

PPT: Power to the People

The Rise and Fall of the Populist Party

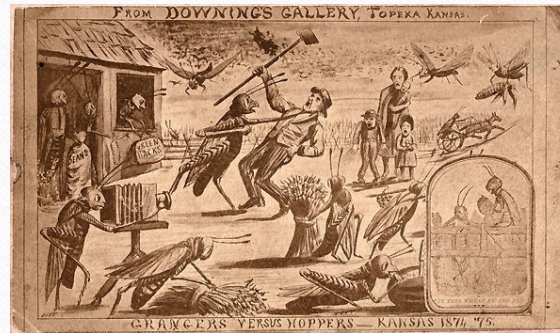
1867-1896

new machines = **overproduction** = lower prices = **loss of \$ for farmers**



Farmers' Problems

- *Crop prices fell. A bushel of wheat that sold for \$1.45 in late 1866 brought only \$0.80 by the mid-1880s and \$0.49 in the mid-1890s*
- *Farmers had no cash, went further into debt, and their lenders foreclosed on their mortgages*
- *1874, grasshoppers devoured crops and farming tools*
- *1886 droughts*
- *the railroad companies charged outrageous prices to ship crops (no regulation!)*



Different Groups Representing Farmers' Interests

- 1867: *The Patrons of Husbandry (The Grange)*
- 1880s: *Farmers' Alliance and Colored Farmers' National Alliance*
- 1892: *Birth of the Populist, or People's Party*

Farmers' Demands

- *8-hour workday for industrial workers and restrict immigration*
- *Make cash more available by **backing the dollar with silver**, not gold, to stimulate the economy and raise farm prices*
- ***Constitutional demands**: single term for President and Vice-President, secret ballot, popular election of Senators*
- ***Regulate the railroad companies** (Stop them from charging such high rates)*

The Grange

- Founded in 1867 by Oliver Hudson Kelley
- sought to educate farmers about new agricultural techniques and helped farmers form cooperatives
- Fought unfair practices of railroad companies
- not all farmers joined. Some formed groups known as “Farmers’ Alliances” which were more political and didn’t try to establish cooperatives.

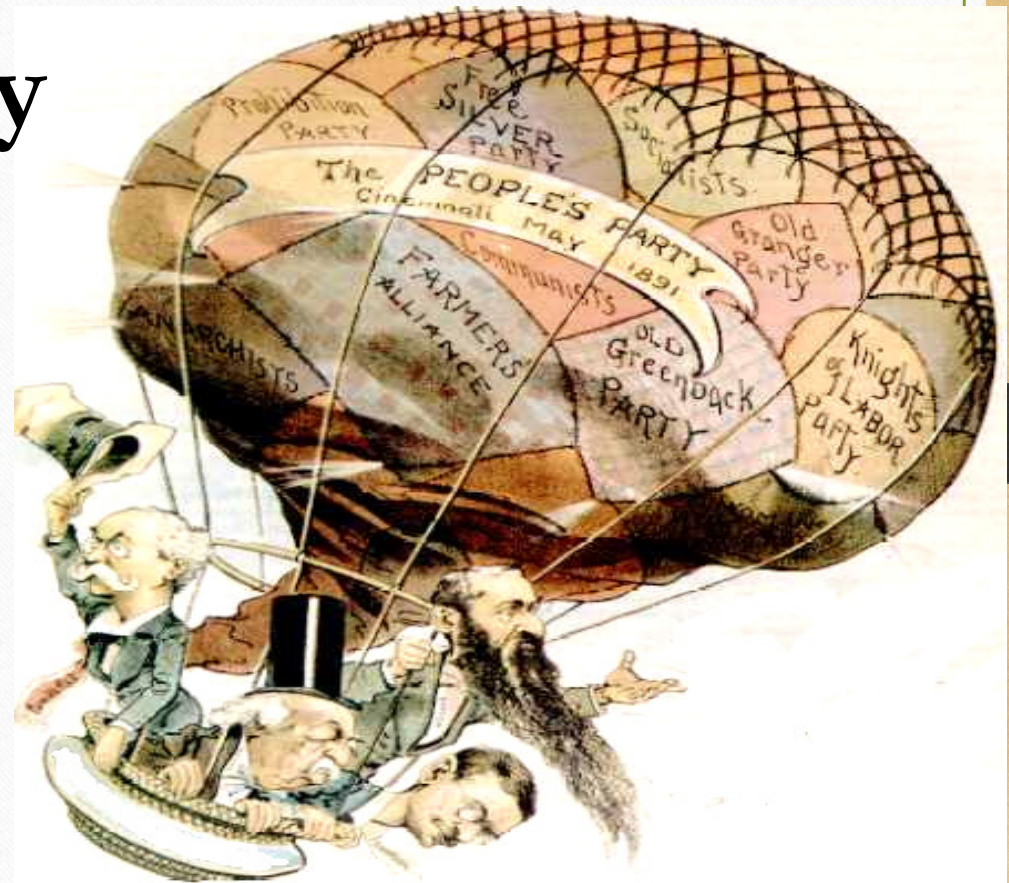


▲ The Patrons of Husbandry, the Grange, idealized farmers and farm life in this lithograph of 1873. Originally a social and cultural organization, by 1873 the Grange was actively mobilizing votes for politicians, Republicans and Democrats, who supported its demands for regulation of railroads.



The Populist Party (a.k.a. “The People’s Party”)

“...We seek to restore the gov’t of the Republic to
the hands of ‘the plain people’ ”



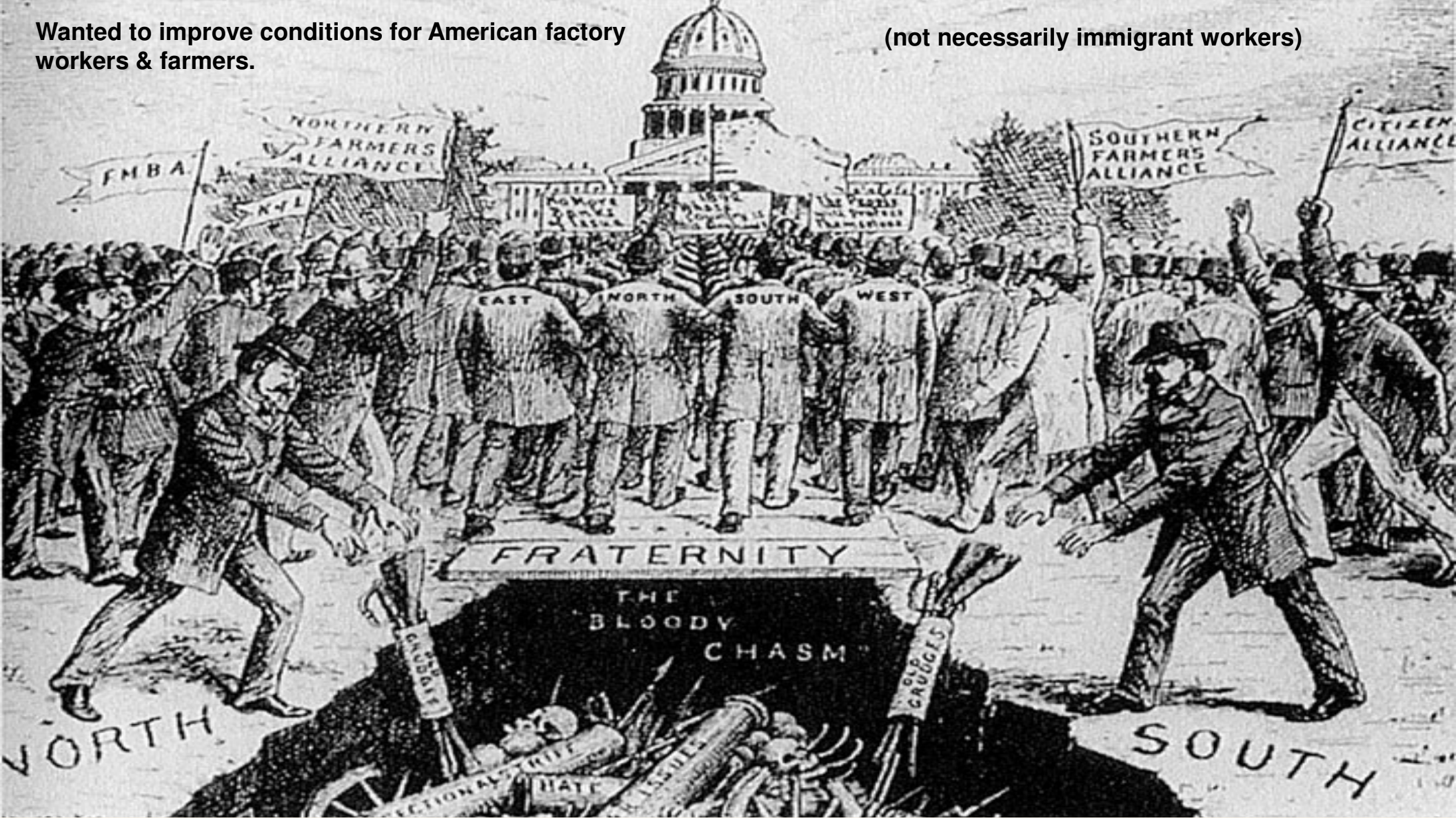
“What you farmers need to do is raise less corn and more hell”
-Populist Mary Lease, to Kansas Farmers



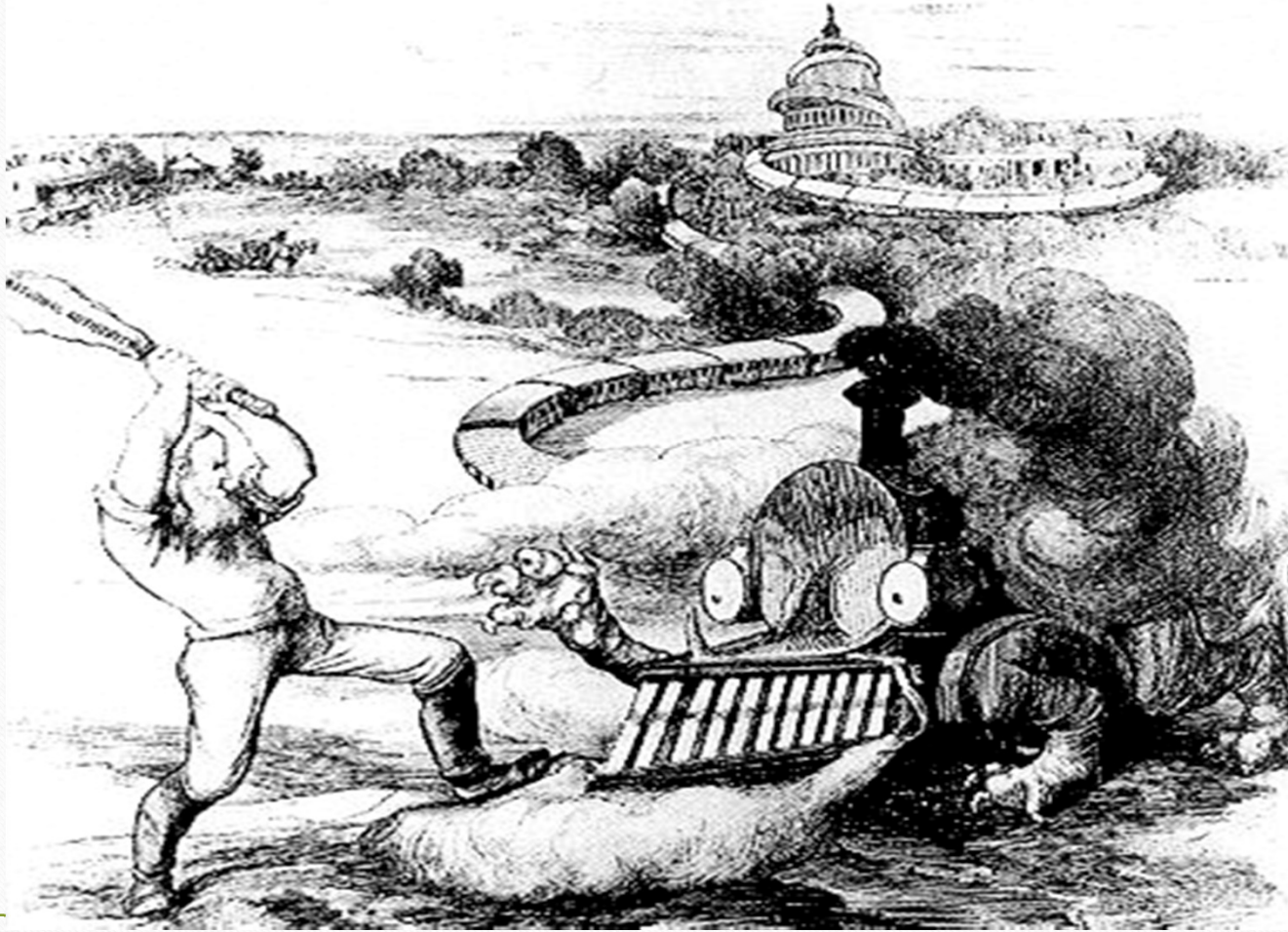
James Coxey led a march of 500 from Ohio to Washington DC (Cleveland appeared to be indifferent) and were arrested on the steps of the Capitol.

Wanted to improve conditions for American factory workers & farmers.

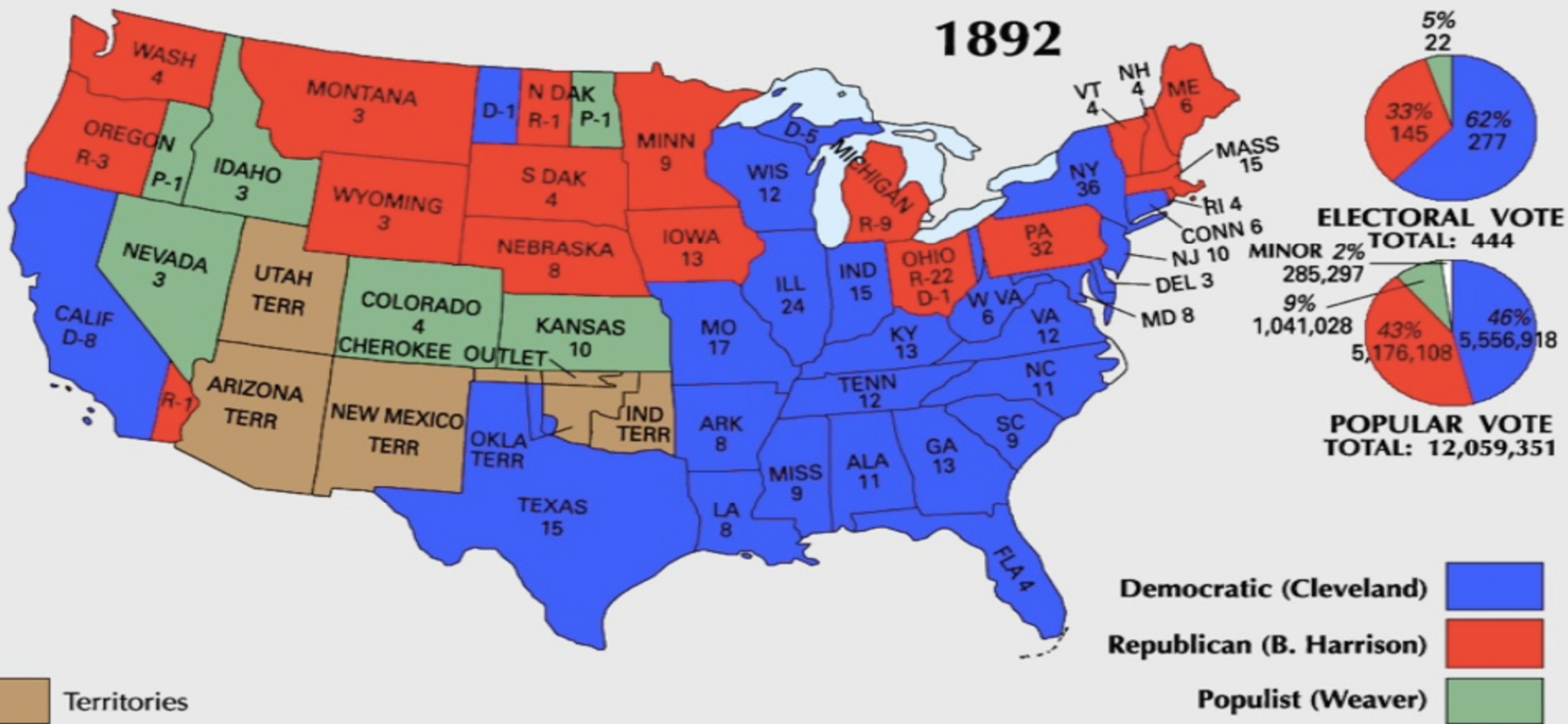
(not necessarily immigrant workers)



Wanted politics to be free of corporate influence.

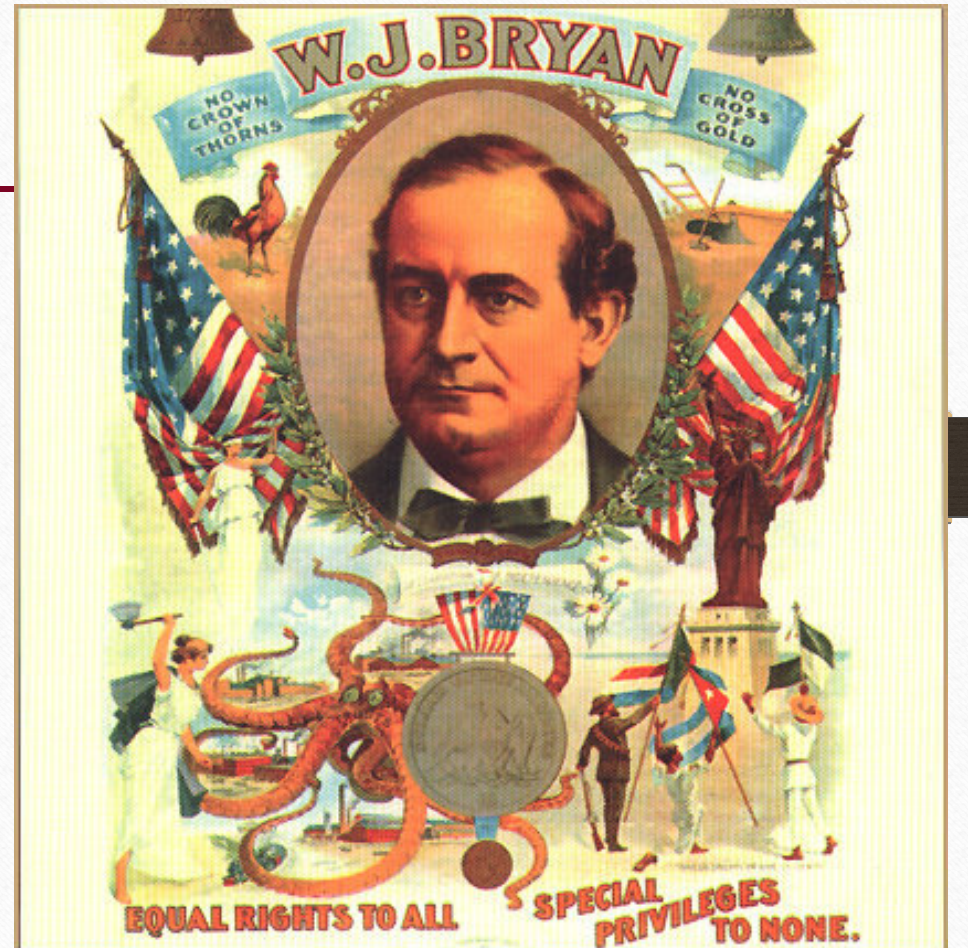


1892 Presidential Election: Populist candidate won over a million votes!

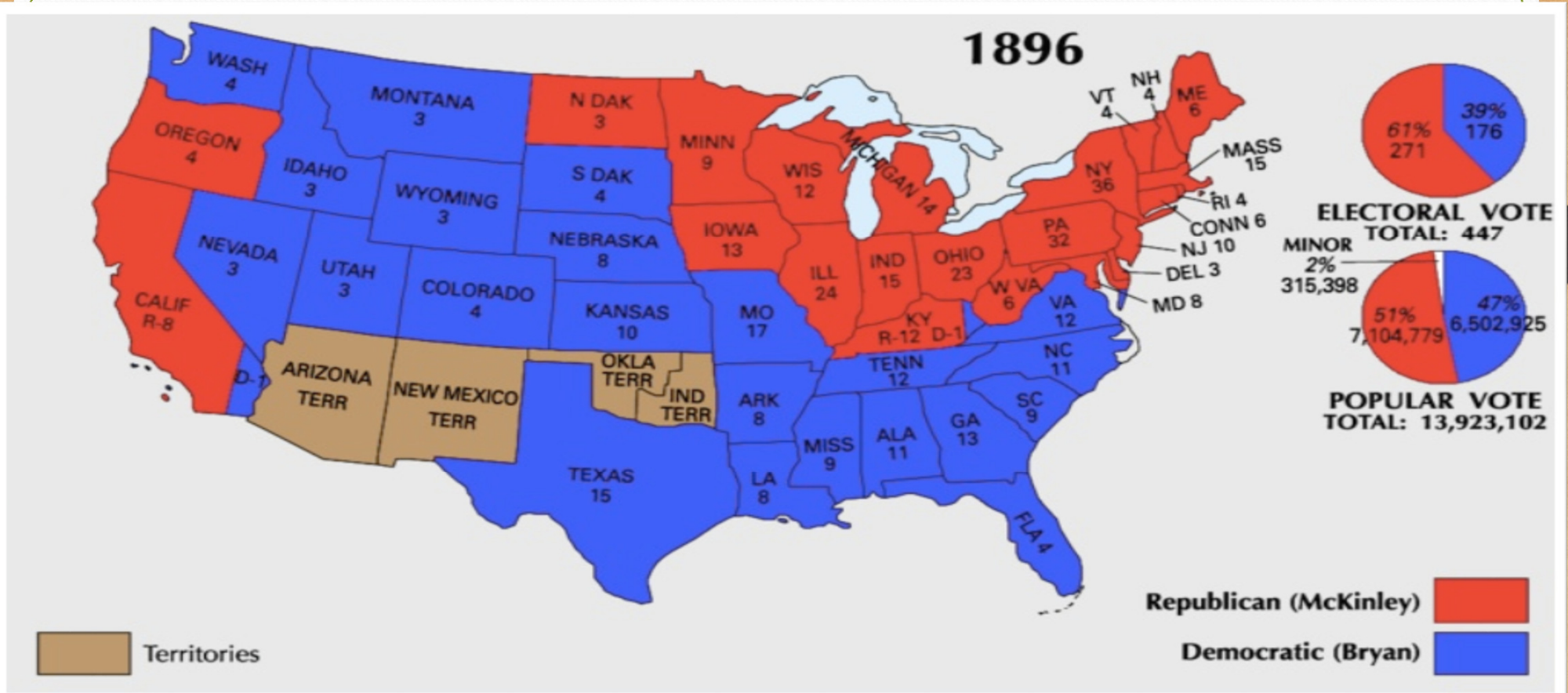


1896 Election

Populists decide to improve their chances by supporting the Democratic candidate, William Jennings Bryan, who agreed to support the silver-backed dollar.



1896 Presidential Election: Bryan loses but carries most of the South and West



Labor Dissatisfaction Grows



HOPELESSLY BOUND TO THE STAKE.

Modern Times

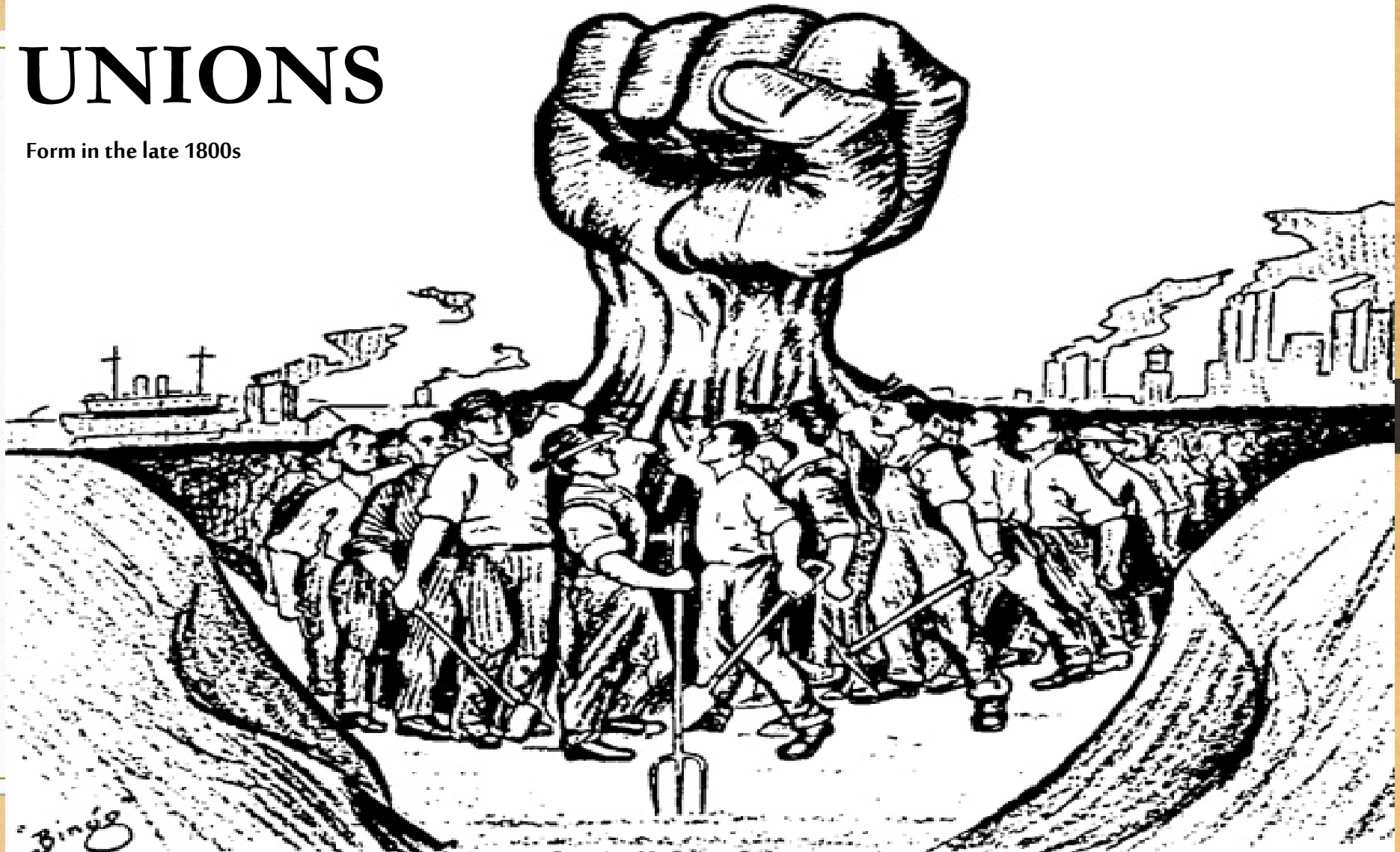
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANXGJe6i3G8>



Who fought for the rights of workers?

UNIONS

Form in the late 1800s

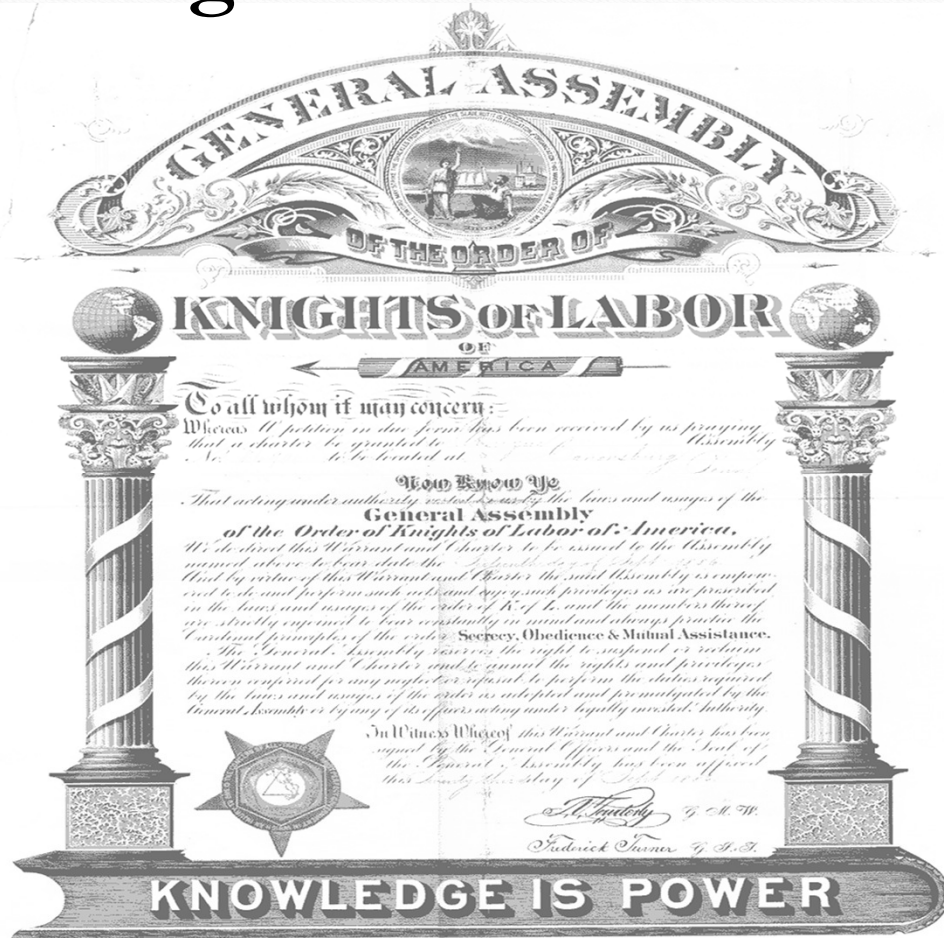


Union Strategies

- Collective Bargaining-negotiation between employers and employees concerning wages, working conditions, and other terms of employment.
- Strikes - when workers refuse to work. A strike can easily shut down a factory, railroad or mine.
- Boycotts - the agreement between a group of people to stop buying or using a product or service

In the early 20th century most unions did not include immigrants, African-Americans or women.

Knights of Labor



WILLIAM COOK. JAMES L. WRIGHT. VACANT CHAIR OF U. S. STEPHENS. R. C. MACAULEY. J. M. HILSER. J. S. KENNEDY. R. W. KIRK.
THE FOUNDERS OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR.
graphed July 2, 1869.

- Accepted all those employed, including farmers, merchants, and unskilled workers.
- It proposed new laws such as cutting the workday to 8 hours and equal pay for men and women doing the same work.

American Federation of Labor



Samuel Gompers

- Supported skilled workers

(carpenters, trained machinists, electricians, etc.)

- advocated using strikes and boycotts.

Industrial Workers of the World

Wanted to represent *all* workers.



*“Too long have the workers of the world waited for some Moses to lead them out of bondage. He has not come; he never will come. I would not lead you out if I could; for if you could be led out, you could be led back again. I would have you make up your minds that **there is nothing that you cannot do for yourselves.**”*

- Eugene Debs, founder of the IWW



Industrial Workers of the World

"One Big Union" to lead "One Big Strike" and overthrow capitalism.



The Wobblies

Opposition to Unions

- Owners threatened to fire workers who joined unions.
- Owners circulated blacklists of union members and refused to hire listed workers.
- If workers formed a union, companies often used a lockout to break it. The locked workers out of the property and refused to pay them.
- If the union called a strike, employers would hire replacement workers (“strikebreakers”).
- There were no laws giving workers the right to organize or requiring owners to negotiate with them. Courts frequently ruled that strikes were “conspiracies in restraint of trade,” for which labor leaders might be fined or jailed.