

# CHAPTER NINETEEN FROM STALEMATE TO CRISIS

## Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter 19 should enable the student to understand:

1. The nature of American party politics in the last third of the nineteenth century.
2. The problems of political patronage in the administrations of Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, and Chester A. Arthur that led to the passage of the Pendleton Act.
3. The circumstances that permitted the Democrats to gain control of the presidency in the elections of 1884 and 1892.
4. The origins, purposes, and effectiveness of the Interstate Commerce Act and the Sherman Antitrust Act.
5. The positions of the two major parties on the tariff question and the actual trend of tariff legislation in the 1880s and 1890s.
6. The rise of agrarian discontent as manifested in the Granger movement, the Farmers' Alliances, and the Populist movement.
7. The rise of the silver question from the "Crime of '73" through the Gold Standard Act of 1900.
8. The significance of the presidential campaign and election of 1896.
9. The reasons for the decline of agrarian discontent after 1898.

## Main Themes

1. How evenly balanced the Democratic and Republican parties were during the late nineteenth century and how this balance flowed from differing regional and sociocultural bases.
2. The inability of the political system and a limited national government to respond effectively to the nation's rapid social and economic changes.
3. How the troubled agrarian sector mounted a powerful but unsuccessful challenge to the new directions of American industrial capitalism and how this confrontation came to a head during the crisis of the 1890s.

## Glossary

1. **dark horse:** A political candidate who is not considered a front runner and whose victory would be surprising to most observers.
2. **cooperatives:** Business enterprises owned by members of an organization and operated for members' benefit and profit. Farmers hoped to avoid reliance on businessmen by forming their own cooperatives, but most of these enterprises failed.
3. **laissez faire:** The theory that the economy functions best when it is free from governmental interference. In a strict laissez-faire system, the government neither helps nor hinders business, but many American businessmen who professed laissez-faire doctrines were happy to accept government aid in the form of protective tariffs and railroad subsidies.

## **Pertinent Questions**

### **THE POLITICS OF EQUILIBRIUM (522-527)**

1. How well balanced were the two major political parties between the Civil War and the turn of the century—especially from the mid-1870s to the early 1890s?
2. What role did politics play for the typical eligible voter of the late nineteenth century? How does that compare with the importance of politics in the life of the present-day voter?
3. What regional, religious, and ethnic factors distinguished the two major parties? Despite basic issue agreement, what culturally related issues tended to divide the parties?
4. Aside from its providing Civil War pensions and the postal service, how significant was the role of the national government in the late nineteenth century?
5. How did the patronage system lead to dominance of national politics by local and state political organizations and factions in the national parties? What was the impact on the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes?
6. In what way was President James Garfield a martyr to civil service? How did Chester A. Arthur react?
7. How did the presidential election of 1888 differ from the typical fare of that period? What was the key issue, how did it become so, and what was the result?
8. What led to passage of the Sherman Antitrust Act? Why did it have so little impact?
9. What caused the significant Republican reverses in the 1890 and 1892 elections? What was the result of Cleveland's effort to lower tariffs after his reelection?
10. How was the demise of the Granger Laws related to the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act? Why was the Interstate Commerce Commission so ineffective?

### **THE AGRARIAN REVOLT (527-533)**

11. Explain how the emphasis of the Grange gradually shifted. Why did the organization eventually fade in importance?
12. What was the vision of the Farmers' Alliance? What role did women play? What was their position on women's suffrage?
13. How did the Farmers' Alliance transform into the People's Party?
14. What kind of person was most attracted to Populism? What were the leaders like?
15. What were the basic elements of Populist ideology and how were they reflected in the party's platform? Why did the movement fail to obtain significant labor support?

### **THE CRISIS OF THE 1890S (533-537)**

16. What were the immediate and long-range causes of the Panic of 1893? How serious was the depression that followed?
17. What developments after 1873 led to the coalition of farmers and miners on behalf of silver coinage? Why did "free silver" seem to be the answer?

### **A CROSS OF GOLD (537-541)**

18. Why did the gold-standard issue divide the Democratic Party?
19. How did William Jennings Bryan win the Democratic presidential nomination in 1896 and how did his candidacy put the Populists in a dilemma?
20. Describe the passions of the 1896 campaign. Where did Bryan do well? Why did he lose?
21. How did President William McKinley handle the bimetallism question? What happened during his administration to help resolve the issue?



## **PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE: THE CHAUTAUQUAS (530-531)**

22. Why was the Chautauqua movement so popular at the turn of the century? What societal changes led to the movement's demise?

## **WHERE HISTORIANS DISAGREE: POPULISM (534-535)**

23. To what extent have historians' own views about capitalism, democracy, and popular movements shaped their views about Populism? Also, what are the most recent interpretations saying about Populism and the modern regulatory state?

## **Identification**

Identify each of the following and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. Civil War pensions
2. James G. Blaine
3. Pendleton Act
4. Benjamin Harrison
5. McKinley Tariff
6. Montgomery Ward & Co.
7. Mary Lease
8. Tom Watson
9. James B. Weaver
10. "Colored Alliances"
11. "Bourbons"
12. Coxey's Army
13. specie
14. "Crime of 1873"
15. Currency/Gold Standard Act of 1900

## **Document 1**

The tariff issue came to the forefront in the election of 1888, with Grover Cleveland favoring lower rates. Read the following excerpt from President Cleveland's State of the Union message in December 1887. Also read the short excerpt from the Minority Report of the House Ways and Means Committee in which the Republicans expressed their opposition to the Mills bills, which embodied many of Cleveland's tariff revision suggestions. Consider the following questions: How does the first part of the address reveal Cleveland's political philosophy? Is Cleveland's characterization of the protective tariff as a tax on consumers an accurate one? Although in another part of the speech Cleveland disclaims any support for completely "free trade," would that be the logical culmination of his ideas? The Republican Minority Report implies that American prosperity flowed from the protective tariff. Was this a valid claim?

You are confronted at the threshold of your legislative duties with a condition of the national financial affairs which imperatively demand immediate careful consideration.

the majority party in the United States. Agrarian and mining interests were unable to convince voters that currency inflation through the free coinage of silver would lead the nation out of the depression of the 1890s. By fusing with the Democrats, the Populists ended any chance they might have had to become a major force in American politics. By the end of the nineteenth century, business forces had triumphed. They had secured a gold-based currency and a rigorously protective tariff. Efforts to regulate railroads and trusts were half-hearted to begin with and were weakened even further by court decisions.

## **Review Questions**

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. What were the differences between the Republicans and the Democrats? To what extent did regional and ethnic differences translate into serious differences on the issues?
2. Compare and contrast the three major farm groups: the Grange, the Farmers' Alliances, and the Populists. Do you agree with the recent historians who believe that Populism was a reasonable and realistic response to agrarian grievances?
3. In a series of cases, including the *Wabash* case and *United States v. E. C. Knight Co.*, the United States Supreme Court severely restricted efforts to regulate business. What logic did the Court use in these and similar cases and what effect did the decisions have on business?

## **Chapter Self Test**

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

## **MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS**

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. A significant characteristic of American politics at the national level during the late nineteenth century was the:
  - a. development of a true multiparty system.
  - b. dominance of the Republican Party in popular support.
  - c. dominance of the Democratic Party in popular support.
  - d. nearly equal division of popular support for the Democratic and Republican parties.
2. In the late nineteenth century, which of the following groups would *least likely* vote Democratic?
  - a. Roman Catholics of immigrant origin
  - b. Protestant farmers of the South
  - c. unskilled wage earners
  - d. northern blacks



3. Before the passage of civil service-reform legislation, there were about 100,000 civilian federal government jobs to be filled by presidential appointment. Of these, the greatest percentage were in the:
  - a. post office.
  - b. Department of the Army.
  - c. attorney general's office.
  - d. Department of the Treasury.
4. Which of the following acts was passed to a considerable extent as a result of the assassination of Garfield?
  - a. the Mills Tariff Act
  - b. the Pendleton Civil Service Act
  - c. the Sherman Antitrust Act
  - d. the Dependent Pension Act
5. Which president served two nonconsecutive terms in office?
  - a. Rutherford B. Hayes
  - b. Benjamin Harrison
  - c. Grover Cleveland
  - d. William McKinley
6. The most significant issue in the presidential election of 1888 was:
  - a. civil service reform.
  - b. the Mulligan letters.
  - c. free silver.
  - d. the tariff.
7. Congress justified its passage of the Sherman Antitrust Act on the basis of its constitutional power to:
  - a. levy taxes.
  - b. promote the general welfare.
  - c. regulate interstate commerce.
  - d. forbid any business practice that impaired free competition or threatened the capitalist system.
8. What was the result of the 1892 national elections?
  - a. the House and Senate were controlled by different parties for the first time since the Civil War.
  - b. for the first time since the end of 1878 the Democratic Party controlled both houses of Congress and the presidency.
  - c. the Populists carried enough Congressional seats to prevent either party from having a majority.
  - d. the Supreme Court intervened to resolve an electoral vote dispute and awarded the presidency to Grover Cleveland.



9. The so-called Granger Laws were designed to regulate:
- child labor.
  - the export of farm crops.
  - railroad and warehouse rates.
  - minimum wages and maximum hours.
10. The Chautauqua movement represented the:
- aspirations of the urban poor to seek better environment.
  - thirst of many Americans for entertainment, education, and enlightenment.
  - coalition of bankers and industrial leaders to resist populist reforms.
  - emerging interest in using governmental action to end racial discrimination.
11. The company that emerged in the 1870s to provide goods to farmers via mail order was:
- R. H. Macy Company.
  - Bloomingdales, Inc.
  - F. W. Woolworth Ltd.
  - Montgomery Ward and Company.
12. During the 1860s and 1870s, the Grangers carried out three of the following activities. Which is the *exception*?
- They established cooperatives.
  - They forged a political coalition with organized labor.
  - They supported political candidates sympathetic to the farmers' needs.
  - They disseminated information about new scientific agricultural techniques.
13. One of the most important leaders of the Southern Farmers Alliance and People's Party was:
- Roscoe Conkling.
  - Marcus Hanna.
  - Tom Watson.
  - James G. Blaine.
14. The Populists in 1892 favored three of the following. Which is the *exception*?
- The direct election of senators.
  - The abolition of the graduated income tax.
  - Government ownership of railroads, telephones, and telegraphs.
  - The establishment of "subtreasuries" that would advance loans against stored crops.
15. Three of the following were contributory causes of the Panic of 1893. Which is the *exception*?
- The tax policies of the federal government on big business.
  - Excessive capital investments, especially by railroads.
  - The loss of American markets abroad due to depressed conditions in Europe.
  - Weakened purchasing power of farmers due to depressed prices in agriculture.



16. In order to alleviate unemployment produced by the Panic of 1893, Jacob S. Coxey proposed:
- a new dependent pensions bill.
  - drafting the unemployed into the Army.
  - creating jobs by means of government public works programs.
  - a welfare program of unemployment compensation.
17. The expression "Crime of '73" refers to the:
- discontinuance of silver coinage.
  - adoption of a bimetallic standard.
  - inflation produced by the unlimited coinage of silver.
  - fixing of the ratio between silver and gold at 16 to 1.
18. The most important issue in the 1896 presidential campaign was:
- the tariff.
  - foreign policy.
  - the civil service.
  - the money question.
19. The significance of the "cross of gold" speech was that:
- it ended the "battle of the standards."
  - it inspired the Populists to oppose free silver.
  - it led to William Jennings Bryan's Democratic presidential nomination.
  - it helped persuade Congress to adopt the Gold Standard Act of 1900.
20. The issue of free coinage of silver rapidly declined in importance among farmers after 1896 partly because:
- farm prices began to rise.
  - farmers lost interest in politics.
  - tariff rates declined and imports increased.
  - voters became more knowledgeable about economic issues.

### TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

- Compared to today, a much higher percentage of eligible voters went to the polls in the late nineteenth century.
- In the late nineteenth century, the Republican Party was more likely than the Democratic to favor the restriction of immigration.
- Although most congressmen apparently expected the Sherman Antitrust Act to be mainly symbolic, the Supreme Court interpreted it very strictly and the Justice Department used it vigorously to prosecute monopolies.
- The Republican-sponsored high protective tariff of 1890 was popular with the voters and led to Republican control of both houses of Congress for the first time since the Civil War.
- The Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 was haphazardly enforced and narrowly interpreted by the courts so that it had little or no practical effect.
- The Grange was strongest in the Midwestern states.



7. The assassination of William McKinley by an office seeker provided impetus to the passage of the Pendleton Civil Service Act.
8. The Sherman Antitrust Act applied initially only to railroads.
9. The Farmers' Alliance organizations provided the foundation from which the Populist Party emerged.
10. Reflecting conservative rural values, the Farmers Alliance movement allowed no role for women and African Americans.
11. Many aged Civil War veterans of the Union army lived in severe poverty because of the lack of a widespread pension program.
12. Some southern white Populists sought to build political connections with black farmers, but the efforts did not prove lasting.
13. The Populists tried to build political connections with industrial workers but were generally unsuccessful in doing so.
14. Most industrialized nations of the world recognized *both* gold and silver as backing for their monetary systems.
15. In the 1896 election, William Jennings Bryan carried most of his votes from the farming areas of the Midwest and mid-Atlantic states.
16. The Chautauqua movement provided many reformers with a platform to spread their ideas to a wide audience.
17. James B. Weaver was the leader of the Stalwart faction of the Republican party.
18. Several influential Populist orators were women.
19. Increased gold production from new discoveries and improved techniques helped improve the U.S. economy around the turn of the century.
20. The Farmers' Alliance promoted the idea of having farmers form marketing cooperatives to eliminate the middleman.



## Chapter Nineteen

### MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. d
2. d
3. a
4. b
5. c
6. d
7. c
8. b
9. c
10. b
11. d
12. b
13. c
14. b
15. a
16. c
17. a
18. d
19. c
20. a

### TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. F
5. T
6. T
7. F
8. F
9. T
10. F
11. F
12. T

- 13. T
- 14. F
- 15. F
- 16. T
- 17. F
- 18. T
- 19. T
- 20. T

## **Chapter Twenty**

### **MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- 1. d
- 2. c
- 3. a
- 4. b
- 5. c