

### Section 3: The Populist Movement

Why are farmers important? What would happen if they lost money?

## The Farmer's Plight

- Larger cities=more people to feed
- Farmers grew more food and raised more animals than ever
- \* • So much food was grown that supply > demand; WHAT HAPPENED THEN? →
- Many farmers borrowed \$ and couldn't repay loans; lost their farms
- Many farmers were angry @ railroad prices

farmer's lost \$

## Farmer's Organize

- **National Grange:** club many farmers joined to help fix their problems
  - Many formed **cooperatives**; shared \$ and equipment; helped each other out
  - Pushed "Granger Laws" that would help lower railroad costs
  - **Interstate Commerce Act** of 1887: railroads not allowed to give secret deals to large businesses
  - pushed for **graduated income tax**
  - Rarely helped black farmers



→ tax rich  
more

## The Money Question

- Farmers wanted more **greenbacks** (Civil War \$); easier to pay bills
- **Gold standard:** turn greenbacks into gold/silver @ any time
- **PROBLEM:** not enough gold in US to increase amount of \$; farmers wanted to use silver only; **MORE SILVER IN US**
- Gov't passed laws to make silver coins; didn't help enough
- Farmers still angry



## A Decade of Populist Politics

- **Populist Party:** created by farmers
- Party wanted to help Grange movement
- Graduated income tax, gov't should buy the railroads and telegraphs, more silver
- 1892: nominated Presidential candidate that lost to Grover Cleveland but did get 10 seats in Congress
- Panic of 1893: depression that sapped silver & gold reserves; Congress ended the use of silver to help economy; made people feel better



1  
Farmers  
are P.O. ed

### The Election of 1896

- Republican William McKinley (Ohio Governor)
  - Gold standard supporter
- Democratic William Jennings Bryan (Nebraska)
  - #freesilver
  - Religious
  - Lawyer
  - Great speaker
  - Lost election to McKinley
    - Populists realized the Free Silver movement was weak; no one cared
    - Populism was dead

