

American history on populism

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American History on Populism Name: Course: Date: American History on Populism The Populist Party, commonly known as Populism in America was founded in the 19th century ahead of the civil war.

During this time, the country was experiencing a serious recession as industrialization continued to develop, which mostly affected farmers in America. The recession was brought about by price drops in the market and drought that affected wheat farmers. In the late 19th century, the growth of industrialization made United States the leader in manufacturing, but farmers experienced difficult economic times at that times. In 1870, farmers decided to organize themselves and tried to improve their condition. The Farmers' Alliance formed in 1876 in Texas.

The farmers decided to form The Farmers' Alliance in 1876 in order to improve their situation. Eric Foner says, " Through the Farmer's Alliance, the largest citizen's movement of the nineteenth century, farmers sought to remedy their condition".[1] Populism was established because banks stopped extending loans to the Alliance, a move that saw the Alliance want the government to establish warehouses for farmers and use crops as collateral to get low interest loans and make them independent. The Populist Party was formed because the farmers wanted to be independent. Given by the fact that the farmers fell into debt, the banks stopped extending loans to the Alliance, which wanted the government to establish adequate warehouses for farmers and use their crops as collateral in order to get low interest loans. It is reported " During the 1809's millions of farmers joined the populist movement in an attempt to reverse their declining economic prospects and to rescue the government from what they saw as control by <https://assignbuster.com/american-history-on-populism/>

powerful corporate interests”. [2] The Populist Party started gaining popularity among industrial workers in the West and South. “ In 1890, populists won control of the Kansas state legislature”.

[3]The farmers’ alliance merged with the Knights of Labor to form the national party, which saw the presidential candidate for the populists win more than one million votes. The populist strength was successes in those states such as Idaho, Colorado. “ It sought to speak for all ‘ producing classes’ and archived some of its greatest successes in states like Colorado and Idaho, where it won the support of miners and industrial workers”[4]. Populism experiences some failures during its time. For example, in those states where it did not exist, people did not take it seriously. There were also cases of fraud and hostility within and associated with the party, which lost them a lot of votes and popularity. There were divisions amongst the party members. There were those who supported the idea of fusion between them and the democrats so that they could gain more power to influence the people.

The “ mid-roaders” supported neither the populists nor the democrats. These two groups in the Populist Party was the cause of friction among party members’ interest. Moreover, it was unable to uphold its values of togetherness in the coalition as minimum wage earners were disregarded as important members of the party. The populist coalition was the merger of populists and republicans of all races and gender.

These people were mostly farmers and industrial workers fighting for change and a place in the political face of the country. The Populist coalition

combined different people such as blacks Republicans. White Populists won control of North Carolina and brought the “ second reconstruction”. This coalition was formed to protect the rights of the Populist Party, to gain power in other states and to replace the democrats as the second largest party in the country. African Americans were excluded from the populist coalition. The efforts by some populists to include them in the party proved futile in most states especially those in the South.

African Americans were excluded because of the problem of white supremacy in the region and consequently in the party. The leaders of the party were whites therefore making it difficult for African Americans to join the party, as they were considered inferior. “ Many white Populists were land-owning farmers while most blacks were tenants and agricultural laborers”[5]. The Populist Party tried to deal with the problem of racism within the party and in their representative states. “ In some southern states, the Populists made remarkable efforts to unite black and white small farmers on a common political and economic program”[6].

The composition of the party tried to include African Americans even amidst resistance from most of the members of the party. This composition includes the appointment of an African American man to the campaign committee of the state in 1894. The populist movement was comprised of women from farm and labor backgrounds. “ During the 1890s, referendum in Colorado and Idaho approved extending the vote to women, while in Kansas and California the proposal went down in defeat. Populists in all these states

endorsed women's suffrage"[7]. The presence of women in the party meant that the party had to fight for their rights especially the right to vote.

Women were not regarded as important members of society at that time but with their inclusion in the populist movement, their presence was felt all the states as they were able to get education, which meant that they became independent. Populism in America was popular when it was first started but it began to lose popularity and soon died. When they started losing elections to republicans, their popularity among the members of the party and their supporters started diminishing. However, some of the ideas of populism were endorsed in the Progressive Party of Theodore Roosevelt in terms of fighting for rights of farmers and the problem of equal rights in employment. President Roosevelt enacted most of the populist demands into law. As much as they did not win the elections, many of their goals and objectives were achieved like the provision of credits for farmers in rural areas.

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