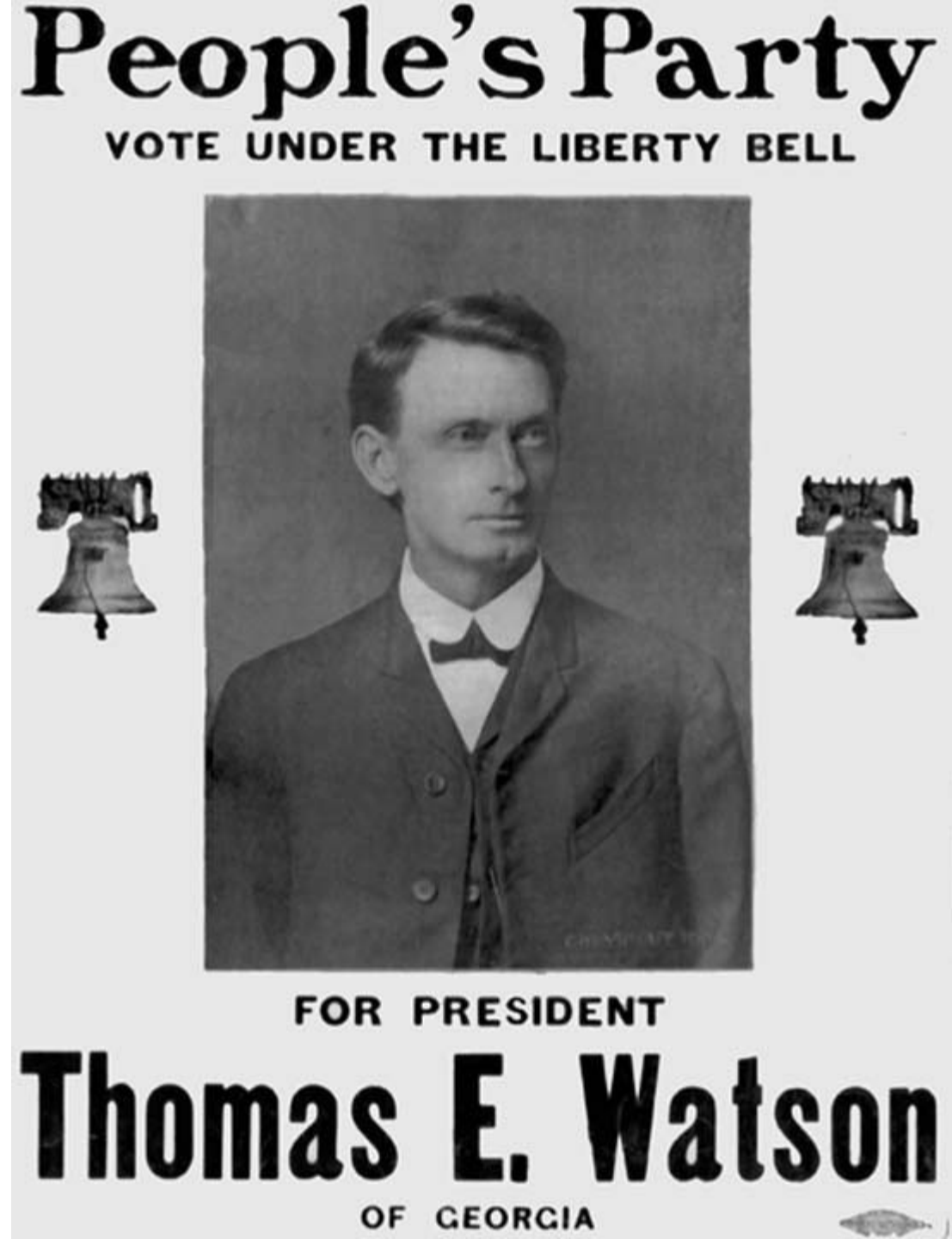


The People`s Party in the USA

Historical Roots of Populism

Outline

1. The history
2. The ideology
3. The impact



History of PP – socio-economical context

The context:

- Immigration to America and expansion to the West (1862 – Homestead Act)
- the Civil War (1861-1865)
- Result:
- Division of the country
 - The urban North and the rural South
 - Financial centre vs agrarian periphery
- Economic (monetary) policies (in details later)
- The end of slavery – increasing number of small farmers

History of PP – socio-economical context

- Rooted in regionally based agrarian radicalism X financial centre of the North
- Two key issues:
 - Monetary policy
 - Crop lien system

Monetary policy

- Need for money during the Civil War – leaving the Gold standard
- Congress agreed the issue of Greenbacks (unbacked paper money) to cover war expenses
- Cheap money as the result (deflation)



Crop lien system

- A credit system used in the South (X North, West – banks, land as collateral)
- Farmers with no cash but in need of equipment and food
- Supply and food on credit from „furnishing merchants“ with money from the North (high interest rates, double prices)
- Credit based on expected crop production (collateral) – pushing into growing cotton – overproduction
- Farmers dependent on the level of production (seasonal influences) in combination with the price of products + other expenses (transport)
- Price influenced by production (higher effectivity + one sided production) + changes in monetary policy = „debt slavery“

Impact of monetary policy

- Conflict between „Greenbackers“ and „Goldbugs“
- Gradual return to the Gold Standard
- Loans taken at times of cheap money (and high prices of crop) but needed to be paid back during the decline of prices caused both by production increase and monetary policy in the context of population growth - deflation
- Worsening of economic situation of farmers - growing numbers of landless tenants in debts

From economic to political solution

- self-reliance of farmers as the chief recipe
- Farmers` Alliance (1877 – Texas Alliance) – a cooperative movement with political aspiration
- Spreading in the South
- Collaboration with labour movement (Knights of Labor – conflict between Dunlap and Lamb)
- Establishment of their own (then unsuccessful) exchange system
- 1892 – the People`s Party established, the Omaha Platform

Omaha platform

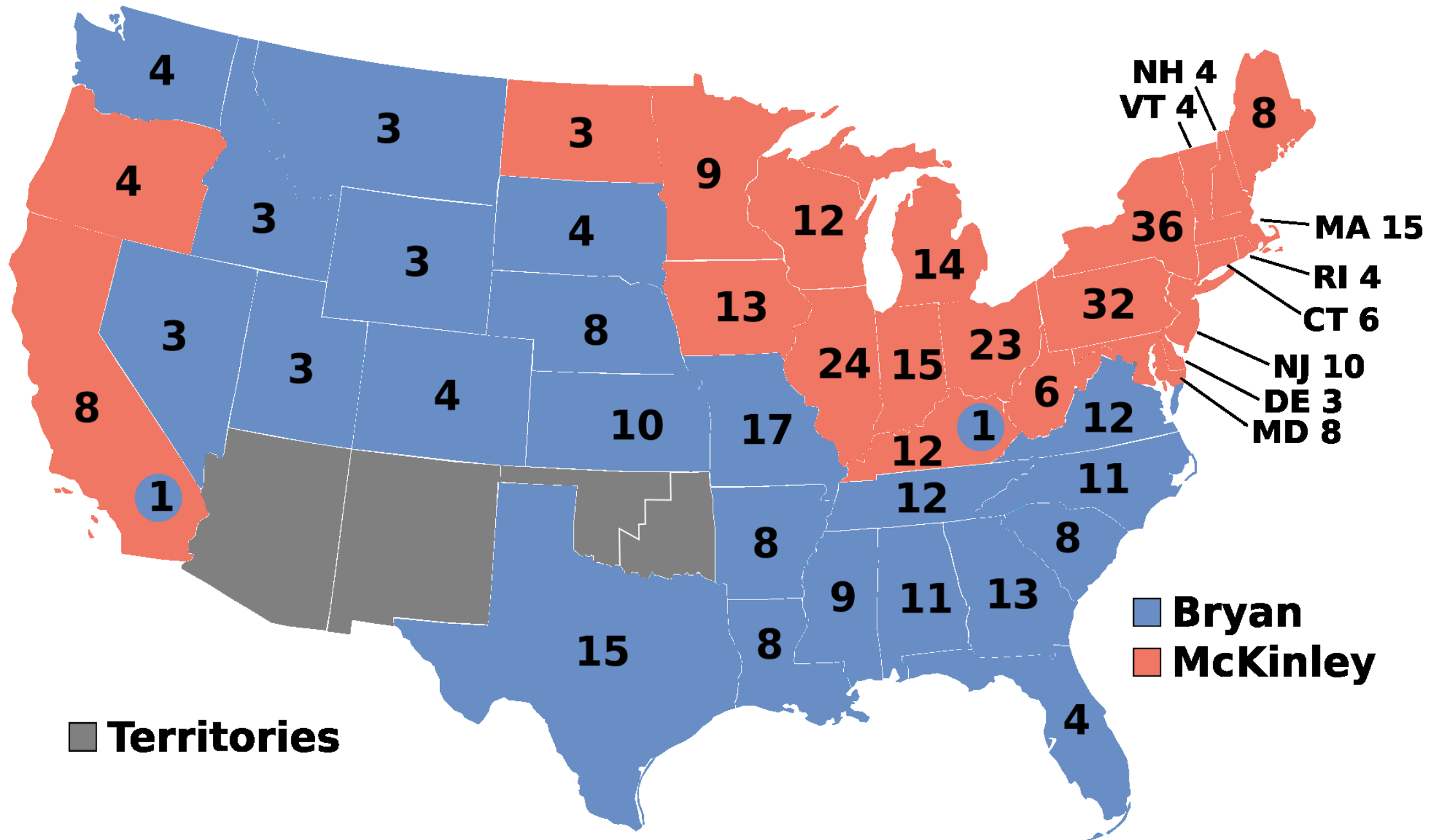
- A complex programme of economical and societal changes
- Based on combination of farmers` priorities (self-reliance, acknowledgement of cooperative movement), greenbackism and labour movement
- Social reforms (e.g. shortening of working days)
- Nationalization of railways, telegraphs and telephones
- More flexible currency (silver)
- Graduated income tax
- Direct elections to the Senate, a reform of the electoral system

Spotting populism

- The People`s Party as expression of political discontent and economic deprivation of small farmers
- the People – farmers (in the south), workers (secondary)
- the Elites – politicians, bankers, „capitalists“, landowners, merchants exploiting the People
- Restoration of the sovereignty of the people – empowerment of farmers (and workers), cooperative movement as a way to self-reliance, macroeconomical changes and reform of the political system

Electoral performance

- 1892 – James Weaver as the presidential candidate of the People's Party (8.5% of votes)
- Minor successes in Congress elections
- 1896 – support of the Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan (vice-president candidate Thomas E. Watson)
- Loss to William McKinley
- Gradual fusion with the Democratic Party – the end of the Populist Party (1900 – partly supporting Bryan but separate candidate Wharton Barker)



Conclusion

- The People`s Party`s rise as an expression of political deprivation strongly rooted in economic conditions
- An example of populist mobilization from the bottom
- An alliance of farmers and workers – left-wing populism?
- Long-term political alignments and institutional constraints as the main reason of the flash performance of the People`s party

...and now for something completely different (Vol. 1)

- **Rhinoceros Party**
- Established 1963

- Inspiration in Brazilian rhino Cacareco



who gained the biggest share of votes in Sao Paulo local election in 1959 („Better to elect a rhino than an ass“)

- „Voto Cacareco“ as an expression of protest voting

...and now for something completely different (Vol. 1)

- Leader of the party Cornelius I
- Primal promise – „promise to keep none of our promises“
- Jacques Ferron – „Éminence de la Grande Corne du parti Rhinocéros“
- A rhino as a perfect symbol of politicians as they are „thick-skinned, slow-moving, dim-witted, can move fast as hell when in danger, and have large, hairy horns growing out of the middle of their faces.“
- Joined by some maverick artists/politicians:
- Ted „not too“ Sharp: “Once we have Antarctica, we'll control all of the world's cold. If another Cold War starts, we'll be unbeatable.”
- Penny Hoar: „Politicians screw you — protect yourself.“

...and now for something completely different (Vol. 1)

- Other party promises:
- To repeal the law of gravity
- Providing higher education by building taller schools
- Instituting English, French and *illiteracy* as Canada's three official languages
- Adopting the British system of driving on the left; gradually phased in over five years with large trucks and tractors first, then buses, eventually including small cars, and bicycles and wheelchairs last
- 1984 – the fourth biggest political party (!)
- Abstained in 1993 election and subsequently dissolved

...and now for something completely different (Vol. 2)

- **Lemon Party**
- Established in 1987
- „For a Bitter Canada“
- To centralize the Canadian economy around lemons
- Support global warming to promote lemon growth in Canada
- Abolish Toronto
- Repeal the law of gravity