

Populist party's platform

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The Populist Party commonly referred to as the people's party was a relatively short lived political party within the United States during the 19th century. It was particularly popular within western farmers since it was directly opposed to the gold standard system of international trade. However the party did not last long in United States politics.

Regardless of this fact the party's ideas or manifestos have been employed in United States politics even to date. In essence the party grew out of an agrarian uprising especially after the collapse of agricultural prices in 1873. It arose from a farmer's alliance of farmers who had an economic target of collective action against merchants, brokers and rail roads as well as an integrated nation wide policy.

Most importantly the driving force towards the creation of the party arose from the refusal of both the democrats and the republicans to accept the farmers' alliance idea of the use of silver as the national model of coinage.

Short history:

The Populist Party or the people's party was formed by the farmers' alliance in collaboration with the knights of labor. This initial formation took place between the years 1899 and 1890. The actual realization of their dreams was in 1892 when the party held its annual convention in Nebraska.

This is the time that the party actually nominated members for the first time for national elections. In 1896 the democrats incorporated ideas of the people's party 1892 platform and this negatively impacted on the party's progress. In addition the ensuing collaboration between the democrats and the Populist Party did not auger well with the already existing relation

between the populists and the republicans in the south. This marked the onset of the party's decline in United States politics.

The 1892 party platform:

The Populist Party's 1892 platform was commonly referred to as the Omaha platform since it was held in Omaha Nebraska. In this platform the Populist Party demanded the following;

Complete overhaul of all national banks. This was aimed at reducing the risk to citizens of excessive exploitation by these corporations.

Immediate Imposition of direct election of senators within the United States was demanded as well. This was directed at reducing the prevalence of corruption and bribery in the voting system. It was also aimed at increasing public participation in the electoral process, as well as to reduce instances of insider trading within the big parties.

The platform also sought immediate introduction of civil service reforms. In the preamble of the manifesto the party claimed that the time had come for the railroads to own the people or the people to own the railroads. For the later to happen there was need to introduce constitutional amendments to make sure that the government would not use the power of the employees to intimidate the people. Thus civil service reforms and regulations had to be introduced to prevent this.

The platform also demanded the introduction of a national wide graduated income tax system.

The introduction of a legal eight hours working day and the introduction of government control of all railroads. The platform also demanded the introduction of unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the existing ratio of 16 to 1.

The platform also demanded that the state introduce postal savings banks for the interest of all citizens in order to facilitate foreign exchange.

The platform also claimed that land and any other natural sources of enrichment remains the people's heritage and thus should not be monopolized or misused and further alien ownership of this should not be entertained.

Analysis:

The Omaha platform was well received throughout the United States. This was mainly due to the fact that most of the party's ideas were overly practical and implemental. In addition the party was trying to prevent a scenario of continued dominance by the democrats and republicans for what the party called political power and plunder.

The party also sought to return power to the people by reducing the vices inflicted by the capitalists on laborers by reducing the dominance of gold in trade. The Omaha platform also sought to return the powers of the government to the " plain people" from where the powers actually originated. The purposes of the platform the party claimed were to be identical to the purposes of the national constitution.

Despite its decline in popularity in United States politics, some of its ideas have come to be endorsed in mainstream governance and politics. A good example of this is the abolition of the gold standard. In this field the party's 1892 platform highly demanded the abolition of this system but it was not until the 1970s that the gold-standard was actually abolished as the common exchange system.

In earnest we can thus argue that the demands put forward by the party were not only progressive in nature but also widely visionary, since it has taken more than a generation for the other political party's to adopt/implement these policies.

In addition the party's platform could be described as having been Progressive in the sense that the introduction to the manifesto detailed splendidly the causes that made their demands justifiable. Among these issues included; the fact that the party claimed that there was widespread corruption compounded by political and moral degradation within the American public.

Conclusion:

Although the people's party 1892 manifesto contained quite progressive ideas the party was quite short-lived in American politics. By 1896 during the next national elections, the Democratic Party took most of the people's party ideas and incorporated them in their platform. In addition the party nominated a democrat (William Jennings) as their presidential candidate. After this scenario the party started to decline in popularity within national politics.

In the year 1984 plans were already underway to revive the Populist Party. These efforts did not bear fruit due to internal party conflicts. In 2002 a new group emerged " the populist party of America" emerged. It is actively opposed to the bush administration especially on the issue of the war in Iraq. It also advocates for strict adherence to the bill of rights as well as direct democracy. It has yet to field presidential candidates.

Reference:

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