

Comparison of Governmental Actions from 1883 through the 1890s

If you see a * in the Public Issue column, it indicates this was an issue since the time of the Liberal Republicans.
 For background on the commission form of government and on getting crops to market, see the 2nd page.

Date	President	Election Issue	Public Issue	Resolution—and Ripples
1883	Arthur	Assassination of Garfield + 1882 Democratic victories	* Civil service	Pendleton Act – Provides competitive exams, no forced political contributions Had been supported by the Civil Service Reform Association, one of the many voluntary associations popping up at this time.
1887	Cleveland	Grangers + court cases	Railroad practices	Interstate Commerce Commission – Ended rebates, pooling Uses the commission form, a method that will spread rapidly.
1887	“		Western expansion, Indians	Dawes Severalty Act – Forces the Indians to own land individually with the theory among reformers that this will make the Indians act white. Result: loss of 62% of Indians’ land to the whites
1890	Harrison	Pre-election year	* Gold/silver	Sherman Silver Purchase Act – Required purchase 4.5M oz. of gold/month and issuing of paper money Objective: Forced inflation, desired by western miners and by farmers
1890	“	“	* Protective tariff	McKinley Tariff – raised tariff level to 49.5% Objective: Desired by manufacturing interests
1890	“	“	Trusts	Sherman Anti-Trust Act – Trial in federal circuit courts, but see 1895 Objective: Desired by West and South
1893-11	Cleveland	Disastrous economy, Panic of 1893	* Gold/silver	Sherman Silver Purchase Act – REPEAL in special session. Objective: Cleveland accepted the faith that the gold standard people held. He was wrong: it did not solve the problem.
1894		Pre-election year	* Protective tariff	Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act – Democratic promise to lower tariff. Was signed over Cleveland’s veto. Personal income tax – Used to compensate for lost tariff funds; later declared unconstitutional.
1895		Continued economic problems		US Bond sale – handled by J.P. Morgan Clarification: A private banker had to be brought in to reassure the public about US solvency – And he made money of course. Knight case – Sherman Anti-Trust can’t apply to manufacturing, a severe blow.

What Is a Commission?

These traits may help you understand the commission form of government:

- Begins at the state level with the attempt to stop the power of the railroads through the Granger laws (See your textbook on those.) For example, the railroads were monopolies in the western regions and treated farmers accordingly. (See your textbook on this.)
- Is a response to the complexity of the new industrial institutions and monopolies of the Gilded Age and those monopolies' use of experts and therefore the commissions also rely on having their own experts and scientists. (Watch for this in the post 1901 era, particularly with the scientists in the Department of Agriculture)
- Is a response to such business practices as rebates and pooling.
Caution: the word *rebate* did **not** mean what it does today. The closest meaning is kickback—a large corporation paid the official rate for railroad shipping but received part of that back.
- Is a creator of regulations (something thought of traditionally as a legislative function) but it is under the executive branch.
- Starts with the Interstate Commerce Commission but takes off in the Progressive Era (post 1901) with multiple organizations created to regulate big business, including the FDA and the power of the Department of Agriculture to regulate meat packing.

Background on Getting Crops to Market

Ask yourself how do farmers get heavy crops to market at a price where they can make a profit:

- How did farmers get their crops to market in the colonial era? The rivers to the sea. What did farmers deeper inland do? They distilled grain into whiskey so they could ship it overland. Roads, even the later development of turnpikes, could not carry these crops.
- How did they get crops to market in the 1820s to 1860? In the Northwest and Northeast, canals. In the Southwest and Southeast, primarily rivers to the sea. With all regions, bit by bit with railroads.
- Envision the Great Plains. Do you see any rivers to the sea or canals there? A crop you can't get to market is just something that will rot.

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