

# CHAPTER 19

## FROM STALEMATE TO CRISIS

### Chapter Summary

Close elections and shifting control of the White House and Congress characterized the politics of the period from 1876 to 1900. Regional, ethno-cultural, and economic factors helped determine party affiliation and elections often turned on consideration of personality. But there were real issues too. Tariff, currency, and civil-service questions arose in almost every election. Discontented farmers in the People's party briefly challenged the Republicans and Democrats, but the two-party system remained intact. The election of 1896, the great battle between the gold standard and the silver standard, firmly established the Republican party as 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.

### 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 position 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 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 regions and socioeconomic bases.
2. The inability of the political system 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.

**AP US History**  
**Chapter 19 Questions**  
**Assignment 1**

**Sources:**

**Textbook: pg. 521 to top of pg. 531.**

**Questions:**

1. Why was the period of the late 1870s to the early 20c called the "Gilded Age?"
2. How were the views of Democrats and Republicans about the role of government different at this time? [Identify these views about both the federal, and state and local governments.]
3. Identify the major political factions within the Republican Party at the end of the 19c.
4. List the significant political and economic issues of the Gilded Age.
5. What were the provisions of the Pendleton Act of 1883? What were the positive and negative effects of this law on the quality of government employees hired at the turn of the last century?
6. How did state legislatures attempt to regulate the railroads? What was the response to these regulations of the Supreme Court in these rulings?: Munn v Illinois; Wabash, St. Louis, and Pacific Railway Co. v Illinois.
7. How was the protective tariff as an issue reflective of regional as well as agrarian-industrial divisions at the end of the 19c?
8. Why did tariff reform fail in the 1890s?
9. Distinguish between the sound [hard] money policy [gold] and the inflationary [soft] money policy [silver/greenbacks] being debated at the end of the 19c.
10. Where did the major political parties stand on the monetary issue? How were the Bland-Allison Act of 1878 and the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 attempts on the part of the Democrats and Republicans to find a compromise on this issue?
11. Why did Republicans include Chester A. Arthur as their Vice Presidential candidate in the 1880 election?
12. What personal scandal plagued Grover Cleveland's campaign in 1884? Why did he win the presidency in spite of it?
13. What progress was made in the women's suffrage movement during the Gilded Age? Why was there a split in the movement?
14. Why was the position of the presidency relatively ineffective at the end of the 19c?

**AP US History**  
**Chapter 19 Questions**  
**Assignment 2**

**Sources:**

**Textbook: top of pg. 531 to pg. 540.**

**Questions:**

1. Why did Southern agriculture, unlike that of the Midwest, not benefit much from mechanization?
2. How did the crop-lien system work? Why did it cause such economic hardships for the tenant farmers stuck in that system?
3. What were the major farmer organizations that emerged in the U. S. during the late 19c? Identify the major contributions that each of them made to agricultural reform.
4. How was the demise of the Granger Laws related to the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act? Why was the ICC so ineffective?
5. How was the National Alliance movement and evangelical Protestantism connected? What was the impact of this movement on race issues in the South?
6. What is populism? Who were its early spokespersons?
7. What were the major causes of the Panic of 1893? How did President Cleveland respond to this depression?
8. What was Coxe's Army? How was this "movement" different from socialism?
9. What were the issues in the Populist Party Platform [Omaha] of 1892?
10. What is the main role played by third parties in the American political process to date?
11. Why did William McKinley win the 1896 presidential election? How did he make good on his campaign promises?