

CHAPTER 26

The Great West And The Agricultural Revolution, 1865–1890

1. Conquest of the Plains Indians

a. The intrusion of whites onto the Great Plains decimated native populations through disease and set tribes against each other in competition for ever-dwindling resources. The government tried to pacify the Indians by signing treaties with them—treating them as “sovereign” nations and forcing them onto reservations in exchange for material benefits. But these treaties assumed that Indians had basically European values. List the two basic white misunderstandings of Indian society and beliefs cited by the authors.

(1)

(2)

b. The treaties were violated on both sides, resulting in continuous warfare from the 1860s to the 1880s. For each of these tribes, list their geographic location, one prominent leader, and any other notes you think are interesting:

(1) Sioux:

(2) Nez Percé:

(3) Apache:

c. The authors attribute the “taming” of the Indians to the increased contact caused by the transcontinental railroad, to the spread of European diseases, and to the virtual extermination of the buffalo, of which there were approximately _____ million in 1865. Humanitarians wanted to treat the Indians kindly and help to “civilize” them, while the hard-liners wanted to keep squeezing and punishing them. “Humanitarians” pushed for passage of the _____ Severality Act of 18____. This act tried to integrate Indians into American culture. What were the provisions and results of this Act? *** What is your view of the “integration” effort? If not by integration, how was the Indian to survive in a world dominated by whites?

(1) Provisions:

(2) Results:

(3) Your view:

2. **Western Economy** Mineral wealth, including the _____ Lode silver deposits in Nevada, played a major part in the western economy, as did cattle and farming. The railroads, particularly using new refrigerated cars, allowed cattle to reach the new meat-packing centers like Chicago and then be transported east. But the railroad brought out a wave of farmers and the _____ Act of 1862 gave them free land to cultivate. (**Remember the Jeffersonian idea that the country would be a better, more stable place if most people were small farmers?**). But what worked in the East was less successful in the West because land roughly west of the 100th meridian was too dry to farm. When huge numbers

of people abandoned their farms in the 1880s, the government again came to the rescue in the form of giant dams and irrigation projects to facilitate agriculture. *** How would you respond to a westerner who argued that the government should stay out of peoples' lives and should leave the people free to go about their business without interference?

3. The Frontier Analyzed With the 1889 land rush into previously Indian territory in _____ and results of the census of 18____, it appeared to many that "a frontier line is no longer discernible." In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson _____ delivered his famous thesis that the pioneer experience (about to come to an end, he said) was the primary shaper of a distinctively American culture and set of values. Summarize the three arguments cited by the authors about the significance of the frontier in American history:

(1) a "safety valve":

(2) a cultural meeting place:

(3) dominant role of government:

4. Farmers and Populist Sentiment

a. By mechanizing and specializing, farmers greatly increased their output in the late 1800s, but the high cost of doing so caused them to fall deeply into debt and they became more susceptible to the world price fluctuations of the few crops they were producing. Explain what the authors mean by the section heading entitled "Deflation Dooms the Debtor".

b. Notorious individualists, farmers (still representing _____ percent of the population) were being victimized by the railroads and by various middlemen, but they were slow to act collectively. However, in 1867 a rural grouping called the National _____ (still active today) was formed, followed by the _____ Labor party in the 1870s. This was succeeded in the 1880s by the cooperative Farmers' _____, which evolved into the grassroots People's Party of the 1890s (better known as the _____). List the four main elements of the Populist Party platform cited on page 613:

(1) _____ (3) _____

(2) _____ (4) _____

5. 1893 Depression The economic crash of the early 1890s added industrial workers to the embittered farmers. Jacob S. _____ led a protest march of the unemployed in 1894. That same year, Eugene V. _____ led a crippling strike in _____ against the _____ Palace Car Company, a strike put down by federal troops on the orders of President _____.

6. Watershed Election of 1896 With the potential for class conflict (workers and farmers vs. the business class), the 1896 election loomed large. The Republicans nominated William _____, whose campaign was managed and financed by the ruthless Marcus Alonzo _____. The Democrats went for the thunderous 36-year-old “Boy Orator” from the state of _____, William Jennings _____, whose fiery “_____ of Gold” speech (calling for inflation through the unlimited coinage of silver) won over the convention. This left the Populists with a fateful choice. Even though the Democrats supported only one of their objectives (“free silver”), they decided to join with the Democrats in supporting Bryan in order to improve their chances of winning. When Bryan eventually lost to McKinley, the Populists had lost their identity for good and never recovered. The authors call the election of 1896 the “most significant political turning point” in over 30 years. Why?
*** Can you draw any conclusions from this story?