

Comparison of Farmer Events from 1869 through 1893 – and to the End of the 1890s

Date	Situation	Farmer Events
1867-12	Farming requires equipment, more land than the Homestead Act Problem: 25% interest charged in Mid-West	Grangers or Patrons of Husbandry - Begins as non-partisan. Reality issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Railroad rates that higher for farmer (short haul/long haul) than for industry - Middlemen (where do you put your grain while you are waiting for the train) - Protective tariffs on imported products to keep them out, but the farmers sell in a free market world.
1874	Continuing problems	States - 11 farmer parties, called the Farmers' Alliance – Becomes political.
1877	South out of Reconstruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crop-lien system ▪ Cotton up in quantity, down in price ▪ Cash poor; trend is to sharecropping and tenant farming ▪ 50% interest in South Tip: See above the lower interest rate in the Mid-West. Why that difference? Ask if you don't know. Compare that interest rate for loans (or a credit card) today. What does that tell you? 	-
1886	Southern situation harder for blacks	Colored Farmers National Alliance
1887	West blizzard	-
1890-11	Republican losses; Farmers' Alliance victories – National move looks promising.	-
1890-12	-	Ocala, Fla. meeting = labor + Southern Alliance + Colored Farmers' Alliance, Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association Advocate economic changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish subtreasury plan – Is an element in the New Deal. ▪ End private banks ▪ Regulate transportation ▪ Unlimited/free coinage of silver Advocate governmental changes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Income tax ▪ Direct election of Senators (Tip: Check the Constitution for on this eventual amendment to the Constitution.)
		1891 – strike – Colored Alliance – 15 lynched

Date	Situation	Farmer Events
1892-11	Approach through the state legislatures is insufficient – turn to national politics as a 3 rd party	James B. Weaver v. Harrison v. Cleveland 1,027,329 5,190,802 5,554,414 <popular vote 22 145 277 <electoral vote Populist v. Republican v. Democrats - Amazing climb for a 3rd party.
le1896-11	Bryan’s “Cross of Gold” speech at Democratic Convention corners Populists into having to back the Democrat Republicans – Mark Hanna - Funding of \$3.5-\$4M by corporations to win this election.	William McKinley vs. William Jennings Bryan 7,035,638 6,467,946 <popular vote 271 176 <electoral vote Republican v. Democrat/Populist – <i>And amazingly quick decline</i>

Comment on the farmers:

The farmers had been the heroes of America since its founding. The idea from Jefferson’s time was that a free farmer could say no to power because they were able to support themselves. For the republic to exist, they had to have voters who were not dependent on the rich and therefore could vote their conscience and not what they were ordered to do. Think about that a bit.

In this window of time, they are trying to save America, not just themselves. They are trying to stop monopoly and the use of legal power to do things many of us would call a corrupt use of power. They are even calling for amendments to the Constitution

- Look at the reasons for the income tax. **At this time, what was our chief source of national income and who paid it?** Who would pay the income tax they planned (not what happened later) and that did happen INITIALLY? If you don’t know, ask.
- Look at the reasons for direct elections of senators instead of having the state legislatures choose them. If you don’t know, ask.

The Populists and the farmers were ridiculed. By the 1920s, farmers are poorer and less well educated than the rest of the population and they were discredited. The reality is that many of the things they advocated happened and they made a difference at that time—including those 2 amendments.

Copyright C. J. Bibus, Ed.D. 2003-2017

WCJC Department: History – Dr. Bibus
Contact Information: 281.239.1577 or bibusc@wcjc.edu
Last Updated: 2017
WCJC Home: <http://www.wcjc.edu/>