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# Gilded Age Politics

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A.P. U.S. History - Period 6

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## Period 6 1865-1898

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The transformation of the United States from an agricultural to an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society brought about significant economic, political, diplomatic, social, environmental, and cultural changes.

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# Key Concept 6.3

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The “Gilded Age” witnessed new cultural and intellectual movements in tandem with political debates over economic and social policies.

I. Gilded Age politics were intimately tied to big business and focused nationally on economic issues — tariffs, currency, corporate expansion, and laissez-faire economic policy — that engendered numerous calls for reform. (POL-6)

A. Corruption in government — especially as it related to big business — energized the public to demand increased popular control and reform of local, state, and national governments, ranging from minor changes to major overhauls of the capitalist system.

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# The “Bloody Shirt” Elects Grant in 1868

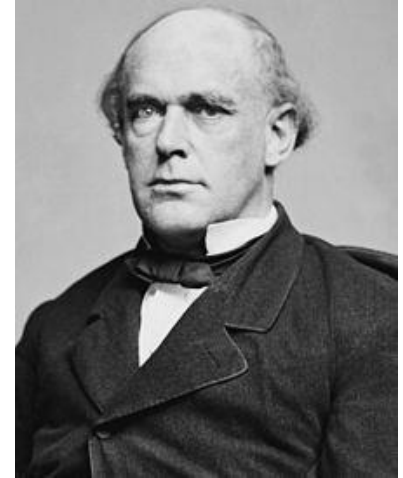
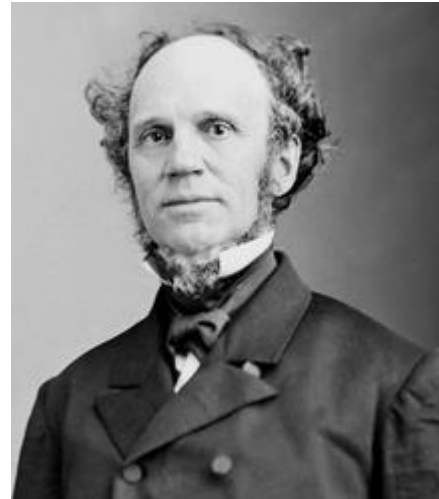
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- US growth by 1870
- Period characterized by greed and corruption

# Democrats in 1868

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- Ohio's George Pendleton was a frontrunner
- Plan to pay bonds in greenbacks
- Most obvious choice was NY Gov. Horatio Seymour
- Adamantly refused to be a candidate
- Chief Justice Salmon Chase?
- Had been seen as a possible Republican nominee



# Democratic Convention - 1868

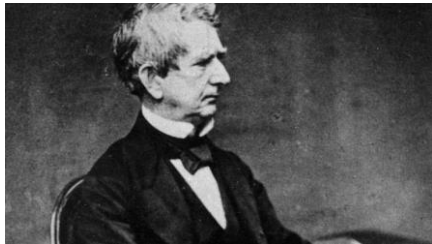
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- Andrew Johnson 2<sup>nd</sup> on first 2 ballots
    - thought he was defeated by “duplicity and deceit”
  - Seymour won on 21<sup>st</sup> ballot
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# Horatio Seymour

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- W. Seward – Democrats “could have nominated no candidate who would have taken away fewer Republican votes”
- Seymour’s conduct during war gave loyalty issue to Republicans – (addressed draft rioters as “my friends”)
  - close ties to NY financiers cost appeal to Western economic resentments





# Seymour's Running Mate – Frank Blair

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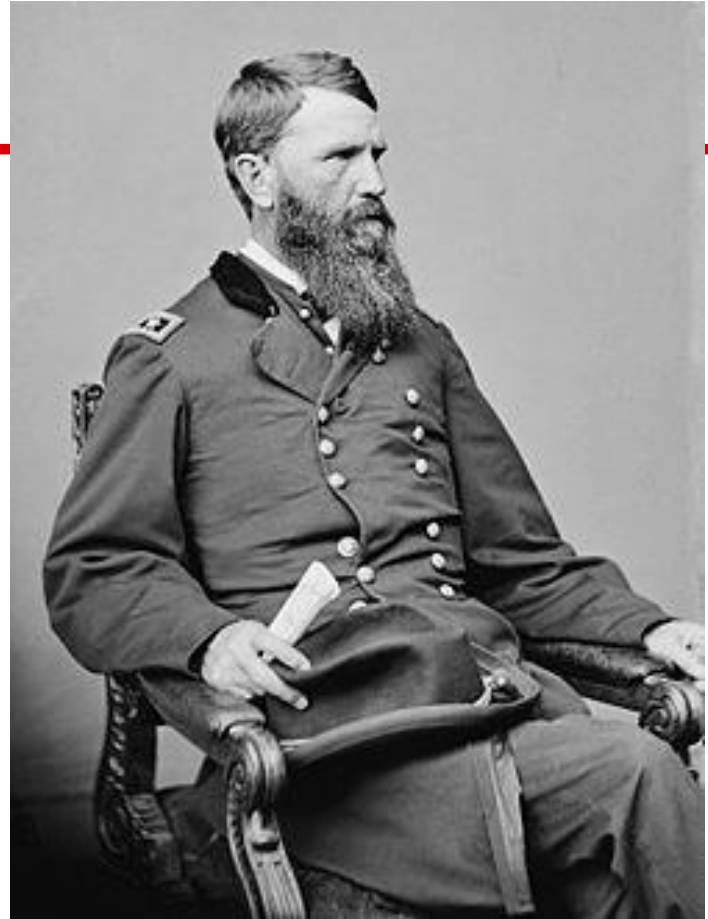
- family had been allied w/ Lincoln
    - helped keep Missouri Union
  - publicized letter rejected Reconstruction
  - Democratic President could restore “white people” to power in South, declare new gov’ts “null and void” – use army to disperse
    - specter of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Civil War
-

# Blair's racism

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-said Republicans placed South under “a semi-barbarous race of blacks who are worshippers of fetishes and poligamists” and would “subject white women to their unbridled lust”

Read Darwin's *The Origin of Species*



# Grant's support

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- "Seymour was opposed to the late war, and Blair is in favor of the next one."
- Jay Cooke gave \$20,000 to Republican campaign  
(assured bonds wouldn't be greenback-redeemed)
- First time Northern capitalists united behind Republicans



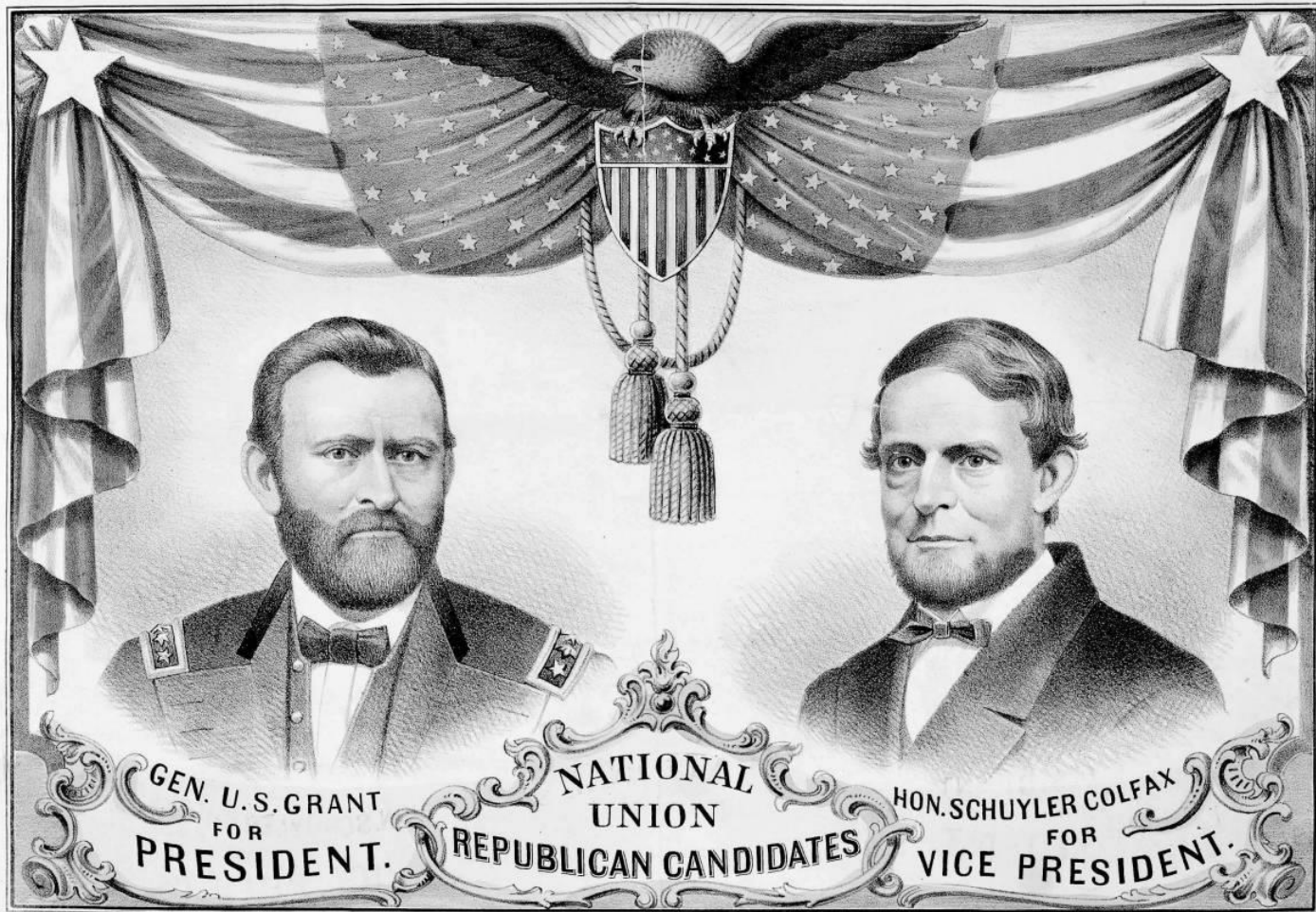


1864.

1868.

'TIS BUT A CHANGE OF BANNERS.



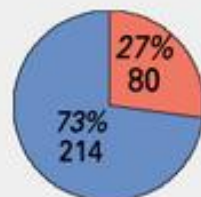
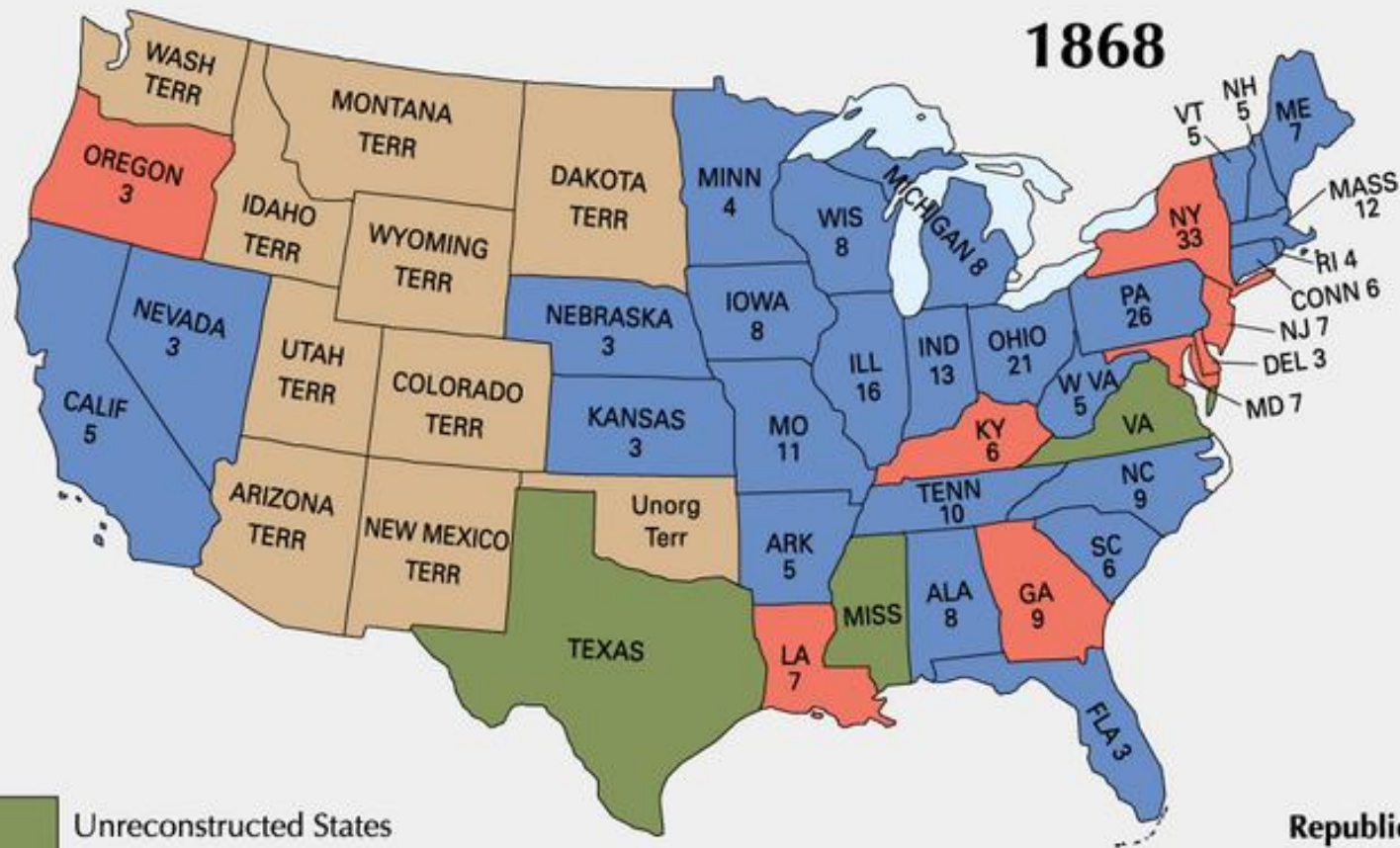


# Election of 1868

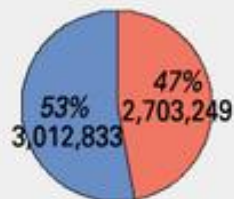
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- Grant had enthusiastic support as a war hero
  - Democrats divided on currency issue
  - Grant won a close popular vote
    - supported by freedmen
    - uncounted votes in south
  - KKK intimidation
-



# 1868



**ELECTORAL VOTE**  
**TOTAL VOTING: 294**  
**NOT VOTING: 23**



**POPULAR VOTE**  
**TOTAL: 5,716,082**

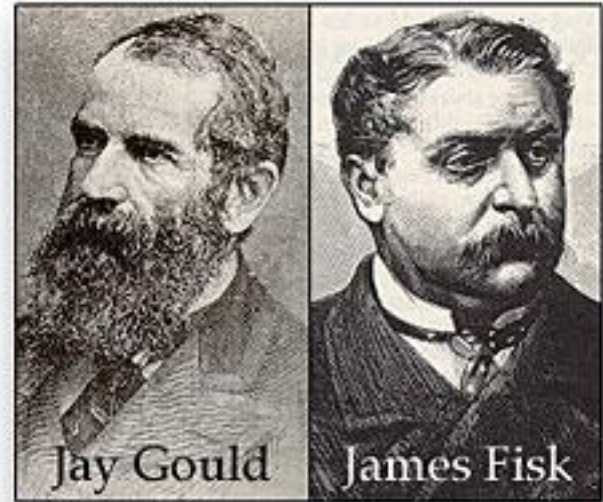
 Unreconstructed States  
 Territories

Republican (Grant)   
 Democratic (Seymour) 

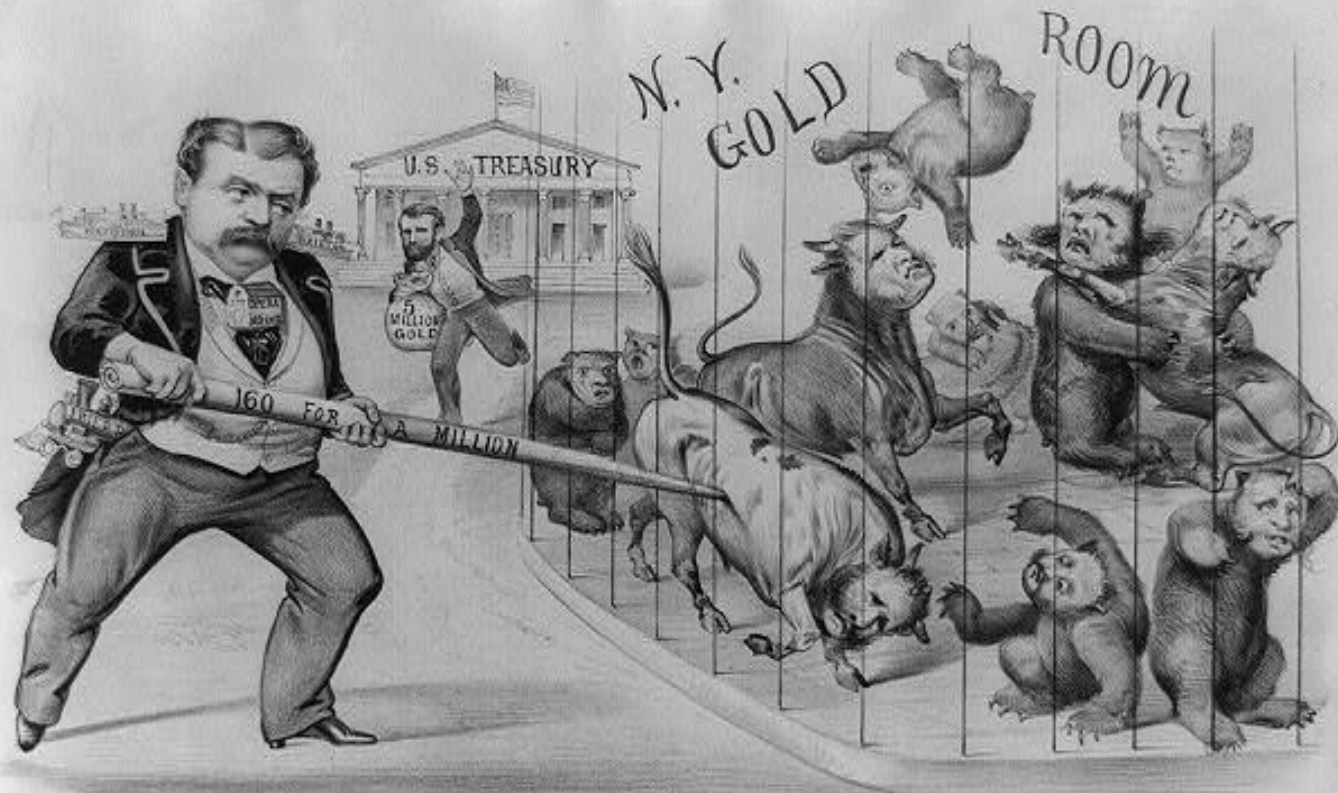
# The Era of “Good Stealings”

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- Fisk-Gould gold scheme - 1869
- Grant's brother-in-law







PUBLISHED BY CUNNINGHAM & CO.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by the Publisher, in the Office of the District Clerk of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.

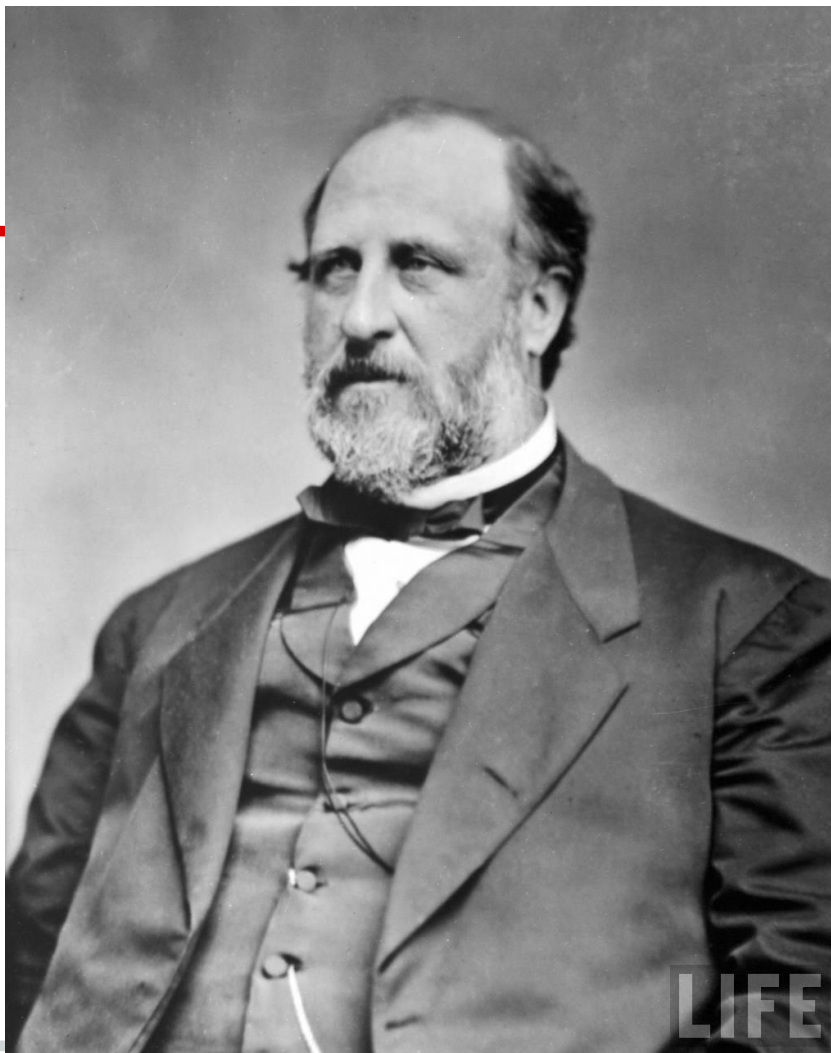
U.S. PATENT OFFICE, WASHINGTON.

THE "BOY OF THE PERIOD" STIRRING UP THE ANIMALS.

# **Tweed Ring - NYC - “Tammany Hall”**

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- Bribery, graft, fraudulent elections
  - Helped immigrants
  - brought down by Thomas Nast and Samuel J. Tilden
-





**"THAT'S WHAT'S THE MATTER."**

BOSS TWEED. "As long as I count the Votes, what are you going to do about it? say?"



IN THE WINDY CITY.

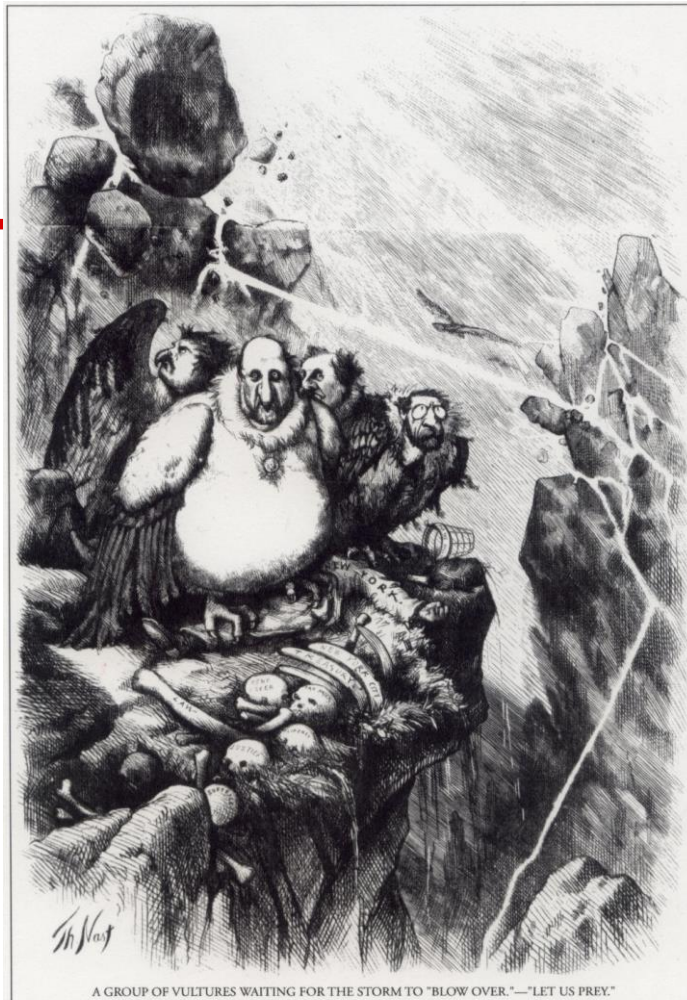
HARPER'S WEEKLY

500

HARPER'S WEEKLY

1861





A GROUP OF VULTURES WAITING FOR THE STORM TO "BLOW OVER."—"LET US PREY."



"WHO STOLE THE PEOPLE'S MONEY?" — DO TELL. N.Y. TIMES.

'T WAS HIM.



"What are you going to do about it?"

(cartoon by Thomas Nast)



# Carnival of Corruption

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- Grant - not corrupt, but surrounded by it
    - Credit Mobilier (1872) -
      - Union Pacific Railroad - formed CM Construction
        - Hired themselves for high rates
        - bought off members of Congress & VP w/ stock
-



THE DEAN, THE DYING AND THE CRIPPLED IN THE CREDIT MOBILIER WARD OF THE UNION PACIFIC HOSPITAL.





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## Whiskey Ring (1874-1875)

- Excise taxes on whiskey
- High-ranking gov't officials skimming off top (millions of \$)

## Belknap Scandal

- Sec of War - resigned for taking bribes from companies supplying Indian reservations
-





I BEG TO REPEAT THAT  
THESE FRAUDS ON THE  
GOVERNMENT SHALL BE  
PROBED TO THE  
VERY BOTTOM.



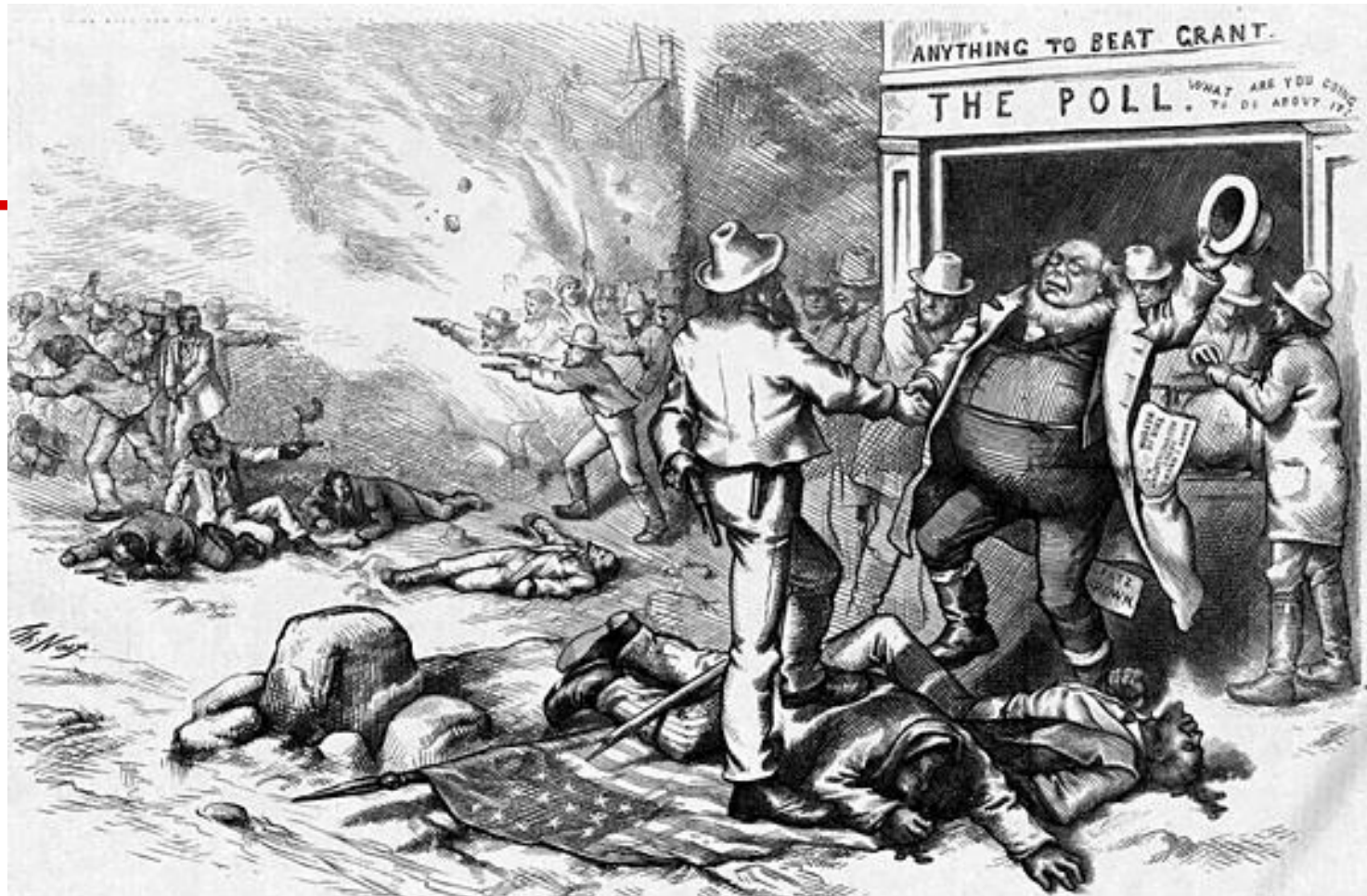
# Liberal Republican Revolt of 1872

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Liberal Republicans nominated Horace Greeley  
-also ran on Democratic ticket  
-Grant won mud-spattered campaign for  
2nd term

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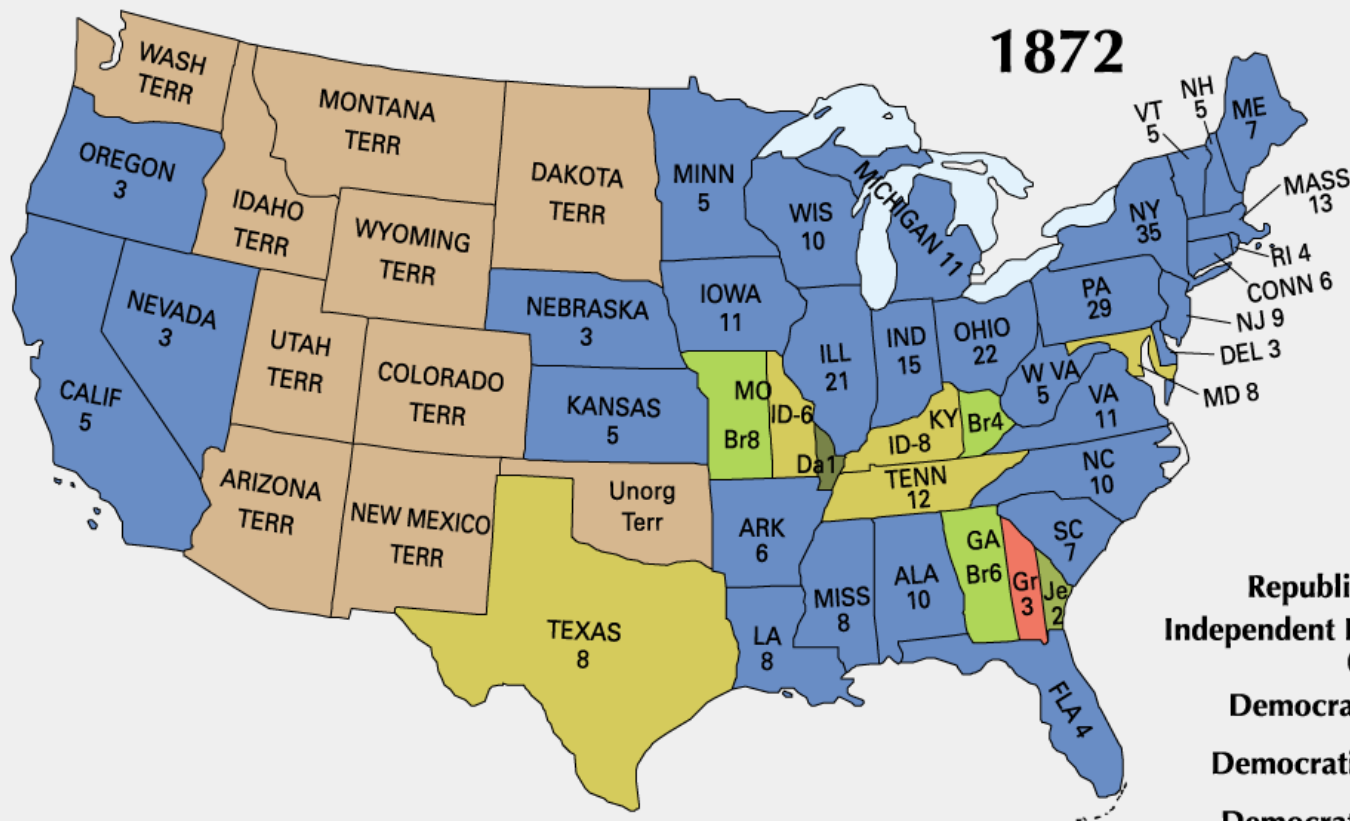


H. G. "LET US CLASP HANDS OVER THE BLOODY CHASM."—[SEE PAGE 105.]

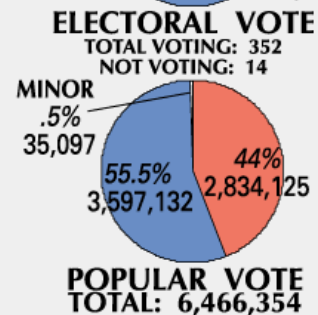
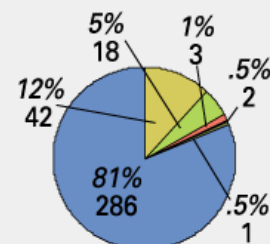
"A Great Victory has been won in Georgia.... The verdict in Georgia is certainly conclusive."—*New York Tribune*, October 3, 1873.



# 1872



Territories



- Republican (Grant)
- Independent Democratic (Hendricks)
- Democratic (Brown)
- Democratic (Greeley)
- Democratic (Jenkins)
- Democratic (Davis)

# 1873 Salary Grab

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- Congress double president's compensation
  - Awarded itself a 40 % retroactive pay increase
  - could this happen today???
  - Sec of Treasury – W. Richardson resigned after allowing tax fraud
-

# Depression, Deflation, and Inflation

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- Panic of 1873 - overspeculation
    - railroads, mines, factories, crops
    - bad loans
    - paper money (greenbacks)
  - Dropped coinage of silver dollars - 1873
  - “The Crime of ‘73” - when Congress stopped coining silver
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# Bland-Allison Act

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allowed a limited coinage of between \$2 million and \$4 million in silver each month

- @ standard silver-to-gold ratio of 16 to 1

Passed over Hayes' Veto

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# Resumption Act of 1875

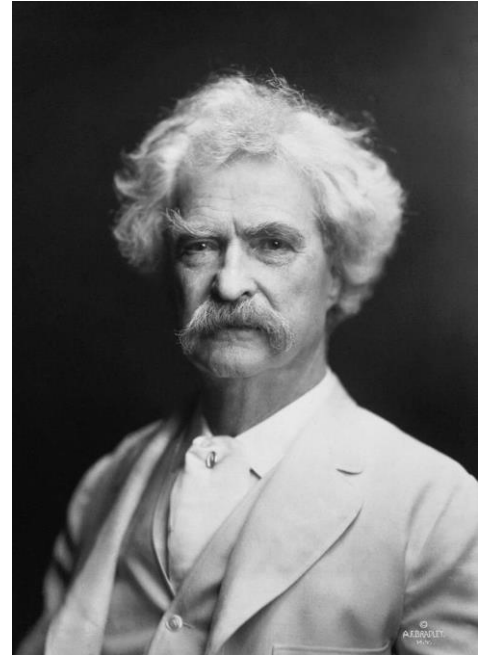
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- withdraw greenbacks, resume gold
  - debtors and farmers against this
  - helped elect a Democratic House (1st since Civil War)
-

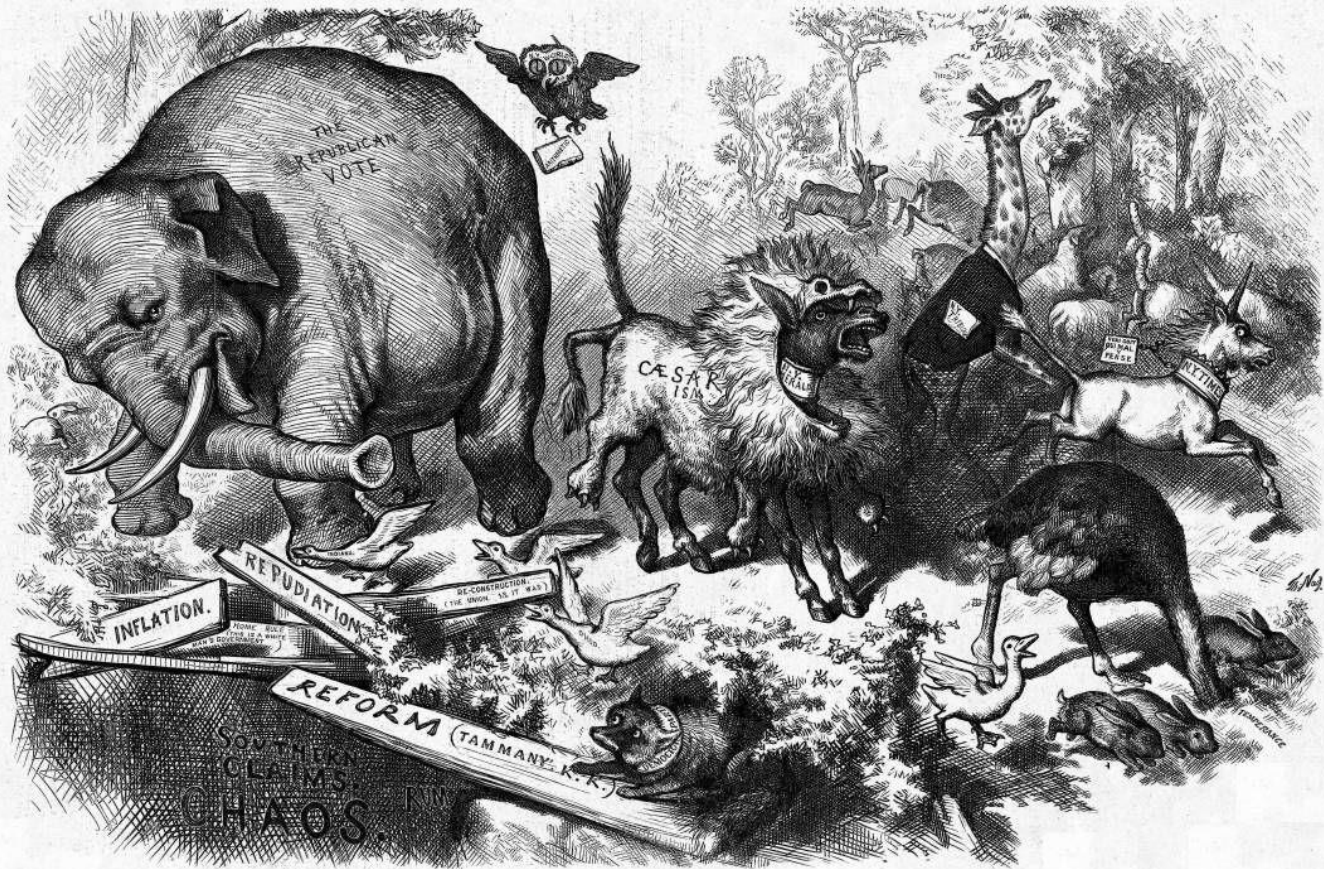
# Pallid Politics in Gilded Age

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- Control of House, Senate, and Presidency - back and forth
- few major issues
- differences - ethnicity and religion
- patronage







THE THIRD-TERM PANIC.

"An Ass, having put on the Lion's skin, roamed about in the Forest, and amused himself by frightening all the foolish Animals he met with in his wanderings."—SHAKSPERE or BACON.



# “Third Term Panic”

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November 7, 1874 - Thomas Nast

Caption:

"An Ass, having put on the Lion's skin, roamed about in the Forest, and amused himself by frightening all the foolish Animals he met with in his wanderings."--Shakespeare or Bacon

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"ANDERSON'S TIGER AND THE ELEPHANT" - *Cartoon*

# Politics (continued)

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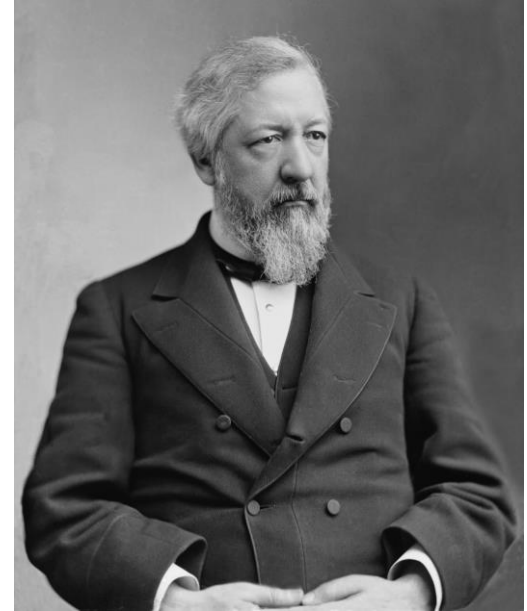
Stalwart Republican faction - Roscoe Conkling  
of NY - all about patronage



# Half-Breed Republicans

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- James Blaine of Maine
- thought about civil service reform



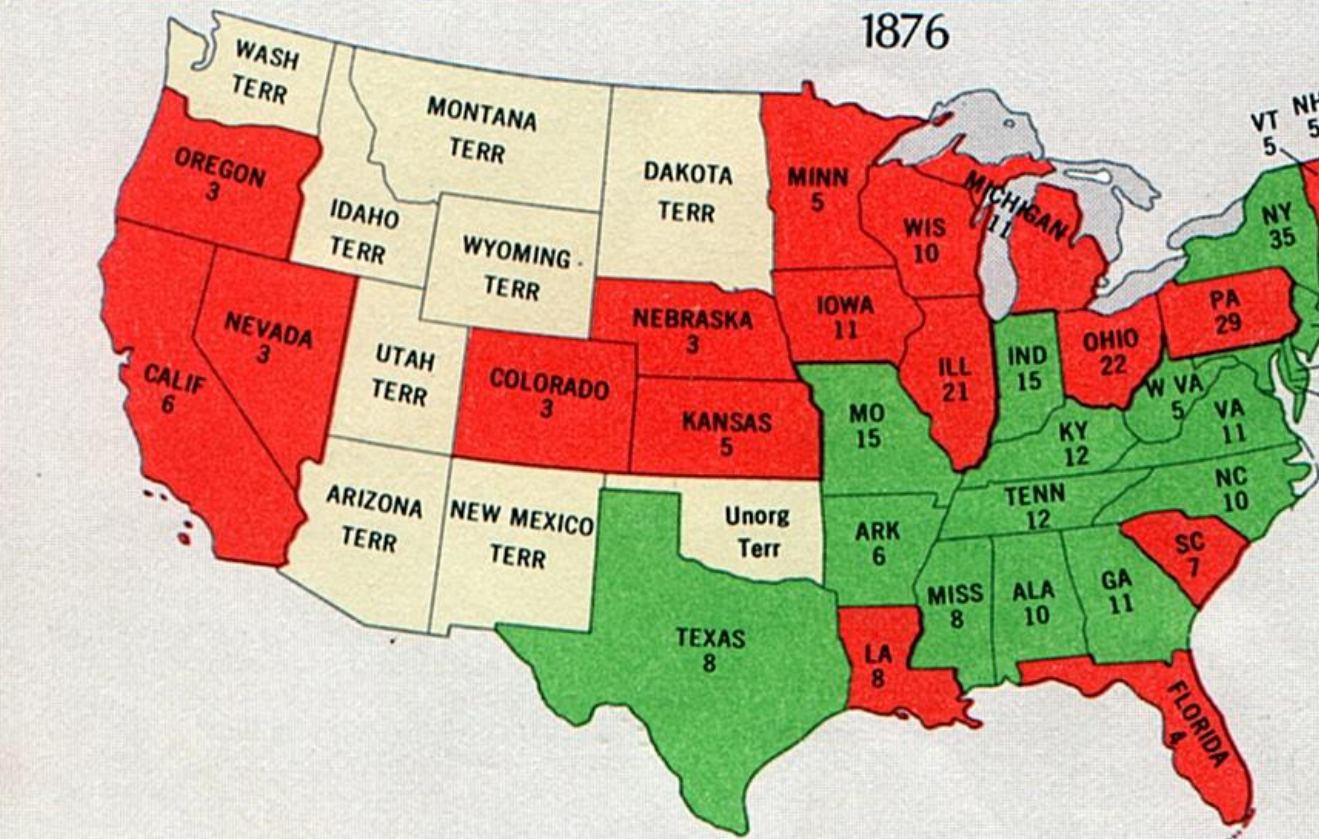
# Hayes-Tilden Standoff, 1876

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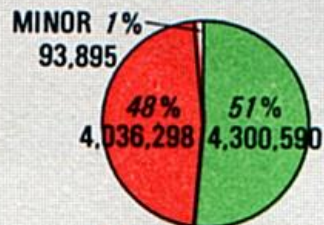
- 1876 - Grant out
  - Republicans - Rutherford B. Hayes - from Ohio (swing state)
  - Democrats - Samuel J. Tilden - helped take down Tweed
  - Contested votes in South
-



1876



ELECTORAL VOTE  
TOTAL: 369

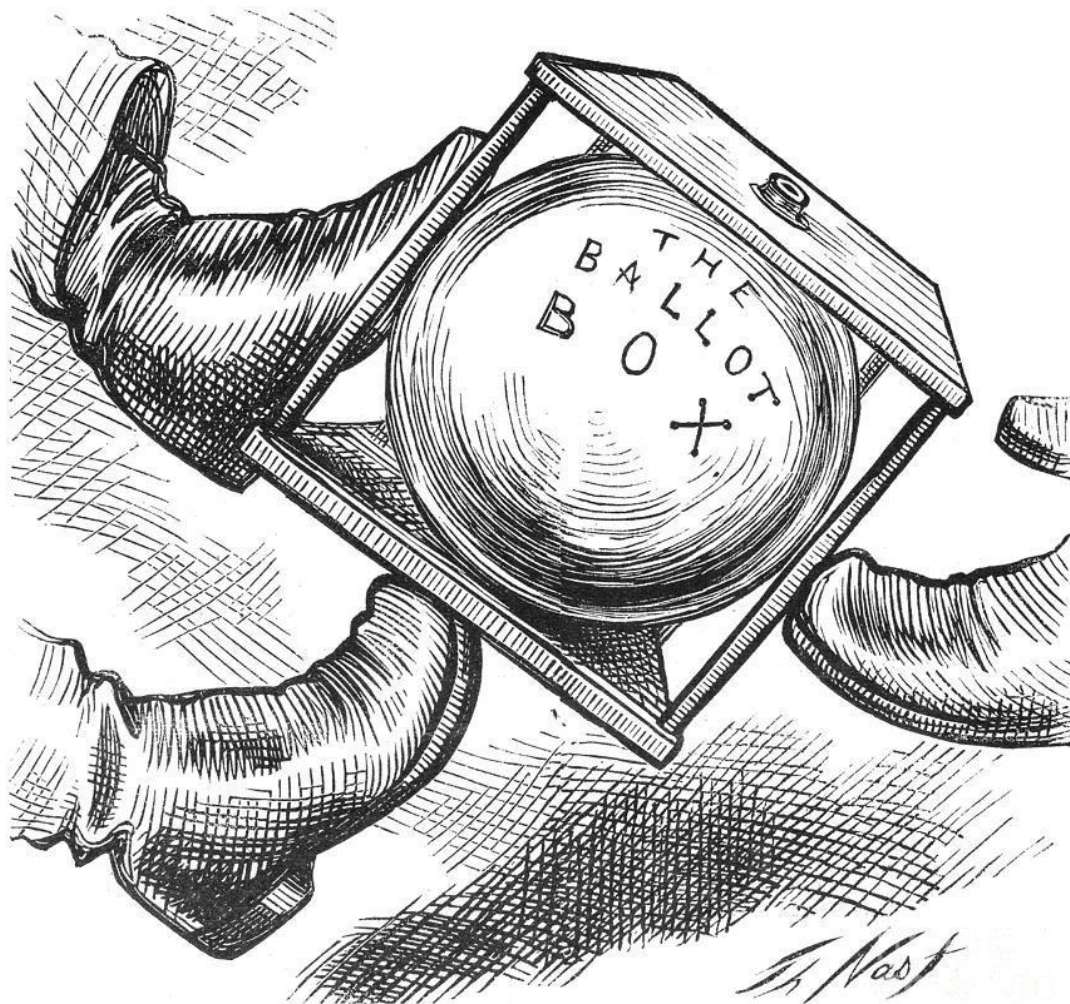


POPULAR VOTE  
TOTAL: 8,430,783

Territories

Republican (Hayes)

Democratic (Tilden)



A NATIONAL GAME THAT IS PLAYED OUT.

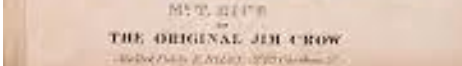
# Compromise of 1877 and End of Reconstruction

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- 2 sets of electoral returns from contested southern states
  - Compromise of 1877
    - Hayes (Republican) could become president
    - All federal troops leave South
    - Ends Reconstruction; Democratic “Redemption”
-



- Redeemers rule South
- Black civil rights taken away
  - crop lien system
  - Jim Crow Laws
  - Plessy v Ferguson
  - Poll tax/literacy test/grandfather clause



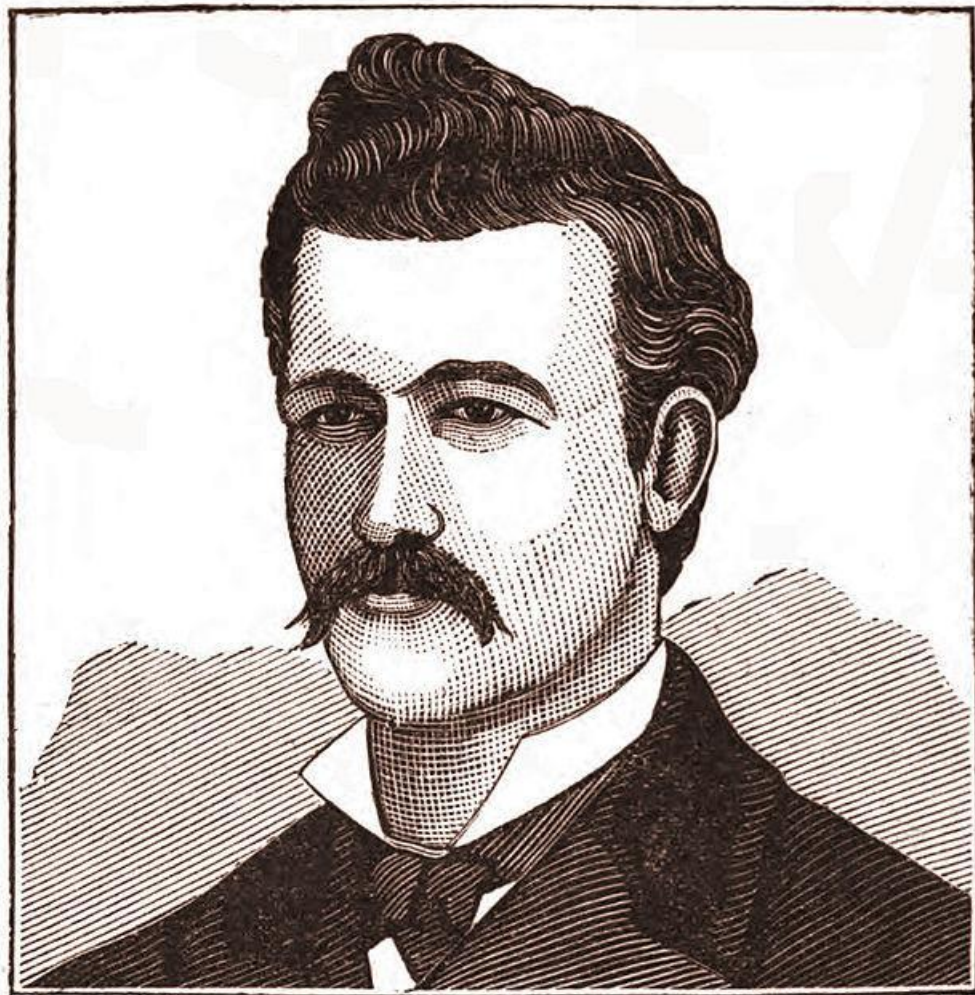




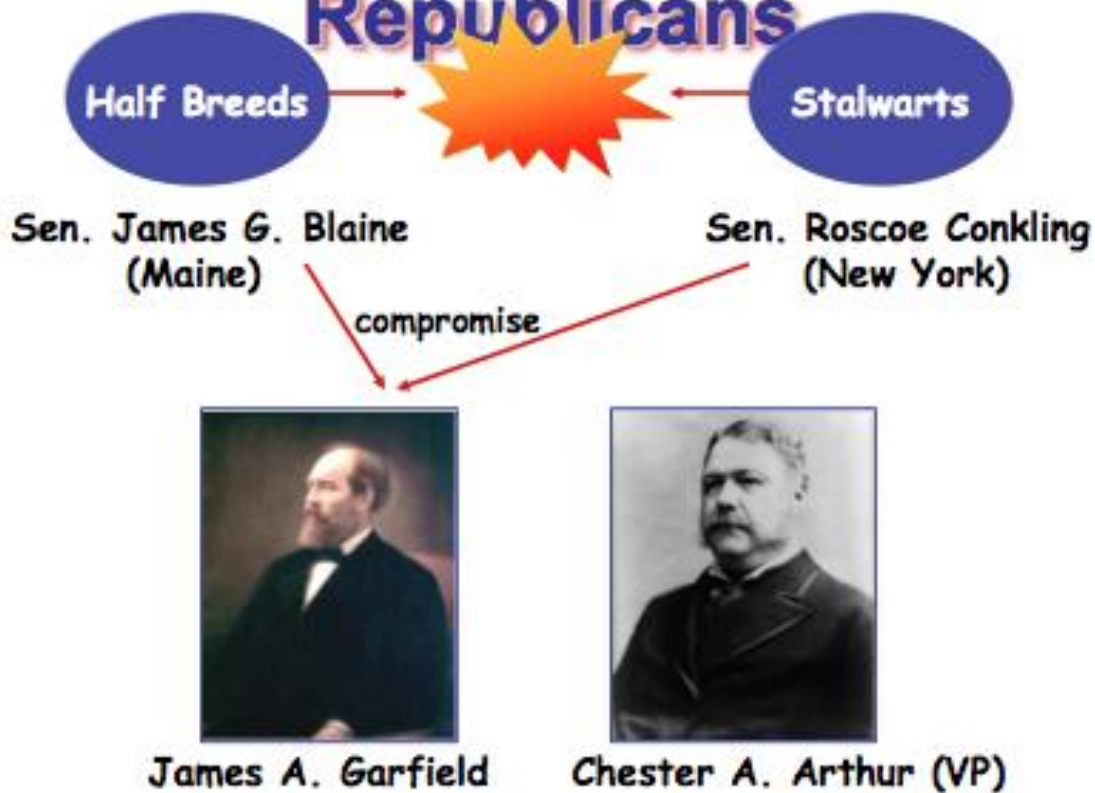
# Class Conflict and Ethnic Clashes

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- Railroad Strike of 1877 - Hayes called in Fed troops
  - Chinese Immigrants to CA
    - Railroads and mines
    - Conflicts w/ Irish immigrants (Denis Kearney)
    - Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
    - US v Wong Kim Ark* (1882) – 14<sup>th</sup>
  - Amendment/Citizenship
    - Tape v Hurley* (1885) – public schools
-

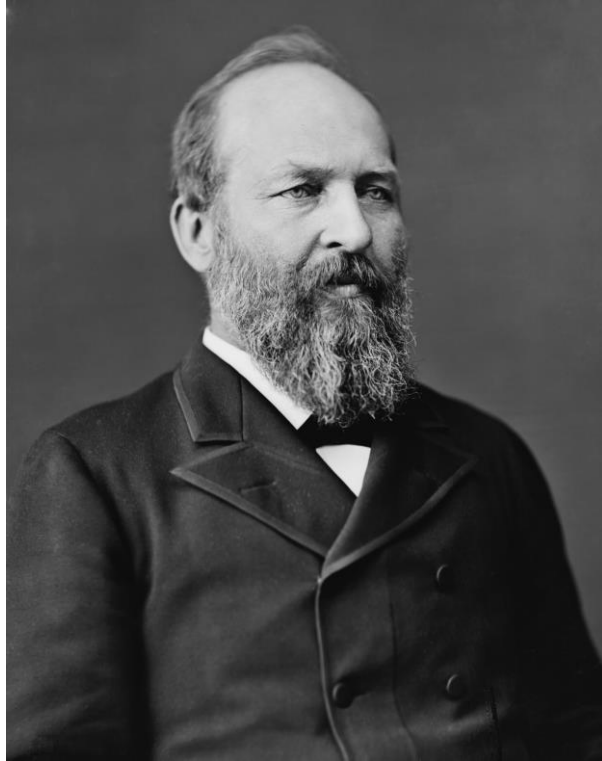


# 1880 Presidential Election: Republicans

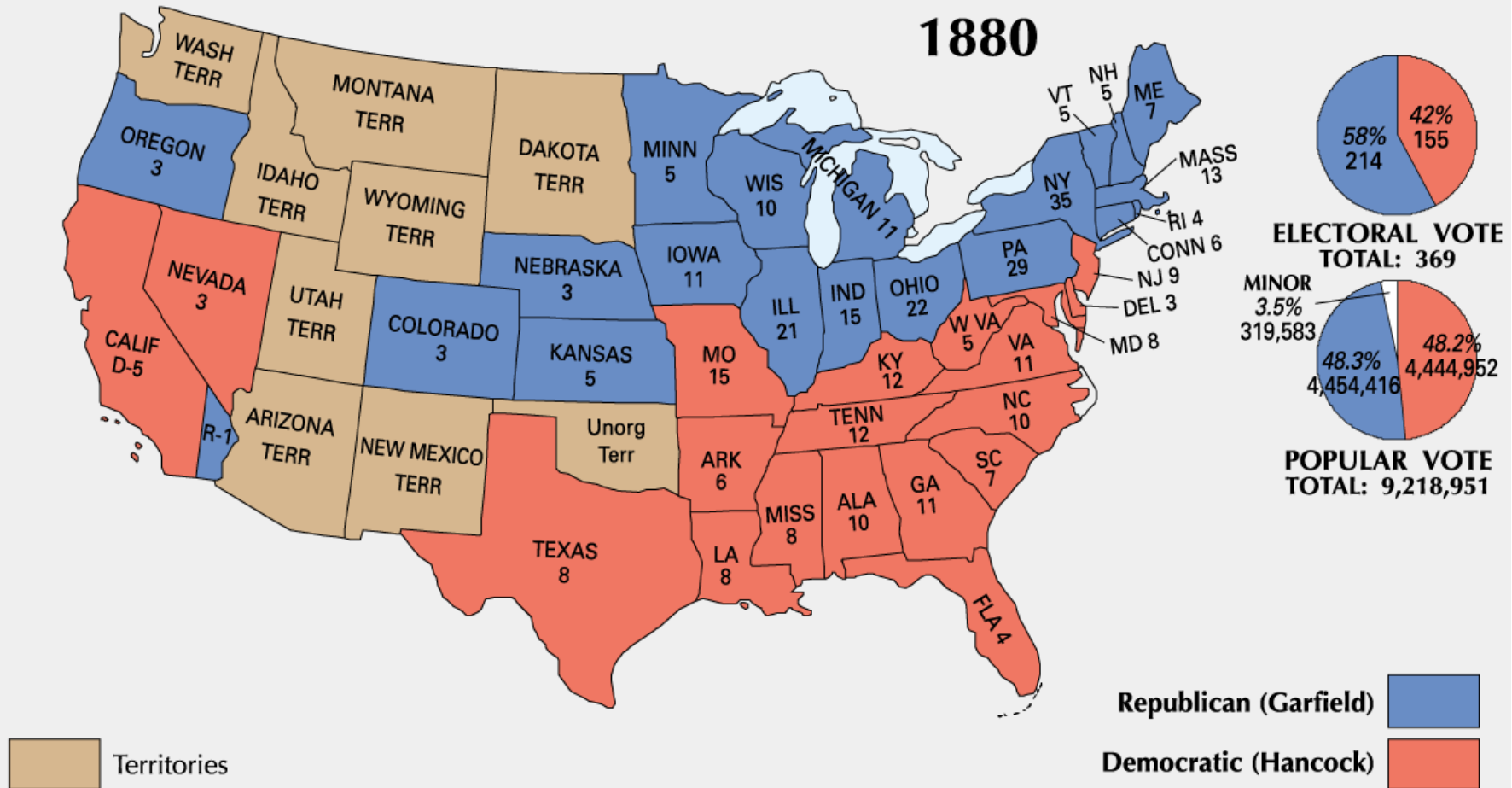


# Still waving the “Bloody Shirt”...

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# 1880







# Pendleton Civil Service Act (1881)

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passed in wake of  
Garfield's assassination

originally only about 10%  
of gov't jobs



# Chester Arthur

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Arthur not renominated because he wouldn't go by patronage



## Blaine-Cleveland Mudslingers of 1884

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James Blaine nominated for Republicans in 1884

-Mulligan letters

Reform-minded Republicans (mugwumps) supported Democrats

Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland

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# Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion

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PUCK.



BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.

# Cleveland's First Term

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Signed Interstate Commerce Act of 1887

the Dawes Act

vetoed Civil War Pension bills

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# Tariff Issue

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Cleveland tried to lower  
gov't running \$145 million surplus

major cause division between the two parties  
caused Cleveland to lose to Harrison in 1888

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# Election of 1888

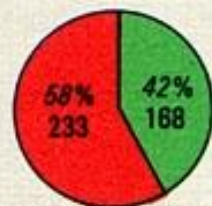
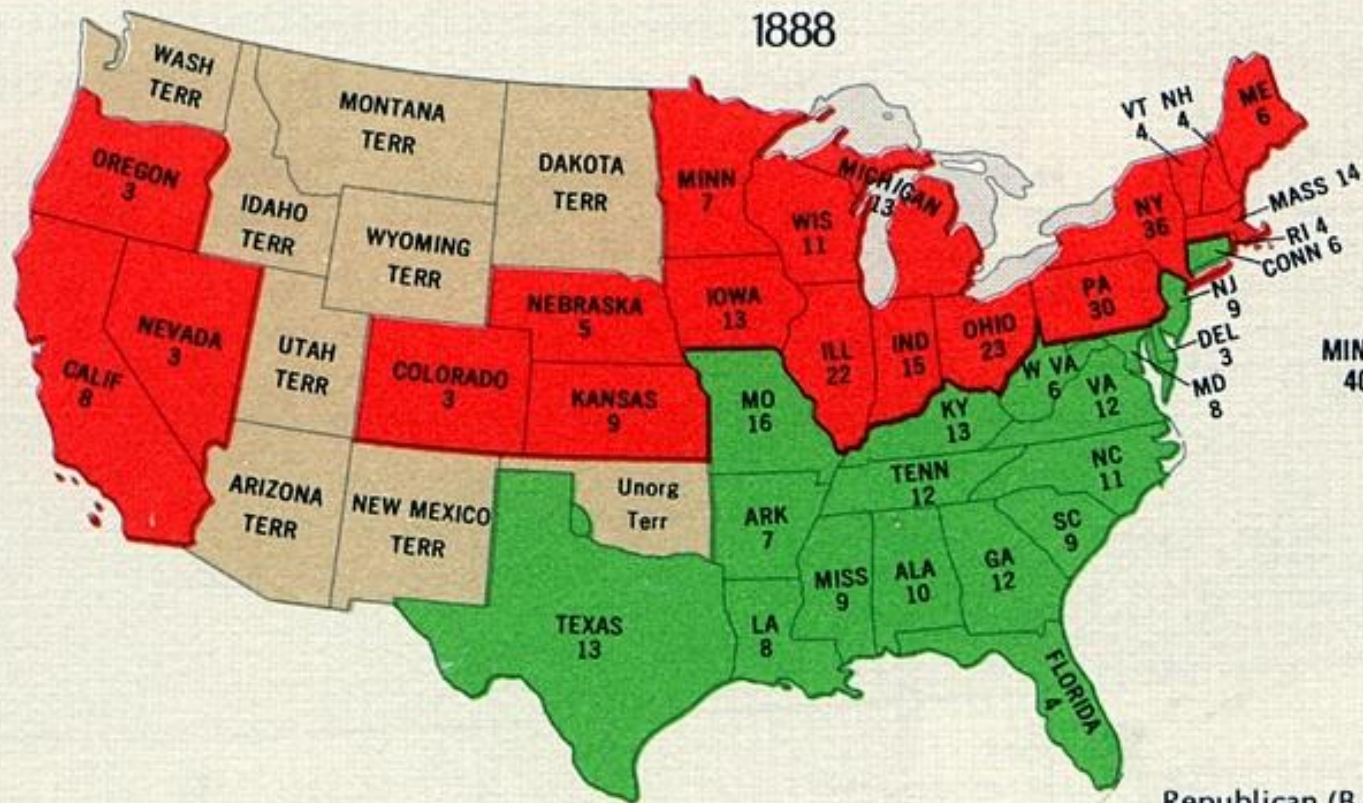
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Cleveland more popular votes, but Harrison wins

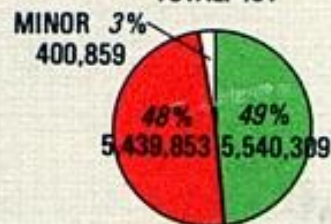




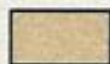
1888



ELECTORAL VOTE  
TOTAL: 401



POPULAR VOTE  
TOTAL: 11,381,021



Territories

Republican (B. Harrison)



Democratic (Cleveland)



# The Billion-Dollar Congress

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- Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 -  
Congress had to purchase \$4 million in silver every month
  - Higher tariff (McKinley Tariff)  
hurt farmers
  - Sherman Anti-Trust Act
-

## Farmers in Distress

- Farmers trapped in a vicious cycle.
  - Prices for crops falling.
  - Good farming land becoming scarce.
  - Banks foreclosing on farmers who could not make loan payments

# Farmers Push for Reforms



- 1867, Oliver Hudson Kelley started Patrons of Husbandry, or the **Grange**.
  - Intended to find social outlet and ed. Reform for farm families.
  - Later spent time and energy fighting railroads and est. farm co-ops.



## Farmers' Alliances



- Sent lecturers around to speak on low interest rates and gov' t. control of railroads.
  - Mary Elizabeth Lease
- Southern Alliance was largest.
- Colored Farmers' Alliance formed for African-American farmers.
  - About 250,000 members



# The Rise of Populism

- The movement of the people.
- Populist Party founded 1892.



# Tom Watson

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Populist from Georgia

-appealed to poor farmers  
of both races to unite  
against common  
grievances



# Tom Watson (continued)

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-became an outspoken racist  
“the Negro has no  
comprehension of virtue...The  
South has to lynch him  
occasionally...to keep him from  
blaspheming the Almighty”



# Election of 1892

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James Weaver (Iowa) - Populist

- one of few 3rd parties to win electoral votes

Benjamin Harrison - Republican

- hurt by anger over McKinley Tariff

Grover Cleveland - Democrat

- only 2x non-consecutive winner



# Populist Party Platform

- Increase in money supply
- Graduated income tax
- Federal loan program
- Election of US senators by popular vote
- Single terms for president
- Secret ballot
- 8 hour workday
- Immigration restrictions





# Panic of 1893

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- overspeculation on stocks
- railroads failed due to overbuilding
- 4 years; foreclosures; 20% unemployment



# Issues with Gold

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- investors traded silver dollars for gold dollars
  - gold reserve fell low
  - Cleveland turned to JP Morgan to borrow \$65 million to support the dollar and gold standard
  - Washington a tool of Eastern bankers?
-

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## Wilson-Gorman Tariff 1894

2% tax on incomes over \$4,000  
(constitutional?)

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# Coxey's Army

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Jacob Coxey - Populist from Ohio



led 200 protesters on march to Washington

demanding gov't spend \$500 million on public works

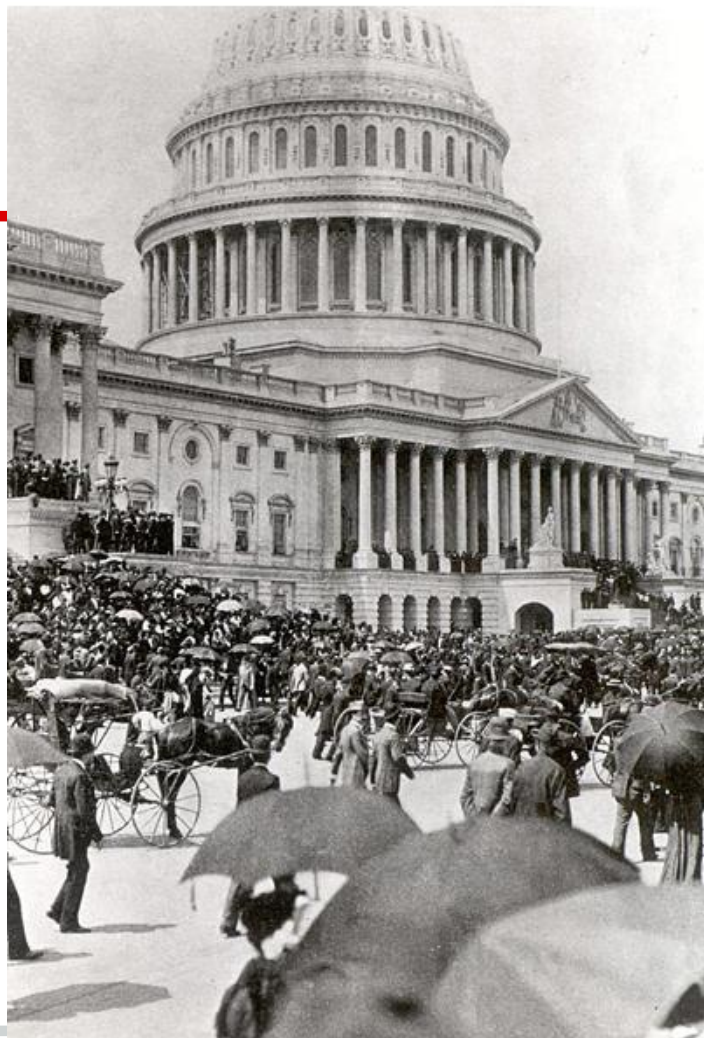
-many were terrified of a general rebellion

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THE COMMONWEAL ARMY LEAVING BRIGHTWOOD CAMP.





## Divided Politics

- Republican and Democratic Parties divided by region
- Businessmen and bankers of Northeast were Republican
- Farmers and laborers of South and West were Democrats

# Bimetallism vs. Gold Standard



- Central Issue was which metal would be the basis for the nation's money system
- Bimetallism – a monetary system in which gov' t. would give gold or silver in exchange for paper money
- Gold Standard – wanted dollars backed only with gold

## Silver vs. Gold

- Supporters of bimetallism hoped it would give life to a stale economy.
- The gold standard would provide a stable economy with less money in circulation



## Gold Bugs

- Bankers and businessmen
- Gold standard – less money out there
- Loans repaid in stable money
- Prices fall
- Value of \$ goes up
- Few people have \$
- Pres. Cleveland

## Silverites

- Farmers and laborers
- Bimetallism – more money out there
- Products sold at higher prices
- Prices rise
- Value of money decreases
- More people have money



# Election of 1896

- Republican – William McKinley
- Democrat(/Populist) – William Jennings Bryan



## Bryan's "Cross of Gold" Speech

- At 1896 Democratic Convention, Bryan delivered what became known as the "Cross of Gold" speech.
- *"You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."*

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“If protection has slain its thousands, the gold standard has slain its tens of thousands.”

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Silver Party – Bryan

“Gold Democrats” – John Palmer (79)/ Simon B  
Buckner







## An Uneven Race

- McKinley had millions of \$ backing his candidacy.
- Bryan struggled for funds.

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Defection of “Gold Bug” Democrats helped  
Republicans

Democrats called for unlimited coinage of silver  
at traditional inflationary ratio of 16 to 1

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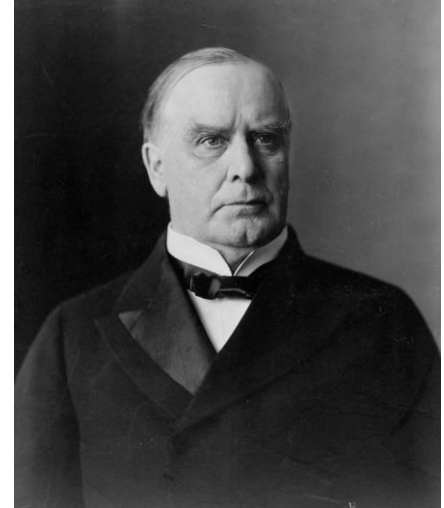
McKinley had 10x the campaign funds that Bryan did –

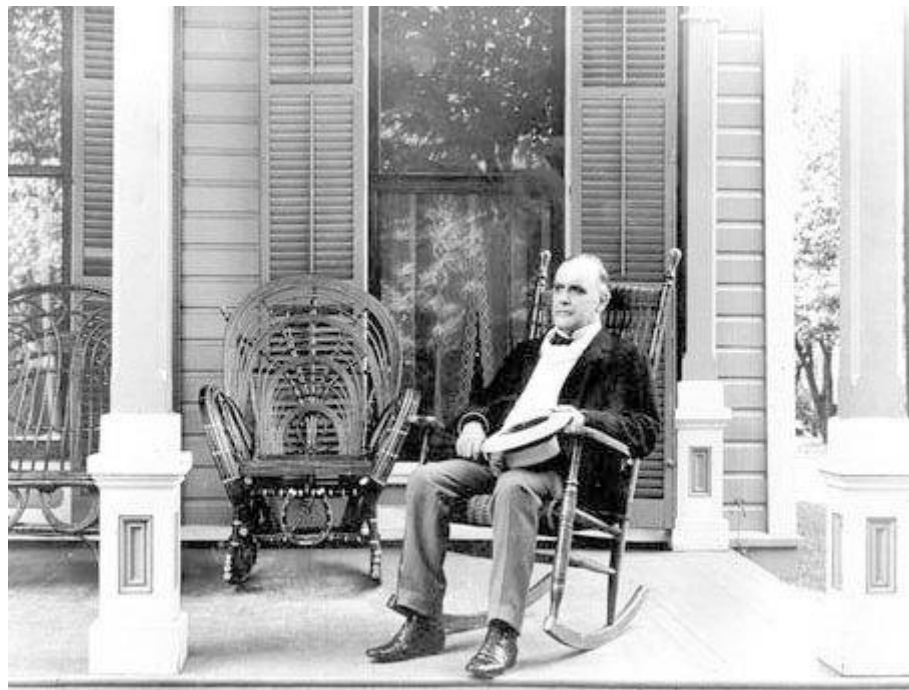
- Standard Oil gave \$250,000
  - JP Morgan gave \$250,000
  - Railroads gave \$174,000
  - NY Life Insurance Co gave \$50,000
-

# McKinley

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“front porch campaign”  
most of the work done by Mark Hanna  
(Republican Senator from Ohio)







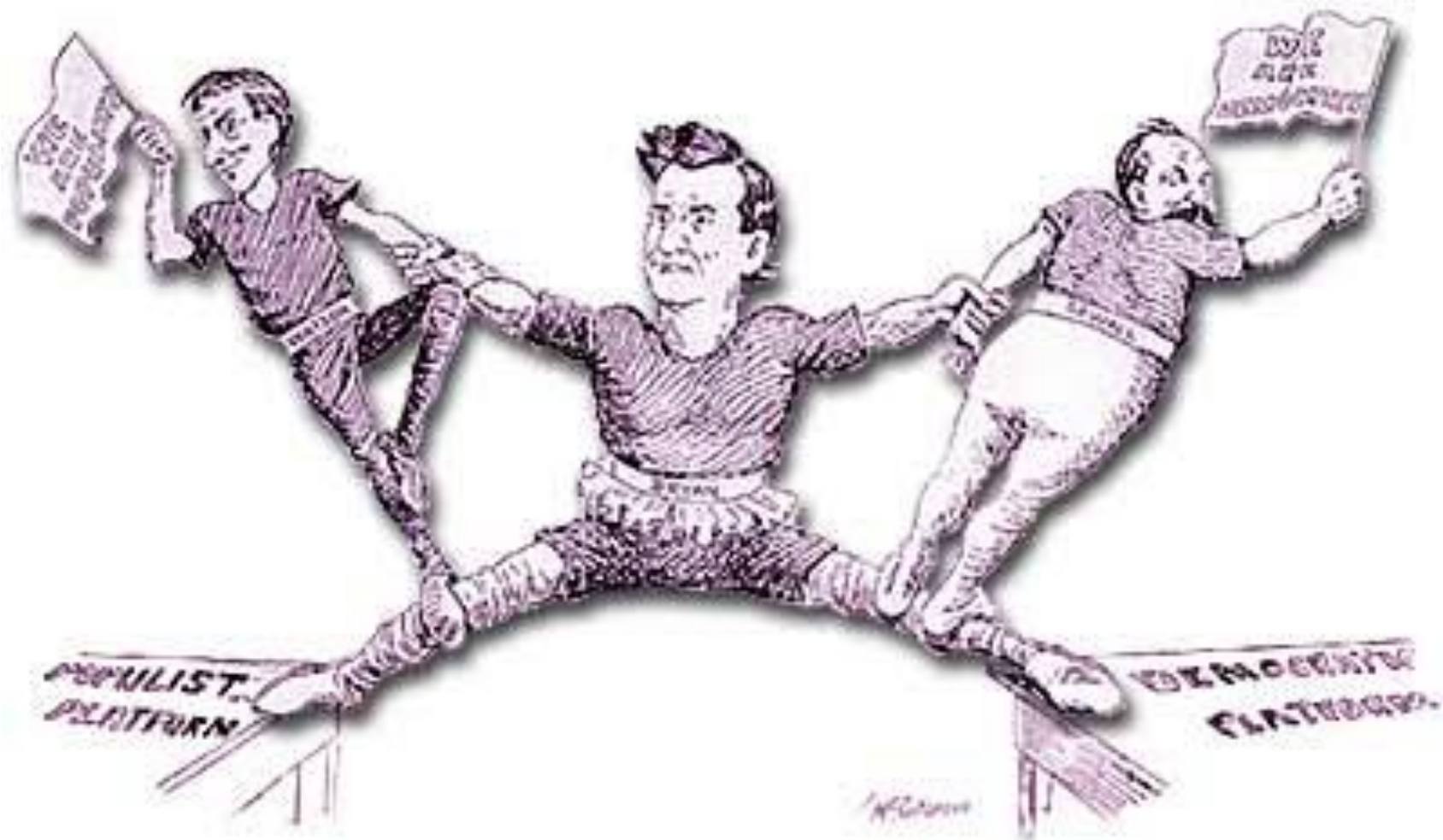
TR (head of NYC Police Commission) - talking about Altgeld and Bryan - “The one plans wholesale repudiation with a light heart and bubbling eloquence, because he lacks intelligence and is intoxicated by hope of power (Byran); the other would connive at wholesale murder, and would justify it by elaborate and cunning sophistry for reasons known only to his own tortuous soul”

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Business leaders feared “silver lunacy”

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The “twin-tailed” ticket - Bryan as Populist w/  
Tom Watson of Ga and Democrat w/ Arthur  
Sewall of Maine.

- Watson attacked Sewall.

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# W.J. Bryan

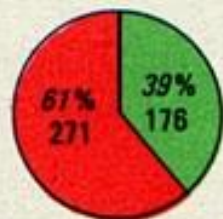
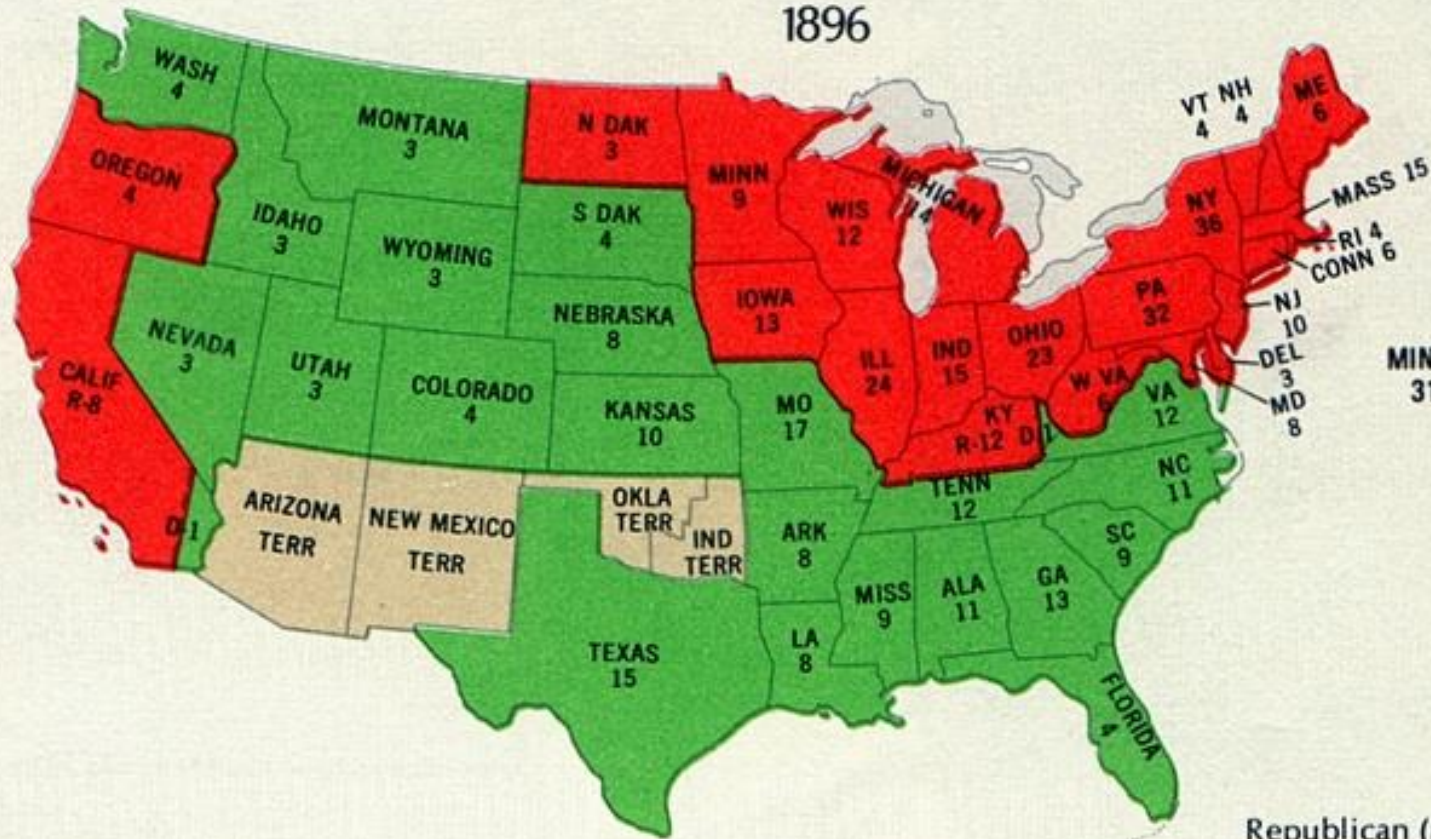
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- 36 years old
- traveled 18,000 miles by train
- gave over 600 speeches
- hurt by:
  - rise in wheat prices
  - employers threatening to shut down

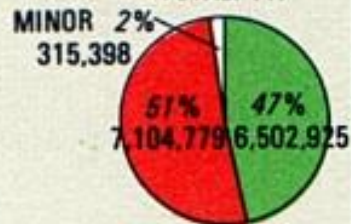




1896



ELECTORAL VOTE  
TOTAL: 447



POPULAR VOTE  
TOTAL: 13,923,102



Territories

Republican (McKinley)



Democratic (Bryan)



# R. Hofstadter - Age of Reform (1955)

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Saw good and bad in the Populists

positive - insisted on fed gov't's responsibility to promote common good and deal w/ problems of industrialization

negative - backward-looking and nostalgic ideology, hopelessly tried to restore a mythical agrarian golden age

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