

AQA Specification 1K; The making of a Superpower: USA, 1865–1920

Revision Guide 1; POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS I

This option allows students to study in breadth issues of change, continuity, cause and consequence in this period through the following key questions:

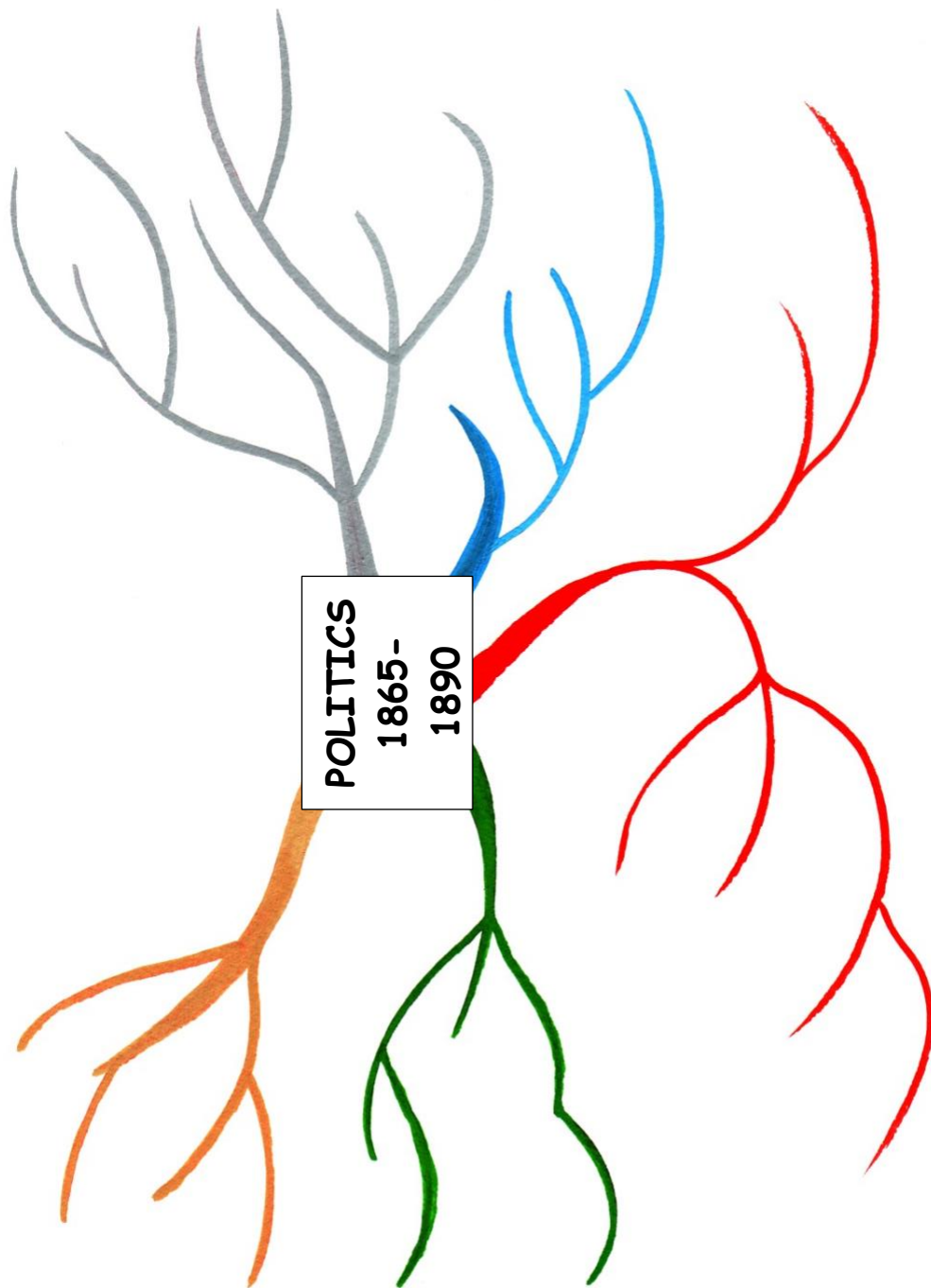
- How did government, political authority and political parties change and develop?
- How united was the USA during this period?
- How important was the role of key individuals and groups and how were they affected by developments?

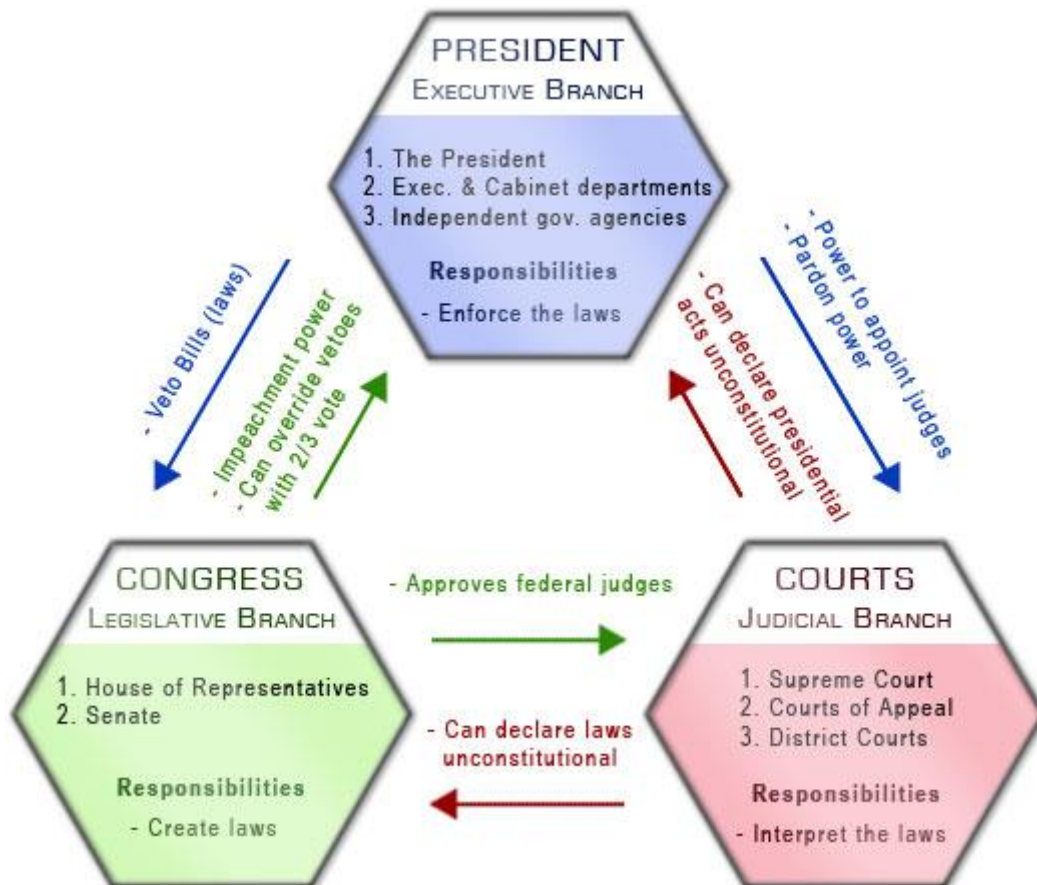
The Era of Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865–1890

- The weaknesses of Federal Government: Johnson, Grant and the failure of Radical Reconstruction
- The politics of the Gilded Age and the era of weak presidents; political corruption

KEY ISSUES;

1. Presidential Reconstruction
2. Congressional Reconstruction
3. Radical Reconstruction (and Failure)
4. Election 1876/Compromise 1877
5. Political corruption





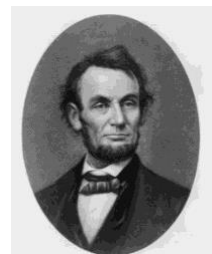
POLITICAL ISSUES 1865-1890

The period after the Civil War, 1865 - 1877, was called the **Reconstruction period**. Abraham Lincoln started planning for the reconstruction of the South during the Civil War as Union soldiers occupied huge areas of the South. In **December 1863** he offered his plan for **Reconstruction** which required that the States new constitutions prohibit slavery.

In January 1865, Congress proposed an amendment to the Constitution which would abolish slavery in the United States. On **December 18, 1865**, Congress ratified the **Thirteenth Amendment** formally abolishing slavery.

The Civil War ended on April 9, 1865.

Abraham Lincoln was assassinated less than one week later.



1. PRESIDENTIAL RECONSTRUCTION

Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's Vice President, briefly continued Lincoln's policies (Lincoln's Legacy) after Lincoln's assassination and in May 1865 announced his own plans for Reconstruction which included a vow of loyalty to the Nation and the abolition of

slavery that Southern states were required to take before they could be readmitted to the Nation.

Black codes were adopted by Midwestern states to regulate or inhibit the migration of free African-Americans to the Midwest. Cruel and severe black code laws were adopted by southern states after the Civil War to control or re-impose the old social structure. Southern legislatures passed laws that restricted the civil rights of the emancipated former slaves. Mississippi was the first state to institute laws that abolished the full civil rights of African-Americans. Other states quickly adopted their own versions of the codes.



The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (or the Freedmen's Bureau) was organized to provide relief and assistance to the former slaves, including health services, educational services, and abandoned land services. Congress passed an act on March 3, 1865 to establish the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. The program was administered by the Department of War in 1865 by President Abraham Lincoln. Its powers were renewed in 1866.

Andrew Johnson clashed with Congress, used Presidential veto, i.e. against Freedman's Bureau and Civil Rights Act March 1866.

2. CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION - (beginnings of Rad Rec)

Although Congress had responded with legislation that led to the **Civil Rights Act of 1866**, States kept on the books laws that continued the legacy of the black codes and, therefore, second-class citizenship for the newly freed slaves.

In 1866, the Civil Rights Act was passed by Congress which outlined a number of civil liberties including the right to make contracts, own and sell property and receive equal treatment under the law.

The **Congressional elections of 1866** brought **Radical Republicans** to power. They wanted to punish the South, and to prevent the ruling class from continuing in power.

They passed the **Military Reconstruction Acts of 1867**, which divided the South into five military districts and outlined how the new governments would be designed. Under federal bayonets, blacks, including those who had recently been freed, received the right to vote, hold political offices, and become judges and police chiefs.

President Johnson vetoed all the Radical initiatives, but Congress overrode him each time. It was the Radical Republicans who impeached President Johnson in 1868. The Senate, by a single vote, failed to convict him, but his power to hinder radical reform was diminished

Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment in 1867. The amendment was designed to provide citizenship and civil liberties to the recently freed slaves.

Carpetbagger was the name given to Northerners who came south for political and economic reasons. They were considered corrupt individuals who were using Reconstruction as a means to advance their own personal interests. Many of the Northerners were middle-class individuals who were professional people who decided to move to the South to make their mark.

Not all supported the Radical Republicans. Many Southern whites could not accept the idea that former slaves could not only vote but hold office. It was in this era that the **Ku Klux Klan** was born. A reign of terror was aimed both at local Republican leaders as well as at blacks seeking to assert their new political rights.

3. **RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION**

The Radical Republicans believed blacks were entitled to the same political rights and opportunities as whites. Leaders like Pennsylvania **Representative Thaddeus Stevens** and Massachusetts **Senator Charles Sumner** vigorously opposed Andrew Johnson's lenient policies.

Americans had long been suspicious of the federal government playing too large a role in the affairs of state. **But the Radicals felt that extraordinary times called for direct intervention in state affairs and laws designed to protect the emancipated blacks.** In the election of 1868 Ulysses Grant won with only 300,000 more votes than the Democrats (blacks voted for the Republicans).



By 1869 the Republican Party was firmly in control of all three branches of the federal government.

Soon afterward, Congress approved the **Fifteenth Amendment**, prohibiting states from restricting the right to vote because of race. **Then it enacted a series of Enforcement Acts (known as the KKK laws) authorizing national action to suppress political violence.**

In 1871 the administration launched a legal and military offensive that destroyed the Klan. **A final Civil Rights Act was passed in 1875.**

Grant (Republican) was re-elected in 1872 in the most peaceful election of the period.

Opposition to Radical Reconstruction

- a. **Political opposition**; in the form of **Democratic 'Redeemers'**. Who fought to 'redeem' the South. This was a coalition of conservatives, pro-businessmen and Southern Democrats. Took back control of states like Mississippi and Arkansas; taking away voting rights from African Americans through literacy tests etc.
- b. **Violent opposition**; '**White terrorists**'. The increase in violence and intimidation against African Americans meant voting levels dropped. In 1868 1,000 Freedmen were killed in Louisiana, in 1873 150 freedmen killed in the Colfax Massacre, and in 1874 Federal troops had to intervene to stop lynchings in Louisiana.

Failure of Radical Reconstruction

1874 Civil Rights Act – last real initiative by RR. They were reluctant to use federal troops in the South and Redeemers had restored Democratic control in most Southern states. **The Amnesty Act 1872 allowed ex-confederates to return to political life.** **The 1873 financial Panic (stocks and shares plummeted) weakened Grant's position** as did worried over Native American conflicts. Grant did attempt to reform the civil service but was **plagued by scandals**;

- 1869 Black Friday Gold scandal
- His VP, Colfax, was disgraced by railroad speculation scandal
- The Tweed Ring NYC 1870s operated Democratic political corruption under Grant's nose (looted \$45 M from the state).



4. ELECTION 1876/COMPROMISE 1877

1876; Disputed, corrupted and fraudulent election, impossible to know who won!

Rutherford B. Hayes (Gov of Ohio) was Republican candidate, Samuel Tilden was Democratic candidate (Gov of NYC).

Commission launched to investigate who won, Hayes chosen 8/7 votes.

Hayes offered to **withdraw of Union troops (this happened in 1877** and this brought renewed attempts to strip African-Americans of their newly acquired rights). This is known as the **Compromise** and in return Democrats recognised Rutherford Hayes as **the President**.

5. Political corruption

Rutherford Hayes - politically respectable, agreed to stay for one term but **weak President ('lane-duck')**. Democrats redeemed the rest of the South (Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina) = **'Solid South' is Democratic and tries to dismantled reformist legislation.**

Hayes was opposed by Republican Stalwarts (Conkling and Chester Arthur) - who were pro Ulysses Grant. The Half-Breeds supported a Rep candidate called Baine.

James Garfield emerged as the Rep candidate but chose Chester Arthur as deputy to appease the Stalwarts. Garfield won the election in 1880 by only 10,000 votes, then was assassinated in 1881; **Chester Arthur was disastrous!**

Democrats did well in mid-terms 1882 and then **Grover Cleveland won Pres election 1884, and later 1892** (promised to keep tariffs).

Benjamin Harrison, Republican Pres 1888-1892; supported by Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) - Northern Veterans; he rewarded his supports with war pensions and the McKinley Tariff 1890.

All of the above Presidents were linked to **political corruption; 'pork-barrel' politics of passing laws to reward people/regions for their backing.** Large cartels/trusts bought off politicians. Corruption was endemic at Federal and State level.

By 1890 there was a backlash against corruption. **Congress was pushed to pass the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to ensure fair competition and stop monopolies of industry.**

SUMMARY 1865-1890;

- 2 party politics had developed
- The identity and ideology of the Republican and Democrats had developed
- The American political system was still not yet fully formed
- Politics very much was reacting to huge economic and social changes

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS II

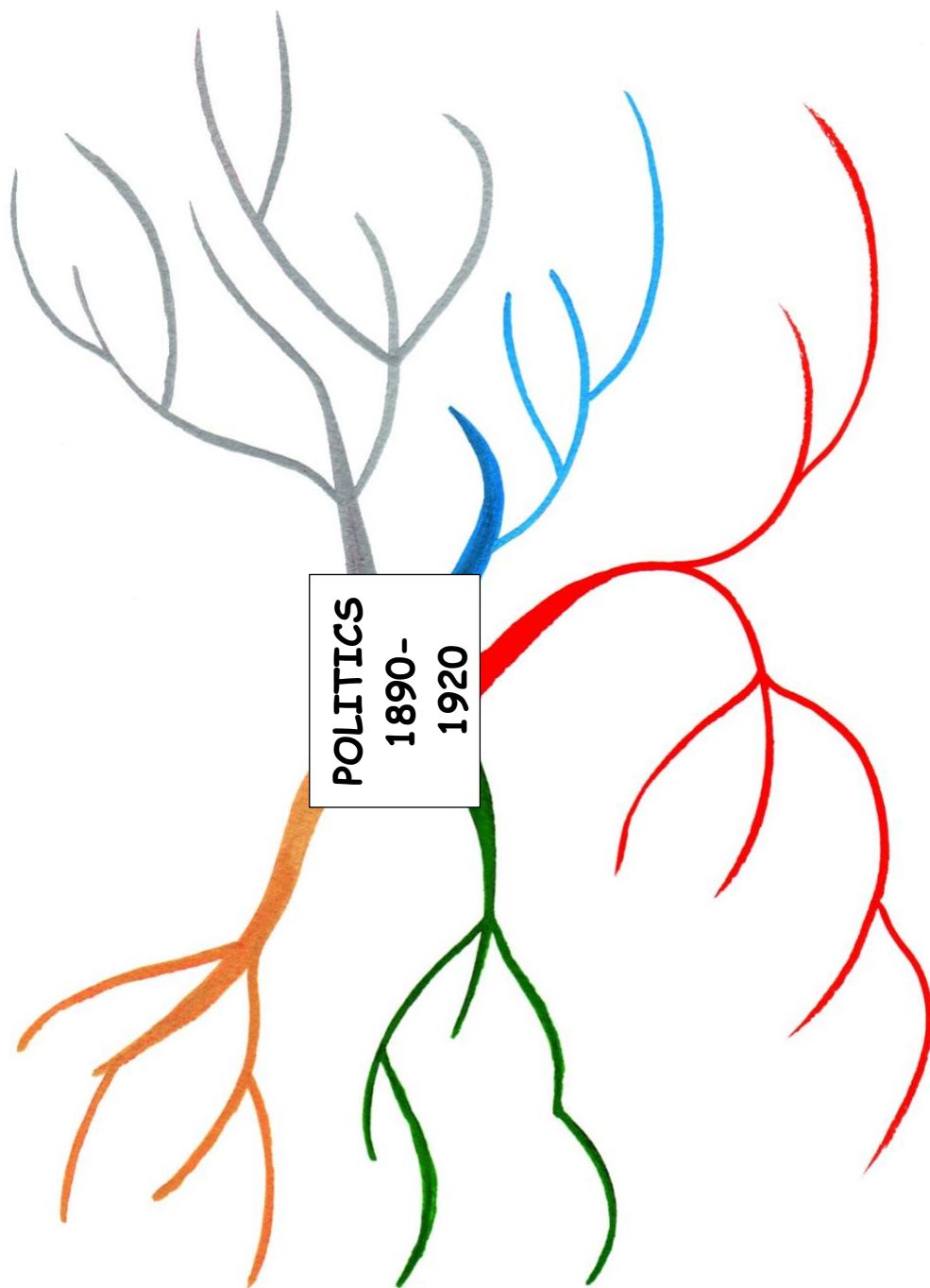
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- How important were ideas and ideology?
- How united was the USA during this period?
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Populism, progressivism and imperialism, 1890-1920

- Political tensions and divisions: the reaction against Big Business at national and state level
- The ideas and influence of Bryan, Roosevelt and Taft; Populism, Progressivism and Wilson's New Freedom

KEY ISSUES;

1. Rise of Republican dominance
2. Populism and William Jennings Bryan
3. Progressivism
4. Theodore Roosevelt
5. Woodrow Wilson and the New Freedom



POLITICAL ISSUES 1890-1920

1. Republican dominance

1867-1912, 12 new states were added to the USA (mostly the Western states). The Democrats were reliant upon the Southern states, industrial North Easterners, immigrants and small-time farmers in Western states.

In the 1896 election there were fewer African American voters **so the Republicans were mainly supported by the urban workers and big business** (high tariffs/protectionism). McKinley was helped by the **Mark Hanna** election campaign strategy and \$7 Million in sponsorship.

The Democrats were divided and turned many voters off with their Populist-centred policies, i.e. Free Silver. **William Jennings Bryan** (Populist Democrat) lost the election in 1896, 1900 and 1908.

2. Populism

Populism grew in the 1890s (turbulent era), as a grass roots, working-class, political movement - prevalent in the South and Rocky Mountains. Its' roots were in the Granger Movement and Farmers Alliances, Knights of Labor etc.

In 1892 the Populists (People's Party) created their manifesto called the **Omaha Platform**, they wanted;

- to fight corruption within the govt,
- legal and civil services,
- nationalisation of railroads,
- land re-distribution (bought),
- graduated income tax,
- 'free silver' (end the Gold Standard to make loans etc cheaper).



The Democrats weren't strong enough to fight both the Republicans AND Populists at elections so chose to absorb Populism into the Democratic Party.

They put forward **William Jennings Bryan** as the Dem candidate (pacifist, anti-Imperialist), in 1896 at the National Nominating Convention in Chicago. Many Democrats didn't want WJB - they wanted to remain conservative and go back to Grover Cleveland and laissez-faire, Gold Standard, '**Bourbon Democrats**'.

WJB was defeated 3 times - voters not convinced of silverites etc.

McKinley won election, Theodore Roosevelt Vice-pres. Big business dominated politics (Dingley Tariff Act 1897, 1900 Currency Act ensured Gold Standard remained).

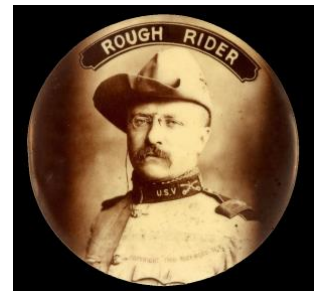
McKinley assassinated 1898, TR - President (young at 42)

3. Progressivism

1900-1917; idealistic reaction against capitalism and corruption. More middle-class and northern (but also influence across whole USA), than Populism. Wide-ranging, demanded reform, pro-suffrage for women, pro-workers rights, temperance.

4. Theodore Roosevelt; big, brash, loud.

Fought corruption but still say need for big business, took on mine owners 1902 coal strike, blocked creation of Northern Securities 1902 (railroad monopoly), used Anti-Sherman Act. Pro-conservation. But in 1907 panic was bailed out by wealthy financier Morgan.



William Howard Taft; more conservative, quieter approach. Sacked TR's forest service chief. Kept tariffs high but launched anti-trust action (US Steel). More cautious. Cons liked him. Democrats gained in 1910 mid-terms (joined by more radical progressive Reps in criticising Speaker of the House, Joseph Cannon).

The Progressive Republican Senator Robert M La Follette BROKE with the Reps to form the National Progressive League. At about the same time TR came back to the Reps and in June 1912 there was a Rep candidate crisis; TRoosevelt or WHTaft? Roosevelt losing so bullied La Follette into letting him stand at National Progressive candidate (nick—named bull moose) = SPLIT VOTE allowed Democrats to win, (Woodrow Wilson).

SUMMARY 1890-1910;

- 1868-1912 only Democratic president - Grover Cleveland
- 6 X Republican presidents
- Democrats split - Populism absorbed into the party
- Now Republicans split by Progressivism
- But Progressivism also appealed to many in the Democratic party also (WW)

5. Woodrow Wilson

The Democratic Party pre-WW; Bryan, excellent speaker and on a moral crusade, 'free silver' but alienated voters (most support in South and Great Plains). Rise of imperialism helped Republicans (Bryan a pacifist). Democrats try a different candidate in 1904 (Alton Parker) with no success. 1908 back to Bryan, he was a bit more moderate but still lost, didn't win ONE state in the NE.

1910 = Woodrow Wilson revived Democrats and the Republicans split between TR and WHT. Mid-terms Dems get House of Representatives.

Wilson was a Southerner, pacifist, Progressive, religious, Gov of New Jersey, a unifier of the Democratic Party.

1912 election - 1. WW (Dem), 2. TR (Nat Prog), 3. WHT (Rep), 4. Eugene Debs (Socialist)

Socialism developed as the economy grew and the urban workforce expanded.

Strike became more common (Coal Strike 1902), workers from Eastern Europe brought socialist ideas with them. **Eugene Debs** formed the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) - a Socialist political party - they wanted RADICAL change. More moderate Socialists, **Samuel Gompers** American Federation of Labor (AFL) were more moderate, so Socialism was split and had too much competition from Progressivism.

Wilson and the New Freedom

WW relied on Southern vote (popular in South as he was a Southerner) and he was careful to win over Bryan (made him Sec of State).

WW's reforms = the New Freedom. Wanted to return freedom for small business and more open competition instead of big cartels.



1913 - fought long battle with House of Reps and Senate to get through tariff reform. Forced through the **Underwood-Simmons Tariff** which slashed tariffs up to 20%. Brought in fairer income tax (graduated), **Federal Reserve Act** created Federal bank - all national banks had to join one of the 12 regional Fed Res banks.

1914 - set up **Federal Trade Commission** to inspect/regulate corporate business. Clayton Anti-Trust Act extended Sherman Anti-Trust Act (1890), 100 cases.

Also;

- Worked with AFL and strikes recognised as legal
- 1916 Adamson Act - 8 hour day for railroad workers
- Workmen's compensation
- Federal Highways - money to build
- Federal farm loans
- 16th Am; state power over income tax, 17th Am; US Senators have to be elected by popular vote, 18th Am; Prohibition, 19th Am; Female suffrage (vote)

SUMMARY 1910-1917;

- Divisions existed in USA due to attitudes towards African Americans and immigrants (New Freedom did nothing to help this)
- Republicanas revived by 1914 - gained in mid-terms
- 1916 election WW 9.1 M votes, Republican Charles Evans Hughes 8.5 M
- Won 1916 election by neutrality in WW1
- Forced to declare war on Germany in 1917; unrestricted submarine warfare