

Populism

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Populism DBQ During the period of 1880-1900, farmers were facing many hardships. Financial issues were one of the main difficulties as well as long hours, droughts, insect plagues, and ranchers and cowboys. The farmers refused to back down without a fight. Farmers made valid complaints and expected something to be done about it. Their complaints weren't being listened to and they took matter into their own hands. The Farmers Alliance was formed in the 1890's to serve for needs of education, farming methods, and to organize economic and political action. A great hardship farmers faced was overproduction of crops.

Because of the over production, crop prices were lowered and farmers weren't able to make much money. In Document E, J. Laurence Laughlin, "Causes of Agriculture Unrest", it explains the enlargement of supply without the corresponding increase of demand. This being something that caused some farmers to even go into a depression. Farmers needed more land to compensate for the price. Also happening during this time was the drastic change between gold and silver currency. The change was creating chaos. When gold became scarce, government took it upon themselves to make silver the new form of currency.

In Document A, The Platform of the People's (populist) party, it states that silver being the new currency as opposed to gold made the value of property and labor go down. Thus only adding to the difficulties farmers had to paying. The rising costs greatly affected farmers in the 1800-1900's. Big companies kept their prices high making it almost impossible for small farmers to keep up. They also had to keep up with the middle man and warehouses and retailers stores that shared the profit. In Document F, James

B. Weaver “ A Call to Action: An Interpretation of Great Uprising”, it says monopolies are key to destroy competition.

That’s exactly what they were doing to small farms so they’d no longer have competition. They would decrease the prices of raw materials then they’d increase the price to the consumer. This guaranteed farmers to be in debt for years to come. Document D, The Farmer’s Voice: a Chicago Newspaper, the cartoon shows a lineup of farmer’s mortgages going into foreclosure because they just cannot afford their farms anymore. Railroads during this time had to raise their prices as well. They charged more for short hauls so they’d be able to stay in business. In Document G, Testimony of George W.

Parker, Railroads were feeling the effects of the rising costs too. To survive, the only thing they could do was to raise their prices aswell. Value of money caused great tensions for farmers. As gold became less available to get and silver became predominant, it was changed into the new currency. The silver to gold ratio was 16 ounces of silver to 1 ounce of gold. In Document B, Acceptance Speech of William McKinley, he states debasement of currency means destruction of value. Free silver didn’t change anything for farmers, they were still in debt working long hours with horrible pay.

As if the money wasn’t scarce enough, immigrats coming to the land and increasing population made circulation of the money even worse. In Document C, United States government data, you see the number in thousands of increasing population while the money in circulation takes a large dip before slowly regaining standard. Farmers faced many problems during the period of 1880-1900. The change in currency and rise of prices were main difficulties. The farmer’s complaints were justified. The hardships

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they went through were extremely tough and many made it through. The reason for some success was because they refused to back down without a fight.