

The Farmers' Alliance movement of the late nineteenth century culminated in the creation of the People's Party (also known as the Populist Party), which ran James B. Weaver (1833–1912), a former Civil War general, for president in 1892. The Populist Party largely disappeared after the 1896 election. This excerpt is the preamble to its platform.

Assembled upon the 116th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the People's party of America, in their first national convention, invoking upon their action the blessing of Almighty God, puts forth, in the name and on behalf of the people of this country, the following preamble and declaration of principles:

The conditions which surround us best justify our co-operation: we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the states have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling places to prevent universal intimidation or bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, our homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrating in the hands of the capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right of organization for self-protection; imported pauperized labor beats down their wages, a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating into European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires.

The national power to create money is appropriated to enrich bondholders; a vast public debt payable in legal-tender currency has been funded into gold-bearing bonds, thereby adding millions to the burdens of the people.

Thomas Hudson McKee, ed., *The National Conventions and Platforms of All Political Parties, 1789–1904: Convention, Popular, and Electoral Vote*, 5th ed. (Baltimore, MD: Friedenwald, 1904), 280–285.

### **PRACTICING Historical Thinking**

**Identify:** List five significant reasons for the formation of the People's Party.

**Analyze:** What factors encouraged the formation of the People's Party? Were they strictly economic?

**Evaluate:** To what extent does this platform represent the needs of marginalized groups, such as African Americans and Hispanics?