

Why did the farmers  
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DBQ: Why did the farmers express discontent during the period 1870-1900 and what impact did their new attitudes and actions have on national politics?

The late 1800s were of great advancement for the government and the people. America, once free of war and foreign conflict was now facing a time of revolt, hardship and technological advancement. Through the advancements of technology and architectural advancements, farming was not the only major producing profession available for people. Once agriculture was over 50% of the population, it later decreased to 33% (Document G). Farmers were starting to find it harder and harder to thrive economically. Crops such as wheat and cotton which were the major economic leaders were now selling at very low prices because of the excess of crops. The excess crops came when advancements of transportation that were now available and the great amount that was grown was not needed thus a surplus of material which farmers dispose of and not end up making profit for anything. Even though the railroads were an advancement that helped all, farmers suffered greatly from the loss of land and most likely contamination. There was in a way an agricultural depression. The way farmers were able to overcome this atrocity by uniting and forming the Populists party. Farmers were seeing monopolization in crops and a shortage in money because of the government decisions.

Farming is the main base for a country. The crops that farmers produce are the foods that give life to those who consume it. That makes farmers a very important part of society. Farmers in that time saw the importance they had

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in society. In an important speech from William Jennings Bryan called Cross of Gold. He said " Burn down your cities and leave our farms and your cities will spring again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country." In this quote of his he says that farmers are the base of a country and how it will survive. If you attack or in one way or another affect the farmers the country will perish. People, apart from politicians, were focusing on the importance on farmers and farming. In a poster from 1875 expresses all the roles that run America (Document A). In a way it is showing off the powers and what they do for the country but they are still in a more small size. The farmer on the other hand is the larger one and the more relaxed and proud of them all.

A group that was also greatly affected was the colored farmers. Once the Civil War ended colored people had nothing to depend on because of the racism on that time. " They had to get the local merchant or someone else to supply the food they made for their family to eat while the crop was being made." This was a Quote from Booker T Washington (Document B); here he explained the tough times colored people had to obtain food for them and their families. The colored farmers and farmers in general, complained about these conditions. As partial result the farmers had more debts from the crops they could grow in the mortgage system. Because of the debt increase and seeing no type of gain from the mortgage system most of the farmers gave up.

A way the government was trying to lead America into an era of hope was by telling people to keep growing. This led to the surplus of crops and people

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also needed money. The price of all the crops collapsed completely, almost worthless. The people demanded and transportation (Document C). With bad leadership America was not progressing in any way. Another of the demands people wanted was the abolition of the national bank. People wanted to have loans directly from the government instead of the national bank.

The Interstate Commercial Commission came to a time of stop. From this pause the government could easily take advantage of it. The main interest for the government was to utilize the railroads and having problems with the Commission would have led to the use of the railroads. "The part of wisdom is not to destroy the Commission, but to utilize it" (Charles E. Perkins Document E). Taking advantage of the Commission would lead to the exporting of the goods that were being produced in the United States between themselves, by theory. Soon after came the panic of 1873, which was caused by the farmers. They were losing land for the production of railroads. To solve this solution the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 was put in place. The Supreme Court rules that individual states could not regulate interstate commerce and discriminate against out of state business. Also because of the land grabbing, President Cleveland was forced to give out land to the public.

The election of 1892 was won by Cleveland (D). He brought new ideas and was an inspiration to all including the opposite parties. He had the majority of the votes especially the votes that came from the East coast which has major plantations (Document D). People voted republican in states such as New York, Iowa, Montana, Vermont and Washington because those states did

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not compare to the crop produce as states such as Nevada, Idaho and Wyoming because they are states that produce crops. Cleveland promised big hope for people. He was said to have solid sense and able to give social stability especially by being accompanied with McKinley (Document I). In the end Cleveland just gave land to farmers because of the complaints of the railroads.

The farmers of this time had many reasons to be displeased with their situation and especially with the government. Unjust railroad decisions that prevented the growth and expansion of agriculture specifically in the west, their complaints not taken for granted most times and their pleas for aid not answered. Farmers faced their own depression because of the monopolies places by the government and merchants. Farmers ended with great debts and loss of hope on the market especially in times of droughts. Part of the resolutions for this so called depression as the immense uses of steel and the great inspiring Farmer's Alliance (Document F) that went on even in politics which ended up being called the Populists party ran by Weaver.