *The Arena*, July 1892, No. XXXII, pp. 160–180.

QUESTIONS

1. How does Diggs justify women's participation in politics?
2. What roles do traditional ideas about women's responsibilities play in her argument?
3. What ideals shaped Populist religiosity?

 Go to the website at www.cengage.com/history/boyerenduring7e for additional primary sources on this period.

in Chapter 21). African-American caterers, barbers, bricklayers, and other artisans lost their white clientele. Blacks who went to prison—sometimes for minor offenses—faced the convict-lease system, which cotton planters, railroad builders, and other employers used to “lease” prison gangs and force them to work under slave-labor conditions.

The convict-lease system enforced the racial hierarchy and played an important economic role as industrialization and agricultural change came to the South. The system brought income to hard-pressed state governments and provided factories, railroads, and large-scale farms with predictable, controllable, cheap labor. The system also intimidated free laborers and discouraged foreign immigrants from going South. Thousands died under this brutal convict-labor system, which continued into the early decades of the twentieth century.

Lynching became the ultimate enforcer of southern white supremacy. Through the 1880s and 1890s, about a hundred blacks were lynched annually in the United States, mainly in the South. The stated reasons, often the rape of a white woman, frequently arose from rumor and unsubstantiated accusations. The charge of “attempted rape,” as the black journalist Ida B. Wells pointed out to a national audience, could cover a wide range of behaviors unacceptable to whites, such as questioning authority or talking back.

The lynch mob demonstrated whites’ absolute power. In the South, more than 80 percent of the lynchings involved black victims. Lynchings most commonly occurred in the Cotton Belt, and they tended to rise at times of economic distress. By no coincidence, lynching peaked in 1892 as many poor blacks embraced the Farmers’ Alliance movement and rallied to the Populist Party banner. Fifteen black Populists were killed in Georgia alone, it has been estimated, during that year’s bitter campaign.

The relationship between southern agrarian protest and white racism was complex. Some Populists, like Georgia’s Tom Watson, sought to build an interracial movement. Watson denounced lynching and the convict-lease system. When a black Populist leader pursued by a lynch mob took refuge in his house during the 1892 campaign, Watson summoned two thousand armed white Populists to defend him. But most white Populists clung to racism. The white ruling elite, eager to drive a wedge in the protest movement, inflamed lower-class white racism.

On balance, the rise of southern agrarian protest deepened racial hatred and ultimately worsened blacks’ situation. Meanwhile, the federal government stood aside. A generation of northern politicians paid lip service to egalitarian principles but failed to apply them to African-Americans.



LYNCHING AT CLANTON, ALABAMA, AUGUST 1891 Reprinted in Ida B. Wells’s *A Red Record*, this photograph is typical of many taken where the white audience faces the camera near the body of the victim. Such photographs were meant to intimidate any blacks who challenged white supremacy. (*Chicago Historical Society*)

The Supreme Court similarly abandoned African-Americans. The Court ripped gaping holes in the Fourteenth Amendment (1868), which granted blacks citizenship and the equal protection of the law, and in the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which outlawed racial discrimination on juries, in public places, and on railroads and streetcars. In the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883), the Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional. The Fourteenth Amendment protected citizens only from governmental infringement of their civil rights, the justices ruled, not from acts by private citizens such as railroad conductors. In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the justices upheld a Louisiana law requiring segregated railroad cars. Racial segregation was constitutional, the Court held, if equal facilities were made available to each race. With the Supreme Court’s blessing, the South segregated its public school system, ignoring the caveat that such separate facilities must be equal. White children studied in nicer buildings, used newer equipment,

and were taught by better-paid teachers. Not until 1954 did the Court overturn the “separate but equal” doctrine. Rounding out their dismal record, in 1898 the justices upheld the poll tax and literacy tests by which southern states had disfranchised blacks.

Until the North condemned lynching outright, declared Douglass, “it will remain equally involved with the South in this common crime.”

American citizenry. Further, the separatist principle endorsed in *Plessy* had a pervasive impact, affecting blacks nationwide, Mexicans in Texas, Asians in California, and other groups.

Blacks responded to their plight in various ways. The nation’s foremost black leader from the 1890s to his death in 1915 was **Booker T. Washington**. Born in slavery in Virginia in 1856, Washington attended a freedman’s school in Hampton, Virginia, and in 1881 organized a black state vocational school in Alabama that eventually became Tuskegee University. Although Washington secretly contributed to lawyers who challenged segregation, he publicly urged accommodation to a racist society. In a widely publicized address in Atlanta in 1895, he insisted that the first task of America’s blacks must be to acquire useful skills such as farming and carpentry. Once blacks proved their economic value, he predicted, racism would fade; meanwhile, they must patiently accept their lot. This was a position later challenged by W. E. B. Du Bois (covered in Chapter 21). Washington lectured widely, and his autobiography, *Up from Slavery* (1901), recounted his rise from poverty thanks to honesty, hard work, and kindly patrons—themes familiar to a generation reared on Horatio Alger’s self-help books.

Other blacks responded resourcefully to racism. Black churches provided emotional support, as did black fraternal lodges like the Knights of Pythias. Some African-Americans started businesses to serve their community. Two black-owned banks, in Richmond and Washington, D.C., were chartered in 1888. The North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company, organized in 1898 by John Merrick, a prosperous Durham barber, evolved into a major

enterprise. Bishop Henry M. Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal church urged blacks to return to Africa and build a great Christian nation.

Meanwhile, African-American protest never wholly died out. Frederick Douglass urged that blacks press for full equality. Blacks should meet violence with violence, insisted militant New York black leader T. Thomas Fortune. But for others, the solution was to leave the South. In 1879, several thousand moved to Kansas (see Chapter 16). Some ten thousand migrated to Chicago between 1870 and 1890. Blacks who moved north, however, soon found that public opinion sanctioned many forms of de facto discrimination.

The rise of the so-called solid South, firmly established on racist foundations, had important political implications. For one thing, it made a mockery of the two-party system in the South. For years, the only meaningful election south of the Potomac was the Democratic primary. Only in the 1960s, in the wake of sweeping social and economic changes, would a genuine two-party system emerge there. The large bloc of southern Democrats selected to Congress each year, accumulating seniority and power, exerted a great and often reactionary influence on public policy. Finally, southern Democrats wielded enormous clout in the national party. No Democratic contender for national office who was unacceptable to them stood a chance.

Above all, the caste system that evolved in the post-Reconstruction South shaped the consciousness of those caught up in it, white and black alike. White novelist Lillian Smith described her girlhood in turn-of-the-century Florida and Georgia: “From the day I was born, I began to learn my lessons.... I learned it is possible to be a Christian and a white southerner simultaneously; to be a gentlewoman and an arrogant callous creature at the same moment; to pray at night and ride a Jim Crow car the next morning;... to glow when the word democracy was used, and to practice slavery from morning to night.”

The 1890s: Politics in a Depression Decade

Discontent with the major parties, which had smoldered during the 1870s and 1880s, burst into flames in the 1890s. As banks failed and railroads went bankrupt, the nation slid into a grinding depression. The crises of the 1890s laid bare the paralysis of the federal government—dominated by a business elite—when confronted by the new social realities of factories, urban slums, immigrant workers, and

desperate farmers. In response, irate farmers, laborers, and their supporters joined a new party, the Populists, to change the system. But in 1896, in the aftermath of the massive depression, the Republicans built a coalition strong enough to control Congress and the presidency for the next fifteen years.

1892: Populists Challenge the Status Quo

In July 1892, the same month that the Populists adopted their party platform, thirteen people died in a gun battle between strikers and strikebreakers at the Homestead steel plant near Pittsburgh, and President Harrison sent federal troops to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where a silver-mine strike had turned violent. Events seemed to justify the platform's warnings of chaos ahead.

Ignoring the escalating unrest, both major parties launched campaigns for the White House that replayed the 1888 contest. The Republicans renominated Harrison. The Democrats turned again to

Grover Cleveland, who in four years out of office had made clear his growing conservatism and his opposition to the Populists. But this time Cleveland won by more than 360,000 votes, a decisive margin in this era of close elections. A public reaction against labor violence and the McKinley Tariff hurt Harrison, while Cleveland's support for the gold standard won business support.

Meanwhile, a solid showing by Populist candidates sparked great hopes for the future. James B. Weaver got more than a million votes—8.5 percent of the total—and the Populists elected five senators, ten congressmen, and three governors. The new party carried Kansas and registered some appeal in the West and in Georgia, Alabama, and Texas, where the alliance



POPULIST ORATOR, MARY E. LEASE An Irish immigrant who became a resident of Kansas in 1873 and was admitted to the bar in 1885, Lease toured the country in the 1890s speaking on behalf of oppressed farmers and asserting women's right to participate in politics. (Granger Collection)

movement had taken deep root. But the party's strength was spotty. It made no dent in New England, the urban East, or the traditionally Republican farm regions of the Midwest. It even failed to show broad strength in the upper Great Plains. "Beaten! Whipped! Smashed!" moaned Minnesota Populist Ignatius Donnelly.

Throughout most of the South, racism, ingrained Democratic loyalty, distaste for a ticket headed by a former Union general, and widespread voter fraud kept the Populist vote under 25 percent. This failure killed the prospects for interracial agrarian reform. After 1892, as Populism began to revive in the South and Midwest, many southern politicians seeking to appeal to poor whites—including a disillusioned Tom Watson—stayed within the Democratic fold and laced their populism with racism.

Capitalism in Crisis: The Depression of 1893–1897

Cleveland soon confronted a major crisis, an economic collapse in the railroad industry that quickly spread. The first hint of trouble flared up in February 1893 when the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad failed. This bankruptcy came at a time of weakened confidence in the gold standard, the government's pledge to redeem paper money for gold on demand.

Confidence had ebbed when, in response to the collapse of a leading London investment bank in 1890, British investors had sold millions of dollars' worth of stock in American railroads and converted their dollars to gold, draining U.S. gold reserves. Moreover, Congress's lavish veterans' benefits during the Harrison administration had reduced government resources just as tariff revenues were dropping because of the high McKinley Tariff. Finally, the 1890 Sherman Silver Purchase Act's requirement that the government pay for its monthly silver purchases with treasury certificates redeemable for either silver or gold had further drained gold reserves.

Between January 1892 and March 1893, when Cleveland took office, the gold reserve had fallen sharply to around \$100 million, the minimum considered necessary to support the dollar. This decline alarmed those who viewed the gold standard as the only sure evidence of the government's financial stability.

The collapse of a railroad thus triggered the **Panic of 1893**. Fear fed on itself as alarmed investors converted their stock holdings to gold. Stock prices fell in May and June; gold reserves sank; by the end of the year, seventy-four railroads and more than

"Beaten! Whipped!
Smashed!" moaned
Minnesota Populist
Ignatius Donnelly.

fifteen thousand commercial institutions, including six hundred banks, had failed. Just as the railroad boom had spurred the industrial prosperity of the 1880s, so had the railroad crisis of the early 1890s battered the entire economy. The Panic of 1893 started a full-scale depression and set off four years of hard times.

The crisis took a heavy human toll. Industrial unemployment soared into the 20 to 25 percent range, leaving millions of factory workers with no money to feed their families and heat their homes. Recent immigrants faced disaster. Jobless men tramped the streets and rode freight trains from city to city seeking work.

The unusually harsh winters of 1893 and 1894 made matters worse. In New York City, where the crisis quickly swamped local relief agencies, a minister reported actual starvation. Rural America, already hard-hit by declining agricultural prices, faced ruin. Farm prices dropped by more than 20 percent between 1890 and 1896. Corn plummeted from fifty cents to twenty-one cents a bushel; wheat, from eighty-four cents to fifty-one cents. Cotton sold for five cents a pound in 1894.

Some desperate Americans turned to protest. In Chicago, workers at the Pullman factory reacted to successive wage cuts by walking off the job in June 1894 (see Chapter 18). In Massillon, Ohio, self-taught monetary expert Jacob Coxey proposed as a solution to unemployment a \$500 million public-works program funded with paper money not backed by gold but simply designated “legal tender” (just as it is today). A man of action as well as ideas, Coxey organized a march on Washington to lobby for his scheme. Thousands joined him en route, and several hundred reached Washington in late April 1894. Police arrested Coxey and other leaders when they attempted to enter the Capitol grounds, and his “army” broke up. Although some considered Coxey eccentric, his proposal closely resembled programs that the government would adopt during the depression of the 1930s.

As unrest intensified, fear clutched middle-class Americans. A church magazine demanded that troops put “a pitiless stop” to outbreaks of unrest. To some observers, a bloody upheaval seemed imminent.

Business Leaders Respond

In the face of suffering and turmoil, Cleveland refused to intervene. Boom-and-bust economic cycles were inevitable, he insisted. The government could do nothing. Missing the larger picture,

A church magazine demanded that troops put “a pitiless stop” to outbreaks of unrest.

Cleveland focused on a single issue: the gold standard. In August 1893 he persuaded Congress to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, which he blamed for the run on gold.

Nevertheless, the gold drain continued. In early 1895, with the gold reserve down to \$41 million, Cleveland turned to Wall Street. Bankers J. P. Morgan and August Belmont agreed to lend the government \$62 million in exchange for U.S. bonds at a special discount. With this loan, the government purchased gold to replenish its reserve. Meanwhile, Morgan and Belmont resold the bonds for a substantial profit. This deal with the bankers did help restore confidence in the government’s economic stability but it confirmed radicals’ suspicions of an unholy alliance between Washington and Wall Street.

As the battle over the tariff made clear, corporate interests held the whip hand. Although Cleveland favored tariff reform, the Congress of 1893–1895—despite its Democratic majorities—generally yielded to high-tariff lobbyists. The Wilson-Gorman Tariff of 1894 lowered duties somewhat, but made so many concessions to protectionist interests that Cleveland disgustedly allowed it to become law without his signature.



COXEY'S ARMY Detractors characterized Coxey's “army” of unemployed as “never do wells,” but this photograph of Jacob Coxey's “Commonwealth of Christ Army” entering Washington, D.C., in 1894 indicates that it was led by more well-to-do Americans making a statement about the government's responsibility to help those hurt by the depression. (Library of Congress)

Hinting at changes ahead, the Wilson-Gorman Tariff imposed a modest income tax of 2 percent on all income over \$4,000 (about \$40,000 in purchasing power today). But in *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan & Trust Co.* (1895), the Supreme Court narrowly ruled the law unconstitutional, arguing that the federal government could impose such a direct tax on personal property only if it were apportioned according to the population of each state. Whether one looked at the executive, the legislature, or the judiciary, Washington's subordination to financial interests seemed absolute.

Cleveland's policies split the Democratic Party. Farm leaders and silver Democrats condemned his opposition to the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. This split in the Democratic ranks affected the elections of 1894 and 1896 and reshaped politics as the century ended.

The depression also helped reorient social thought. Middle-class charitable workers, long convinced that individual character flaws caused poverty, now realized—as socialists proclaimed and as the poor well knew—that even sober and hard-working people could succumb to economic forces beyond their control. Laissez-faire ideology weakened too, as many depression-worn Americans adopted a broadened view of the government's role in dealing with the social consequences of industrialization. The depression, in short, not only brought suffering; it also taught lessons.

Silver Advocates Capture the Democratic Party

Republican gains in the 1894 midterm election revealed the depth of revulsion against Cleveland and the Democrats, who were blamed for the hard times. The Republicans gained control of Congress and several key states. Populist candidates won nearly 1.5 million votes, 40 percent more than their 1892 total. Most Populist gains occurred in the South.

The serious economic divisions that split Americans in the mid-1890s focused on a symbolic issue: free silver. Cleveland's rigid defense of the gold standard forced his opponents into an equally exaggerated obsession with silver, obscuring the genuine issues that divided rich and poor, creditor and debtor, and farmer and city dweller. Conservatives tirelessly upheld the gold standard while agrarian radicals, urged on and sometimes financed by western silver-mine owners, extolled silver as a universal cure-all.

Each side had a point. Gold advocates recognized that a nation's paper money must be based on more than a government's ability to run printing presses and that uncontrolled inflation could

be catastrophic. The silver advocates knew from experience how tight-money policies depressed prices and devastated farmers. Unfortunately, these underlying realities were rarely expressed clearly.

At the 1896 Democratic convention in Chicago, western and southern delegates adopted a platform including a demand for the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio to gold of sixteen to one, in effect repudiating the Cleveland administration. **William Jennings Bryan** of Nebraska, an ardent advocate of free silver, captured the nomination. Only thirty-six years old, the young lawyer had already served two terms in Congress championing western agrarian interests.

Joining Christian imagery with economic analysis, Bryan delivered his major convention speech in the debate over the platform. With his booming voice carrying his words to the upper gallery of the convention hall, Bryan praised farmers as the nation's bedrock. The wildly cheering delegates had identified their candidate even before he reached his rousing conclusion—“You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!”

“[Y]ou shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!”

The silverites' capture of the Democratic Party presented a dilemma to the Populists. They, too, advocated free silver, but only as one reform among many. To back Bryan would be to abandon the broad Populist program. Furthermore, fusion with the Democrats could destroy their influence as a third party. Yet the Populist leaders recognized that a separate Populist ticket would likely siphon votes from Bryan and ensure a Republican victory. Reluctantly, the Populists endorsed Bryan, while preserving a shred of independence (and confusing voters) by naming their own vice-presidential candidate, Tom Watson of Georgia. The Populists were learning the difficulty of organizing an independent political movement in a nation wedded to the two-party system.

The Republicans, meanwhile, had nominated former governor William McKinley, who as an Ohio congressman had given his name to the McKinley Tariff of 1890. The Republican platform embraced the high protective tariff and endorsed the gold standard.

1896: Republicans Triumphant

Bryan tried to sustain the momentum of the Chicago convention. Crisscrossing the nation by train, he delivered his free-silver campaign speech



WOMEN BRYAN SUPPORTERS Although women could not vote in national elections in the 1890s, they actively participated in political campaigns. These women worked to turn out the vote for William Jennings Bryan. (© David J. & Janice L. Frent Collection/Corbis)

to hundreds of audiences in twenty-nine states. One skeptical editor compared him to Nebraska's notoriously shallow Platte River: six inches deep and a mile wide at the mouth.

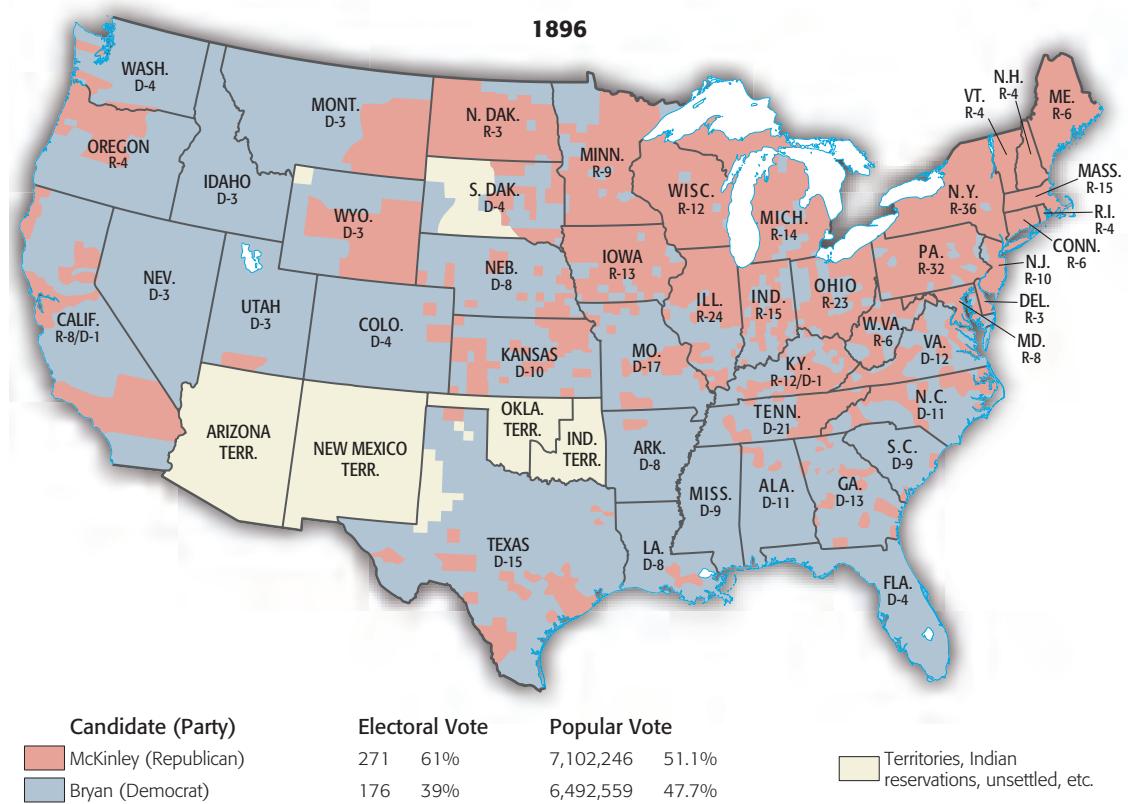
McKinley's campaign was shrewdly managed by Mark Hanna, a Cleveland industrialist. Dignified and aloof, McKinley could not match Bryan's popular touch. Accordingly, Hanna built the campaign not around the candidate but around posters, pamphlets, and newspaper editorials. These publications warned of the dangers of free silver, caricatured Bryan as a rabid radical, and portrayed McKinley and the gold standard as twin pillars of prosperity.

Drawing on a war chest possibly as large as \$7 million, Hanna spent lavishly. J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller together contributed half a million dollars, far more than Bryan's total campaign contributions. Like Benjamin Harrison in 1888, McKinley stayed home in Canton, Ohio,

emerging from time to time to read speeches to visiting delegations. Carefully orchestrated by Hanna, McKinley's deceptively bucolic "front-porch" campaign involved elaborate organization. All told, 750,000 people trekked to Canton that summer.

On election day, McKinley beat Bryan by over six hundred thousand votes (see Map 20.1). He swept the Northeast and the Midwest and even carried three farm states beyond the Mississippi—Iowa, Minnesota, and North Dakota—as well as California and Oregon. Bryan's strength was limited to the South and the sparsely settled Great Plains and mountain states. The Republicans retained control of Congress.

Why did Bryan lose despite the depression and the protest spirit abroad in the land? Certainly, Republicans' cash reserves, influence on the East Coast press, and scare tactics played a role. But Bryan's candidacy carried its own liabilities. His core constituency, while passionately loyal, was



MAP 20.1 THE ELECTION OF 1896 Republicans won the election by carrying the urban vote.

limited. Seduced by free silver and Bryan's oratory, the Democrats had upheld a platform and a candidate with little appeal for factory workers, the urban middle class, or the settled family farmers of the midwestern corn belt. Urban voters, realizing that higher farm prices, a major free-silver goal, also meant higher food prices, went heavily for McKinley. Bryan's weakness in urban America reflected cultural differences as well. To urban Catholics and Jews, this moralistic, teetotaling Nebraskan thundering like a Protestant revival preacher seemed utterly alien.

The McKinley administration quickly translated its conservative platform into law. The Dingley Tariff (1897) pushed rates to all-time high levels, and the Currency Act of 1900 officially committed the United States to the gold standard. With returning prosperity, rising farm prices after 1897, and the discovery of gold in Alaska and elsewhere, these measures aroused little protest. Bryan won renomination in 1900, but the fervor of 1896 was missing. The Republican campaign theme of prosperity easily won McKinley a second term.

The elections of 1894 and 1896 produced a Republican majority that, except for Woodrow Wilson's two presidential terms (1913–1921), would

dominate national politics until the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. Bryan's defeat and the Republicans' emergence as the party of prosperity killed the Populist Party and drove the Democrats back to their regional base in the South. But although populism collapsed, a new reform movement called progressivism was emerging. Many of the Populists' reform proposals would be enacted into law in the progressive years.

Expansionist Stirrings and War with Spain, 1878–1901

The same corporate elite that dominated late-nineteenth century domestic politics influenced U.S. foreign policy as well, contributing to surging expansionist pressures. Not only business leaders but politicians, statesmen, and editorial writers insisted that national greatness required that America match Europe's imperial expansion. Fanned by sensationalistic newspaper coverage of a Cuban struggle for independence and by elite calls for greater American international assertiveness, war between the United States and Spain broke out in 1898.

Roots of Expansionist Sentiment

Ever since the first European settlers colonized North America's Atlantic coast, the newcomers had been an expansionist people. By the 1840s, the push westward had acquired a name: Manifest Destiny. Directed inward after 1865 toward the settlement of the trans-Mississippi West (see Chapter 17), this impulse turned outward in the 1880s as Americans followed the example set by Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Japan, which were busily collecting colonies from North Africa to the Pacific islands. National greatness, it appeared, demanded an empire.

Many business leaders believed that continued domestic prosperity required overseas markets. As American industrial capacity expanded, foreign markets offered a safety valve for potentially explosive pressures in the U.S. economy. Secretary of State James Blaine warned in 1890 that U.S. productivity was outrunning "the demands of the home market" and insisted that American business must look abroad.

Advocates of a stronger navy further fueled the expansionist mood. In *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890), Alfred Thayer Mahan equated sea power with national greatness and urged a U.S. naval buildup. Since a strong navy required bases abroad, Mahan and other naval advocates supported the movement to acquire foreign territories, especially Pacific islands with good harbors. Military strategy, in this case and others, often masked the desire for access to new markets.

Religious leaders proclaimed America's mission to spread Christianity. This expansionist argument sometimes took on a racist tinge. As Josiah Strong put it in his 1885 work *Our Country*, "God is training the Anglo-Saxon race for its mission"—a mission of Christianizing and civilizing the world's "weaker races" (see Beyond America).

"God is training the Anglo-Saxon race for its mission."

A group of Republican expansionists, led by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, diplomat John Hay, and Theodore Roosevelt of New York, preached imperial greatness and military might. "I should welcome almost any war," declared Roosevelt in 1897; "...this country needs one." Advocates of expansionism, like Roosevelt and Lodge, built upon the Social Darwinist rhetoric of the day and argued that war, as a vehicle for natural selection, would test and refurbish American manhood, restore chivalry and honor, and create a new generation of civic-minded Americans. This

gendered appeal to renew American masculinity both counterbalanced concerns about women's political activism and helped forge the disparate arguments for expansionism into a simpler, more visceral plea for international engagement that had a broad appeal.

A series of diplomatic skirmishes between 1885 and 1895 revealed the newly assertive American mood and paved the way for the war that Roosevelt desired. In the mid-1880s, quarrels between the United States and Great Britain over fishing rights in the North Atlantic and in the Bering Sea off Alaska reawakened Americans' latent anti-British feelings as well as the old dream of acquiring Canada. A poem published in the *Detroit News* (adapted from an English music-hall song) supplied the nickname that critics would apply to the promoters of expansion—jingoists:

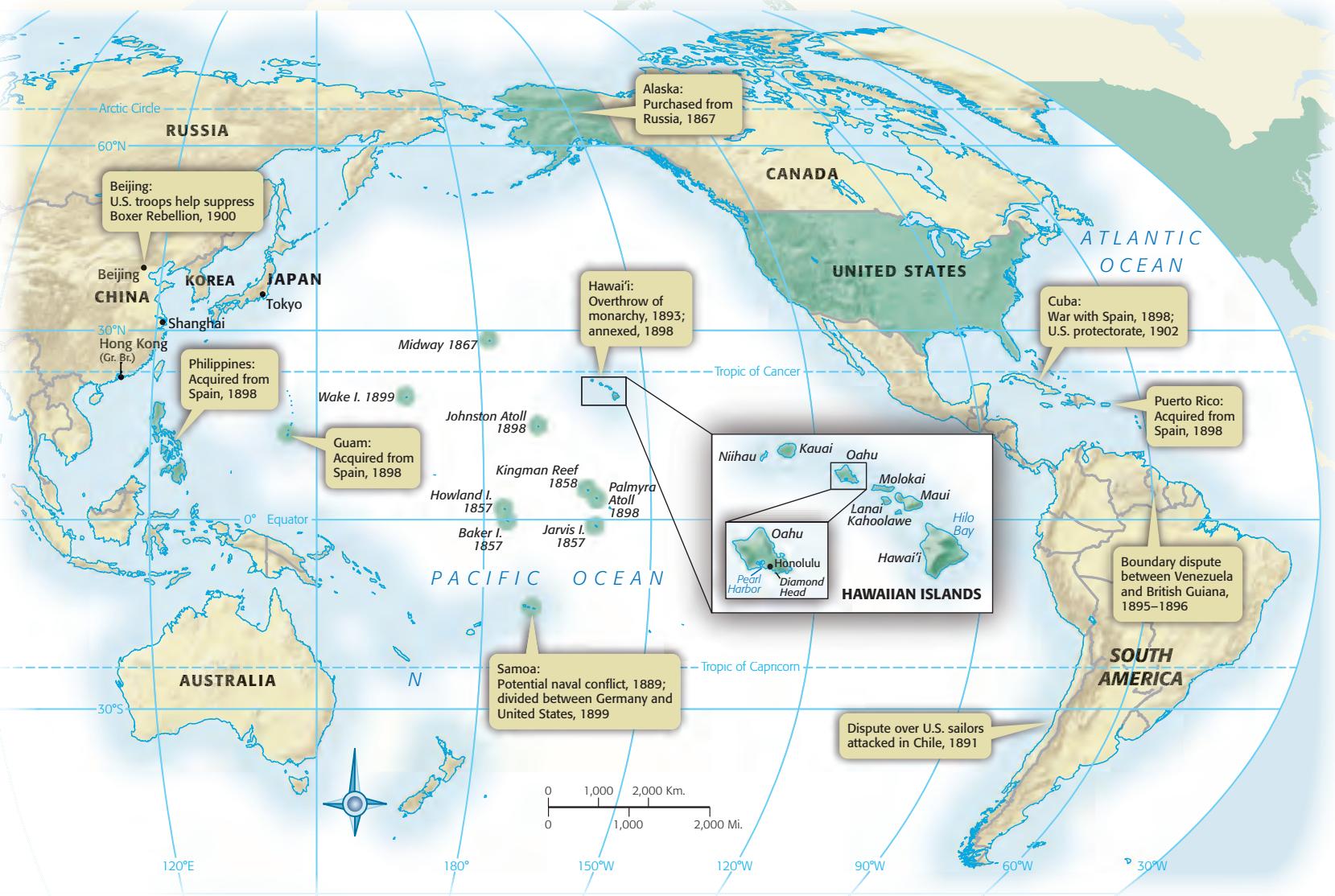
*We do not want to fight,
But, by jingo, if we do,
We'll scoop in all the fishing grounds
And the whole dominion too!*

The fishing-rights dispute was resolved in 1898, but by then attention had shifted to Latin America. In 1891, as civil war raged in Chile, U.S. officials seized a Chilean vessel that was attempting to buy guns in San Diego. Soon after, a mob in Valparaiso, Chile, killed two unarmed sailors on shore leave. President Harrison practically called for war. Only when Chile apologized and paid an indemnity was the incident closed.

Another Latin American conflict arose from a boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana in 1895 (see Map 20.2). The disagreement worsened after gold was discovered in the contested territory. When the British rejected a U.S. arbitration offer and condescendingly insisted that America's revered Monroe Doctrine had no standing in international law, a livid Grover Cleveland asked Congress to set up a commission to settle the disputed boundary even without Britain's approval. As patriotic fervor pulsed through the nation, the British in 1897 accepted the commission's findings.

Pacific Expansion

Meanwhile, the U.S. navy focused on the Samoan Islands in the South Pacific, where it sought access to the port of Pago Pago as a refueling station. Britain and Germany had ambitions in Samoa as well, and in March 1889 the United States and Germany narrowly avoided a naval clash when a hurricane wrecked both fleets. Secretary of State Blaine's wife wrote to one of their children, "Your father is now



MAP 20.2 U.S. TERRITORIAL EXPANSION IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY The major U.S. territorial expansion abroad came in a short burst of activity in the late 1890s, when newspapers and some politicians urged Americans to acquire strategic ports and coaling stations abroad.

looking up Samoa on the map." Once he found it, negotiations began, and the United States, Great Britain, and Germany established a three-way "protectorate" over the islands.

Attention had by that time shifted to the Hawaiian Islands, which had both strategic and economic significance for the United States (see Map 20.2). New England trading vessels had visited **Hawai'i** as early as the 1790s, and Yankee missionaries had come in the 1820s. By the 1860s American-owned sugar plantations worked by Chinese and Japanese laborers dotted the islands. Under an 1887 treaty (negotiated after the planters had forcibly imposed a new constitution on Hawai'i's native ruler, Kala-kaua), the United States built a naval base at Pearl Harbor, near Honolulu. American economic dominance and the influx of foreigners angered Hawaiians. In 1891, they welcomed Liliuokalani, a strong-willed woman hostile to Americans, to the Hawaiian throne.

Meanwhile, in 1890, the framers of the McKinley Tariff, pressured by domestic sugar growers, eliminated the duty-free status enjoyed by Hawaiian sugar. In January 1893, facing ruin as Hawai'i's wholesale sugar prices plunged 40 percent, the planters deposed Queen Liliuokalani, proclaimed the independent Republic of Hawai'i, and requested U.S. annexation. The U.S. State Department's representative in Hawai'i cabled Washington, "The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe, and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it." But the grab for Hawai'i troubled Grover Cleveland, who sent a representative to investigate the situation. This representative's report questioned whether the Hawaiian people actually desired annexation.

Cleveland's scruples infuriated expansionists. When William McKinley succeeded Cleveland in 1897, the acquisition of Hawai'i was pushed forward by sugar companies that had similar investments



Beyond America

GLOBAL INTERACTIONS



Missionaries to the World

In 1885, twenty-two-year-old Elaine Goodale from Massachusetts secured a commission from an Episcopal bishop to be a "lady missionary" and open a day school for Sioux Indians in the newly formed Dakota Territory. While she taught school there during the next seven years, Goodale learned the Dakota Sioux language, became the federal supervisor of education in the territory, and married Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), an Indian who had attended Dartmouth College and received his medical degree from Boston University.

American women did not confine their missionary work to North America. Nancy Jones, the child of runaway slaves, was educated at Fisk University and became the first African-American missionary in Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). In 1883, Baptists sent six black couples as missionaries to West Africa. In the late nineteenth century, thousands of American and European women served as Christian missionaries not only in Africa and the American West, but



ELAINE GOODALE, WHITE RIVER MISSION, SOUTH DAKOTA, 1887 Elaine Goodale, age 24, to the left of the doorway in this photograph, taught Dakota Indians at this mission school.
(Private Collection)

PROTESTANT MISSIONARY EXPANSION IN EAST ASIA, TO 1910



also in the Middle East, India, China, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and the Hawaiian Islands.

American women's missionary experiences were similar to those of women from England, Belgium, France, and Germany. The growth of missionary work was closely associated with Western imperialism. The relationship between missionary work and imperialism was complex. An examination of the lives of missionaries like Goodale and Jones reveals a paradox: on the one hand missionaries encouraged education, Christianization,

and the inculcation of Western values that supported imperialism; on the other hand, women working alone in a foreign land gained a degree of independence and social responsibility that often led them to criticize imperial policy and become an advocate for native peoples.

Why did thousands of women become missionaries? Many women signed up out of an idealistic urge to help poor, “pagan,” malnourished, uneducated women and girls. They believed the racist theories of the time that nonwhites were members of inferior races, with debased social values and ignorant religious beliefs. Missionaries took on a role similar to that of settlement-house workers: teaching reading and writing, improving household sanitation and personal hygiene, and instilling Western religious beliefs and moral standards.

Women missionaries, whether they came from Europe or the United States, opposed polygamy, child marriage, and hard physical labor for women and girls. Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries from the United States and Great Britain taught their charges in English, believing that native languages were inferior and that women were the primary source of morality. In Mozambique, Portuguese nuns instructed girls in how to sew and wear their clothes in the latest European styles. In China, missionary magazines with titles like *The Heathen Woman’s Friend*, taught that cleanliness was the true sign of civilization. Female missionaries, both single and married, hoped to train their converts to be good wives for Christian men. In their view, good Christians made good colonial subjects, an attitude that historians have called “domestic imperialism.”

Working alone or with little supervision in a foreign territory gave female missionaries a measure of independence and personal authority. Service as missionary teachers elevated their social status and opened up travel opportunities that would not have been available at home. Goodale accompanied a Sioux hunting party on horseback west to Yellowstone Park, sleeping in a tipi and learning native traditions and customs. Other American women traveled by canoe along rivers through China and Africa. Travel was often quite dangerous, and many women were injured or suffered from diseases such as malaria, dysentery, or typhoid fever.

Some women missionaries became doctors and founded hospitals. The British doctor Edith Pechey ran a hospital for women and children in Bombay, India (now called Mumbai). American Methodist missionaries in China helped one of their best students, Mary Stone (Shi Meiyu), attend the University of Michigan medical school in 1896 and return home to work as a physician. Other missionaries, whether Protestant teachers or Catholic nuns, ran boarding schools and set up orphanages.



EVA SWIFT IN INDIA By dressing in a Western manner, missionaries such as Eva Swift, here pictured teaching in India, reinforced the assumption that Western standards were superior to native ones. (*United Theological College*)

Although a few missionaries adopted native customs and dress, and even married native men, most upheld European and American middle-class values. They taught their women charges that modesty, humility, and service were Christian virtues and emphasized the superiority of Western culture and institutions.

If most women missionaries came to change, not to be changed, some, like Goodale, were transformed by the experience. Introduced to the “strange new world of an Indian reservation,” she later wrote, “We found it, rather, two distinct worlds existing side by side, now in dramatic opposition, now intimately mixed.” Four years later, after some of the bleeding survivors of the Wounded Knee massacre escaped to her schoolhouse, she wrote to the New York newspapers attacking “the indiscriminate slaughter of the unarmed and helpless.”

Overall, American women missionaries left a mixed legacy. Their perception of native societies as backward and barbaric encouraged colonial intervention and subjugation. But their experiences empowered the women missionaries, encouraged the creation of medical and educational institutions, and at times fostered a critique of colonialism itself.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- What was the relationship between women missionaries and imperialism?
- Why did women become missionaries?
- Why did the experiences of some missionaries change their view of native peoples?

in Cuba. In 1898 Congress proclaimed Hawai'i an American territory. Sixty-one years later, it joined the Union as the fiftieth state.

Crisis over Cuba

Many of the same expansionists who had argued for the annexation of Hawai'i turned their attention in 1898 to the Spanish colony of Cuba, ninety miles off Florida, where in 1895 an anti-Spanish rebellion had broken out. This revolt, organized by the Cuban writer José Martí and other Cuban exiles in New York City, won little support from U.S. business, which had \$50 million invested in Cuba and annually imported \$100 million worth of sugar and other products from the island. Nor did the rebels initially secure the backing of Washington, which urged Spain to grant Cuba a degree of autonomy.

But the rebels' cause aroused popular sympathy in the United States. This support increased with revelations that the Spanish commander in Cuba, Valeriano Weyler, was herding vast numbers of Cubans into squalid camps. Malnutrition and disease turned these camps into hellholes in which perhaps two hundred thousand Cubans died.

Fueling American anger was the sensationalized reporting of two competing New York City newspapers, William Randolph Hearst's *Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer's *World*. The *Journal*'s color comic strip, "The Yellow Kid," provided a name for Hearst's debased editorial approach: yellow journalism. The Hungarian immigrant Pulitzer normally had higher standards, but in the cutthroat battle for readers, Pulitzer's *World* matched the *Journal*'s sensationalism. Both editors exploited the Cuban crisis. Headlines turned rumor into fact, and feature stories detailed "Butcher" Weyler's atrocities. When a young Cuban woman was jailed for resisting a rape attempt by a Spanish officer, a Hearst reporter helped the woman escape and brought her triumphantly to New York.

In 1897, a new, more liberal Spanish government sought a peaceful resolution of the Cuban crisis. But Hearst and Pulitzer continued to inflame the public. On February 8, 1898, Hearst's *Journal* published a private letter by Spain's minister to the United States that described McKinley as "weak" and "a bidder for the admiration of the crowd." Irritation over this incident turned to outrage when on February 15 an

explosion sank the U.S. battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor and killed 266 crewmen. Scholarly opinion about what caused the explosion is still divided, but a careful review of the evidence in 1998

**It had been, Hay wrote
Roosevelt, "a splendid
little war."**

concluded that a mine most likely set off the ammunition explosion that sank the ship. Newspaper headlines at the time blamed the same cause and war spirit flared high.

Despite further Spanish concessions, McKinley sent a war message to Congress on April 11, and legislators enacted a joint resolution recognizing Cuba's independence and authorizing force to expel the Spanish. The Teller Amendment, introduced by Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado, renounced any U.S. interest in "sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control" in Cuba and pledged that America would leave the island alone once independence was assured.

The Spanish-American War, 1898

The war with Spain involved only a few days of actual combat. The first action came on May 1, 1898, when a U.S. fleet commanded by George Dewey steamed into Manila Bay in the Philippines and destroyed or captured all ten Spanish ships anchored there, at the cost of 1 American and 381 Spanish lives (see Map 20.3). In mid-August, U.S. troops occupied the capital, Manila.

In Cuba, the fighting centered on the military stronghold of Santiago on the southeastern coast. On May 19, a Spanish battle fleet of seven aging vessels sailed into the Santiago harbor, where five U.S. battleships and two cruisers blockaded them (see Map 20.4). On July 1, in the war's only significant land action, American troops seized three strongly defended Spanish garrisons overlooking Santiago on El Caney Hill, Kettleman's Hill, and San Juan Hill. Leading the volunteer "Rough Riders" unit in the capture of San Juan Hill was Theodore Roosevelt, who became a war hero. Emphasizing his toughness and sense of honor, Roosevelt would later use his war experience to reaffirm the aptitude of men like himself for political leadership.

On July 3, the Spanish attempted to break through the American blockade to the open sea. The U.S. navy fired and sank their archaic vessels. Spain lost 474 men in this gallant but doomed defense. Americans might have found a cautionary lesson in this sorry end to four hundred years of Spanish rule in the New World, but few had time for somber musings. The *Washington Post* observed, "A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength...." Secretary of State John Hay was more succinct. It had been, he wrote Roosevelt, "a splendid little war."

Many who served in Cuba found the war far from splendid. Ill-trained and poorly equipped, the troops went into summer combat wearing heavy



WE LEAVE THE TRENCHES, BY CHARLES JOHNSON POST, AUGUST 8, 1898 Weakened by disease and clad in their wool uniforms, American soldiers prepare to leave Cuba. Their initial enthusiasm for the Spanish-American war had been dampened by spoiled food and sickness. (*U.S. Army Center of Military History*)

woolen uniforms. The army also lacked adequate medical support. When [Clara Barton](#), president of the American Association for Red Cross, visited Santiago, she found wounded soldiers lying in the rain, unable to eat the hardtack rations. Under her leadership, 1,000 trained nurses worked with the medical corps. Despite the efforts of these nurses and doctors, 379 American soldiers died in combat and more than 5,000 succumbed to food poisoning, yellow fever, malaria, and other diseases during and after the war.

Several thousand black troops fought in Cuba. Some, such as the Twenty-fourth Infantry and Tenth Cavalry, were seasoned regular army "buffalo soldiers" transferred from bases in the West. Others were volunteers from various states. At assembly points in Georgia, and then at the embarkation port of Tampa, Florida, these troops encountered the racism of a Jim Crow society. Tampa restaurants and bars refused them service; Tampa whites disparaged them. On June 6, after weeks of racist treatment, some black troops exploded in riotous rage, storming into restaurants, bars, and other establishments that had barred them. White troops from

Georgia restored order. Although white and black troops sailed to Cuba on the same transport ships (actually, hastily converted freighters), the ships themselves were segregated, with black troops often confined to the lowest quarters in the stifling heat, denied permission to mingle on deck with the other units, and in other ways discriminated against.

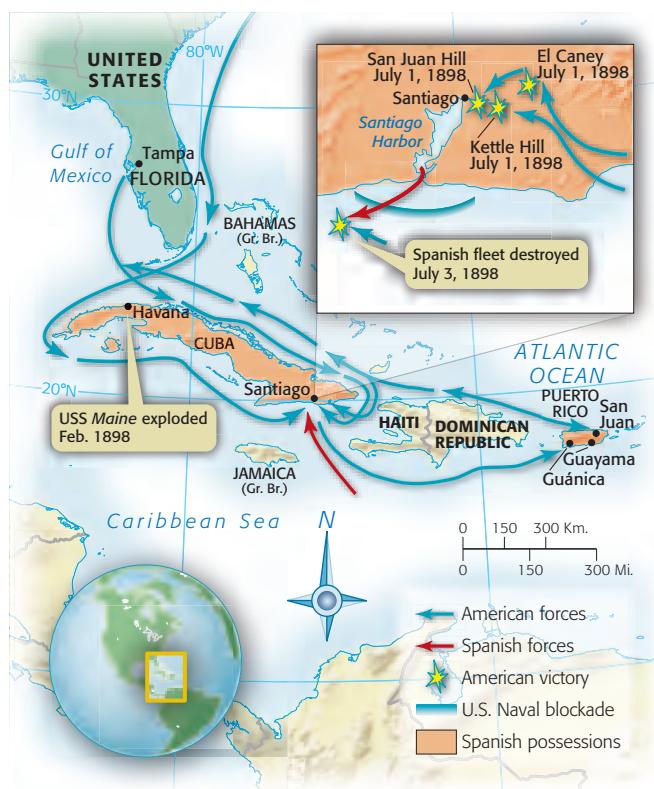
Despite the racism, African-Americans served with distinction once they reached Cuba. Black troops played key roles in the taking of both San Juan Hill and El Caney Hill. Of the total U.S. troops involved in the latter action, some 15 percent were black.

The Spanish sought an armistice on July 17. In the peace treaty signed that December in Paris, Spain recognized Cuba's independence and, after a U.S. payment of \$20 million, ceded the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and the Pacific island of Guam to the United States. Americans now possessed an island empire stretching from the Caribbean to the Pacific.

From 1898 to 1902, the U.S. army governed Cuba under the command of General Leonard Wood. Wood's administration improved public health, education, and sanitation but nevertheless



MAP 20.3 DEWEY'S ROUTE IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1898 Admiral Dewey's prompt defeat of the Spanish fleet made it evident that naval plans for this attack had been drawn up even before war had been declared.



MAP 20.4 THE CUBAN CAMPAIGN, 1898 The fighting in Cuba lasted only 113 days.

violated the spirit of the 1898 Teller Amendment. The troops eventually withdrew, though under conditions that limited Cuban sovereignty. The 1901 **Platt Amendment**, attached to an army appropriations bill offered by a Connecticut senator at the request of the War Department, authorized American withdrawal only after Cuba agreed not to make any treaty with a foreign power limiting its independence and not to borrow beyond its means. The United States also reserved the right to intervene in Cuba when it saw fit and to maintain a naval base there, a policy resented by the Cubans. With U.S. troops still occupying the island, the Cuban constitutional convention of 1901 accepted the Platt Amendment, which remained in force until 1934. Under its terms the United States established a naval base at Guantánamo Bay, near Santiago de Cuba, which it still maintains. U.S. investments in Cuba, some \$50 million in 1898, soared to half a billion dollars by 1920.

Critics of Empire

Some Americans, who had opposed imperialism for more than a decade, were dismayed by the victories of the expansionists in Cuba and the Philippines. Although few in number, the critics, like the Mugwumps who had challenged the spoils system, were influential. Indeed, some of them, like Carl Schurz and E. L. Godkin, were former Mugwumps. Other anti-imperialists included William Jennings Bryan, settlement-house founder Jane Addams, novelist Mark Twain, and Harvard philosopher William James. Steel king Andrew Carnegie gave thousands of dollars to the cause. In 1898, these critics of empire formed the **Anti-Imperialist League**.

For the United States to rule other peoples, the anti-imperialists believed, was to violate the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. As one of them wrote, "Dewey took Manila with the loss of one man—and all our institutions." The military fever that accompanied expansionism also dismayed the anti-imperialists. Some labor leaders feared that imperial expansion would lead to competition from cheap foreign labor and products.

In February 1899, the anti-imperialists failed by one vote to prevent Senate ratification of the peace treaty with Spain. McKinley's overwhelming reelection victory in 1900 and the defeat of expansionist critic William Jennings Bryan eroded the anti-imperialists' cause. Nevertheless, at a time of jingoistic rhetoric and militaristic posturing, they had upheld an older and more traditional vision of America.



AFRICAN-AMERICAN SOLDIERS OF THE TENTH U.S. CAVALRY IN CUBA, JULY 1898 These men posed shortly after the capture of San Juan Hill. Black troops, known as buffalo soldiers, played an important role in the Spanish-American War, but they were subject to harassment and discrimination. (*National Archives*)

Guerrilla War in the Philippines, 1898–1902

Events in the Philippines confirmed the worst fears of the anti-imperialists. When the war ended, President McKinley was faced with the urgent problem of what to do about this group of Pacific islands that had a population of more than 5 million people. At the war's outset, few Americans knew that the Philippines belonged to Spain or even where they were. Without a map, McKinley later confessed, "I could not have told where those darn islands were within two thousand miles."

But the victory over Spain whetted the appetite for expansion. To the U.S. business community, the Philippines offered a steppingstone to the China market. McKinley, reflecting the prevailing mood as always, reasoned that the Filipinos were unready for self-government and would be gobbled up if set adrift in a world of imperial rivalries. McKinley further persuaded himself that American rule would enormously benefit the Filipinos, whom he called "our little brown brothers." A devout Methodist, he explained that America's mission was "to educate the Filipinos, and to uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them." (In fact, most Filipinos were already Catholic, a legacy of

centuries of Spanish rule.) Having prayerfully reached his decision, McKinley instructed the American peace negotiators in Paris to insist on U.S. acquisition of the Philippines.

"Uplifting" the Filipinos required a struggle. In 1896 young **Emilio Aguinaldo** had organized a Filipino independence movement to drive out Spain. In 1898, with arms supplied by George Dewey, Aguinaldo's forces had captured most of Luzon, the Philippines' main island. When the Spanish surrendered, Aguinaldo proclaimed Filipino independence and drafted a democratic constitution. Feeling betrayed when the peace treaty ceded his country to the United States, Aguinaldo ordered his rebel force to attack Manila, the American base of operations. Seventy thousand more U.S. troops were shipped to the Philippines, and by the end of 1899 the initial Filipino resistance had been crushed.

These hostilities became the opening phase of a long guerrilla conflict. Before it ended, over 125,000 American men had served in the Philippines, and four thousand had been killed. As many as twenty thousand Filipino independence fighters died. As in the later Vietnam and Iraq Wars, casualties

"I could not have told where those darn islands were within two thousand miles."

Samuel Gompers warned that “an inundation of Mongolians” might steal jobs from white labor.

and suffering ravaged the civilian population as well. Historians estimate that at least 200,000 civilians died in the conflict. Aguinaldo was captured in March 1901, but large-scale guerrilla fighting continued through the summer of 1902.

In 1902, a special Senate committee heard testimony from veterans of the Philippines war about the execution of prisoners, the torture of suspects, and the burning of villages. The humanitarian mood of 1898, when Americans had rushed to save Cuba from the cruel Spaniards, seemed remote indeed. In retrospect, the American troops’ ambivalent attitudes about the peoples of the Philippines, while deplorable, are not hard to understand. Despite America’s self-image as a beacon of liberty and a savior of the world’s peoples, many Americans in the 1880s and 1890s had been deeply troubled by the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and had expressed concerns over “backward” and “useless” races. As American nationalism was reformulated in this cauldron of immigration, imperialism, and the “winning of the West,” racist attitudes about Native peoples and foreigners intermixed with rhetorical pleas for supervision and stewardship. In the process, as was evident in the treatment of American

Indians (see Chapter 17), well-meaning paternalism often degenerated into deadly domination.

The subjugation of the Philippines followed years of expansionism that proclaimed America’s debut on the world stage and underscored the global reach of U.S. capitalism. Nevertheless, most Americans remained ambivalent about the acquisition of territory. While anti-imperialist Mark Twain could acidly condemn “the Blessings of Civilization Trust,” labor leader Samuel Gompers warned that “an inundation of Mongolians” might steal jobs from white labor. From the debate over the annexation of Hawai‘i in 1898 to the end of the war against Philippine independence in 1902, white Americans recoiled from making these “barbarian peoples” a part of the United States. Not fit to manage their own affairs, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Hawaiian, and Filipino peoples were placed in a protective status that denied their independence and kept them under U.S. control.

To stabilize relations in the Philippines, Congress passed the Philippine Government Act in 1902, which vested authority in a governor general to be appointed by the president. The act also provided for an elected Filipino assembly and promised eventual self-government. Progress toward this goal inched forward, with intervals of semi military rule. In 1946, nearly half a century after Admiral Dewey’s guns had boomed in Manila Bay, independence finally came to the Philippines.

CHRONOLOGY 1877–1902

1869	Boss William M. Tweed gains control of New York's Tammany Hall political machine.	1893	Panic of 1893; depression of 1893–1897 begins. Repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act.
1878	Congress requires U.S. Treasury to purchase silver.	1894	Coxey's "army" marches on Washington. Pullman strike. Wilson-Gorman Tariff.
1880	James Garfield elected president.	1895	Supreme Court declares federal income tax unconstitutional.
1881	Assassination of Garfield; Chester A. Arthur becomes president.	1896	Free-silver forces capture Democratic Party and nominate William Jennings Bryan. William McKinley elected president.
1883	Pendleton Civil Service Act.	1898	Acquisition of Hawai'i. Spanish-American War.
1884	Grover Cleveland elected president.	1898–1902	Guerrilla uprising in Philippines.
1886	<i>Wabash v. Illinois</i> .	1900	Currency Act officially places United States on gold standard.
1887	Interstate Commerce Act.	1901	Platt Amendment retains U.S. role in Cuba. Regular Army Nursing Corps founded.
1888	Benjamin Harrison elected president.	1902	Philippine Government Act.
1889	National Farmers' Alliance formed.		
1890	Sherman Silver Purchase Act. Sherman Anti-Trust Act. McKinley Tariff pushes tariffs to all-time high.		

CONCLUSION

By 1900 immigration, the settlement of the frontier West, and rapid industrial expansion had pushed America to the forefront of the world economy and had sparked a major realignment in American politics. After nearly two decades of hard-fought elections in which political control had seesawed back and forth between the major parties, the Republicans now held power.

It had been difficult to achieve political dominance. The dynamic growth of the American economy together with rapid urbanization and a massive influx of immigrants had initially strained the political process. As the parties struggled to define their vision of the proper role of government in stimulating economic development, they were forced to deal with ethnic, cultural, and racial issues that included prohibition, church schools, and segregation. All this was further complicated by the Democratic party's attempt to throw off the limits imposed by Reconstruction and gain political control of the South.

On the national level, both parties built a loyal following by linking their positions to deeply held

beliefs about the family and the proper role of government. Republicans justified their support for the tariff and soldiers' pensions in terms of patriotic protection of the family. Democrats countered that a high-tariff policy was indicative of precisely the kind of excessive governmental force that would destroy family life. On the local level, both parties secured loyal voters by stressing ethnic and cultural issues. Democrats, often as political bosses and urban machines, courted the new immigrants, while Republicans catered to rural and small-town native-born Americans in the Northeast and Midwest. Political bosses gave immigrants a foothold in the political process but their participation often came at the high cost of inflated contracts and corruption that siphoned millions of dollars from the public treasury.

In the competition for new voters, the needs of rural Americans were often overlooked. Caught between declining prices for grain and cotton, and high railroad and bank rates, farmers struggled to survive. Their precarious position was further strained by years of drought, insect infestation, and overspecialization in one crop. In desperation, farmers turned first to the Grange and Farmers'

Alliance movements and then to the Populist Party for help. In the South, after first courting black farmers, members of the Farmers' Alliance and later the Populists joined with Democrats to disfranchise black voters. Using lynching and intimidation, Democrats seized control of southern politics.

In the face of these threats, the Republican Party in 1896 raised huge sums from big business to turn back the Populist challenge and take control of national politics. The fusion of the Populists and Democrats behind William Jennings Bryan and the silver issue created problems of its own. Although he carried the South and almost all the Midwest, the teetotaling Bryan had little appeal for urban workers and the middle class who believed that a monetary policy based on free silver promised only inflation and higher prices. McKinley won by playing down moral reforms such as prohibition and emphasizing patriotism and fiscal responsibility. Republicans won over the urban-industrial core of the nation—the Northeast and much of the Midwest. They would control the House of Representatives for twenty-eight out of the thirty-six years from 1894 to 1930.

McKinley's administration was drawn by events in Cuba and jingoistic advocates within his own party into the Spanish-American War and

the subsequent acquisition of Hawai'i, Samoa, Guam, the Philippines, and Cuba. Although the Republicans preferred the term "expansionism" to "imperialism," the move to acquire new bases for access to global markets fit the party's probusiness stance. But expansion into the Pacific created its own obstacles when the United States became involved in a guerrilla war with Philippine nationalists. Facing mounting criticism at home, the expansionists adopted the Teller and Platt Amendments, which foreshadowed eventual disengagement from the acquisition of foreign territory.

Notwithstanding these foreign interventions, the fundamental question of late-nineteenth century American politics persisted: could a government designed for the needs of a small agrarian society serve an industrialized nation of factories and immigrant-crowded cities? The answer was by no means clear. Although issues such as patronage, the tariff, veterans' benefits, and monetary policy had enabled the industrial system to grow dramatically, the needs of farmers, workers, and immigrant Americans had largely been ignored. The Republicans successfully carried the field in 1896, but Populists and other critics who argued that government should play an assertive role in solving social and economic problems would help shape the political environment of the progressive movement.

KEY TERMS

laissez-faire (p. 599)

Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) (p. 599)

political machine (p. 600)

William "Magear" Tweed (p. 600)

Sherman Silver Purchase Act (p. 601)

Pendleton Civil Service Act (p. 602)

Mugwumps (p. 603)

Grange (p. 605)

Farmers' Alliance (p. 605)

Populist Party (p. 607)

subtreasury plan (p. 607)

lynching (p. 609)

***Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)** (p. 609)

Booker T. Washington (p. 610)

Panic of 1893 (p. 611)

William Jennings Bryan (p. 613)

Alfred Thayer Mahan (p. 616)

Hawai'i (p. 617)

Clara Barton (p. 621)

Platt Amendment (p. 622)

Anti-Imperialist League (p. 622)

Emilio Aguinaldo (p. 623)

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